



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## 'Process' resolution is the key to diet success

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It's been a couple of years since I've even bothered making a New Year's resolution to drop a few pounds. I have two children, do the running for two aging mothers and do a lot of volunteer work. You'd think I'd look like a twig, but I'm more the log type. I just don't seem to have time to exercise regularly. Where do I start? I'd really like to make this one a NEW year.

- D.T., Lakewood

If stress burned calories, we'd all be thin! It sounds like you devote so much time to others that you have little to spend on yourself. This has to change if you are to have a healthier New Year.

A resolution without a plan is a blueprint for failure. Rather than making an "outcome" resolution such as "I'm going to lose 30 pounds by summer," make a "process" resolution that specifies exactly how you're going to get there.

For example, "I'll switch to sugar-free soda." Even if you don't meet your weight-loss goal, this is likely to be a healthy change. If you drink just one can of regular soda a day, this translates into 15 pounds lost in a year.

Since you've tried to lose weight several times on your own, you might want to get help. Data from the National Weight Control Registry of successful dieters tells us that there are many paths to successful weight management.

Ask your doctor for a referral to a registered dietitian. A dietitian will take a diet history and tailor a program just for you, taking into account any health problems you might have. Use the link (see accompanying box) to find one in your area.

Try a commercial weight-loss program. But before you do, access the Weight Information Network site (see box page F1) for tips on choosing a good one.

Make changes on your own that you can live with for a lifetime. Remember, temporary changes in diet and exercise do not produce permanent weight loss!

### **Exercise**

Perhaps you've seen those discouraging statistics that say you have to cross-country ski or jog for an hour to burn off the calories in a hamburger. It's difficult to lose significant weight through exercise alone. But exercise can enhance the effectiveness of an eating plan in two ways.

Cardiovascular or aerobic exercise burns calories and increases overall cardiovascular fitness.

Weight training and toning changes your body composition, thereby increasing your metabolism since muscle burns more calories than fat. Exercise for 30 to 60 minutes on most days, and you'll burn more calories all day long. Exercise also seems to be key in keeping weight off.

Check with your doctor before launching any exercise program. If you've not been exercising, it makes sense to begin with short sessions and add a few minutes a day until you reach your goal.

## **Diet**

Diet is the cornerstone of weight management. It is possible to outeat virtually any exercise program you can devise. When it comes to weight management, it's all about the calories - calories in and calories burned - NOT carbs and NOT fat grams. Nothing is off the table, but some foods are definitely better than others.

So, you decide. What changes can you live with permanently? Not starvation, surely, and not a diet that requires you to buy all your food from a diet program or eat your meals separately from your family. Not a plan that means you can never eat out in a restaurant.

Again, think process. And think positive. Not every diet resolution has to be about saying no.

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