

# To Reach Your Healthy Weight, Stop Trying to Lose Weight



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Mary has been on just about every diet there is. Yet her weight keeps climbing. For every pound she loses, she seems to gain two. The thought of trying again is torture, but she doesn't know what to do instead. She's got high blood pressure and is on the verge of diabetes.

It's a story repeated time and again as people worldwide struggle with weight and health. But it's a case of the cure being worse than the problem. Research suggests almost two-thirds of people who diet to lose weight end up regaining it plus some. And with that come health problems associated with higher weights, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.

## End the Yo-Yo Cycle of Weight Loss with Mindful Eating

Mindful eating offers a way out of the struggle. It's not about what you "should" or "shouldn't" eat but about discovering what and how to eat in a way that makes you feel well. Keep it up and that can lead to better health because feeling well is your body's signal that all is well.

It ends the search for weight loss because it's not about trying to lose weight. It's about supporting your health and happiness.

## Mindful Eating vs. Dieting

Mindful eating offers two main advantages over dieting. It helps you:



**Almost two-thirds of people who diet to lose weight gain it back plus some.**

- **Meet your physical needs**  
The search for weight loss usually means counting calories or points and other rules that often don't match your needs in the moment. You have a built-in system that can clearly tell you when as well as what and how much you need to eat for well-being. Mindful eating helps bring that system back online.
- **Satisfy your emotional needs**  
Diets put people at odds with food. Yet food is one of the greatest pleasures of life, and pleasure is good medicine. There are no forbidden foods in mindful eating. That allows you to discover what you really like, and how to eat it in a way that makes you feel good while eating and afterward. Mindful eating also helps you determine when you need food to feel good, or when a walk, time spent meditating, a hug or something else is a better choice.

## Expand Your Toolbox to Help Your Healthy Weight Find You

Mindful eating helps you meet your need for food. But your body has other needs for wellness, too, such as regular

physical activity, sleep, and a satisfying social life.

The behaviors and emotions that surround weight struggles often leave us too exhausted to exercise, sleep well, or just generally take care of ourselves. They also often mean we avoid social situations because we feel ashamed of our bodies, leaving us isolated and eating for comfort.

As you move away from the focus on losing weight, you can free your mind to better meet these other needs. That leads to the healthy lifestyle at the foundation of health and healthy weights.

Getting back in touch with and trusting your body's cues for eating can take time and attention if you've struggled with your weight for any length of time. Consider working with a qualified mindful eating professional to help you along with way.

The good news is that it's a gratifying journey of discovery and enjoyment. That helps keep you on the path to better health and happiness.

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# COMMUNITY WISDOM:

We asked our members to reflect on our theme of mindful eating and weight controversies.

## How do you feel when professionals question whether mindful eating, and other mindfulness practices, supports a healthy, natural weight?

“I think there are many lenses through which people view this issue. Those who question mindful eating may not have enough of their own experience with mindfulness to see a broader view. I also think that medical professionals rely on evidence, and until scientific data is available, they continue to question and doubt.” ~ *Lenna Liu, MD, MPH (Seattle, WA - USA)*

“When I hear this, it makes me think we need to clarify what ‘healthy, natural weight’ means. The word ‘healthy’ is so loaded in our weight-centric culture. It is equated with thinness. ‘Natural weight’ suffers from the same bias in our culture, which promotes the belief that our weight is fully in our control.” ~ *Camerin Ross, PhD (Sausalito, CA - USA)*

“‘Frustration’ is the first word that comes to mind. When health professionals think about weight management, they often focus on calorie deficit. But that’s not how people think about eating. Eating is for pleasure, for socializing. When my patients learn to assess how they eat --when they become more mindful -- I see a lot of “ah ha” moments when they realize weight loss does boil down to calorie deficit. But it starts with the mind!” ~ *Kim Browning, RD (Ann Arbor, MI - USA)*

## You may have had other experiences in which your views about client care differed from those of your peers. In addition to noticing thoughts, feelings, and sensations, how have you responded in these situations?

“I bring the discussion back to the client, and how important it is for the mind and body to be considered when it comes to health. I might also discuss the complexity of appetite

and weight regulation. All healthy babies are born with the skills to self-regulate appetite and weight. Relearning those skills is essential for a healthy mind & body.” ~ *Anne Embry, APD (Canberra, Australia)*

“Even if I have a different approach or opinion, I welcome the diversity and learning in every situation. When it comes to the client, I trust that if they want structured eating, or a diet plan, then this approach is right for them at that time. Sometimes the structure feels safer for them.” ~ *Grace Bell, MA (Seattle, Washington - USA)*

## How do you help your clients explore mindful eating and issues surrounding weight controversies?

“By staying positive and helping my client identify ‘wins.’ And by keeping gremlins at bay. I also take a few moments before each session to settle into our time together with deep breathing. And we agree on “ground-rules” for our time together. This is a good way to practice mindfulness and prepare my client for his or her next food journey.” ~ *Joan M. Atkinson, MS, RD, CHWC (New Harbor, Maine - USA)*

“Mindful eating is really not about weight. If you count calories, you can get your weight to an exact number. With mindful eating, your body decides your optimal weight. Mindful eating changes what you eat, not the calories. It is about quality, not quantity. It is about life, not about weight.” ~ *Terhi Summa, Mindful Eating Training Teacher (Helsinki, Finland)*

“Try it! Try eating without rules for a month. Instead, eat with total awareness -- awareness of what you’re telling yourself about each food you’re eating; awareness of how it really tastes. For those who have lived by the “good food/bad food” rule, this is going to be scary. It will take time.” ~ *Caryn Schall, CTACC (Minnetonka, MN - USA)*

“I tell them: “Together we will understand how your weight functions. You will be your own laboratory. We will try different experiences and see how it affects your body and mind. After that, you will be free to take it or leave it, but at least you will be conscious.” ~ *Amélie Sabourin, RD (Montreal, Canada)*



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