THE MEAL MENTOR GUIDE TO WEIGHT-LOSS

by Lindsay S. Nixon
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Hello my fellow weight-loss warrior!

If you’re like me, you’ve battled your weight, you’ve battled your fork, you’ve battled cravings and food emotions, and you’ve done all that fighting from a defensive position: backed in a corner and blindfolded, because you trusted the wrong intel.

There is a huge sea of misinformation out there, with waves (trends), and rip currents (quasi-scientific evidence), that can pull you under and carry you far away from your goal without knowing it. This book will free you from all of it.

If you’ve ever wondered why losing weight feels like you’re swimming upstream with rocks in your pockets, this book is for you.

If you think you have a slow metabolism, this book is for you.

If you’re worried about starvation mode, eating six meals a day, not getting enough protein, eating too many carbs, and so forth, this book is for you.

And if you feel like there is too much conflicting information out there, this book is for you.

This book debunks all the myths and rejects all the reasonable sounding arguments that the masses keep passing around as wisdom or fact (when it is neither), and explains exactly what you need to do to lose weight.

My research doesn’t happen in a laboratory. It happens in my inbox, through correspondence with thousands of people just like you.

I’ve helped 38,147 people lose weight and now I want to help you too! Are you ready to take off the blindfold?

You got this!
Lindsay
METABOLISM
MYTH: YOU'RE NOT LOSING WEIGHT DUE TO SLOW METABOLISM

Having a “slow metabolism” is popular explanation for why someone has gained or has not lost weight. This is false.*

Obese and overweight people tend to have a greater energy expenditure than people who are not obese or overweight. The more you weigh, the more calories you'll burn, even at rest, so people who weigh more tend to have a faster metabolism (not a slower one).

Metabolism is the process by which your body converts the food you eat (or drink) into energy. Even when you’re asleep, your body needs energy for basic life functions like breathing and circulating blood. The number of calories (how much energy) used for these basic functions is known as your basal metabolic rate (BMR). Think of your BMR as the number of calories (energy) you’d burn laying in bed all day.

Your BMR is determined by your body size and composition, as well as your sex and age, which brings up another false belief: that your metabolism slows as you age, making it harder to lose once you cross a particular age barrier. This is half true, but also (and more importantly) half false!

As you get older, your muscle mass usually decreases, which slows down the rate at which you burn calories. It’s not the passing of time and getting older that slows your BMR, it’s the change in your muscle mass. Correlation doesn’t equal causation.

Similarly, while men tend to have a faster metabolism than women, it’s not purely because they are male, but because men tend to have less body fat and more muscle mass than women of the same age, so they burn more calories because of their mass.

**Bottom line:** Even if your metabolism is slower than it was 20 years ago, it is still not slow, or the reason why you’ve gained weight or aren’t losing. Your age and sex are also not to blame. You need to create a deficit to lose, it’s as simple as that.

*Slow metabolism is real, but rare, and usually caused by a medical condition (such as thyroid) that can be tested for and treated.
MYTH: SKINNY PEOPLE HAVE A HIGHER METABOLISM

Having a “high metabolism” is also a myth. While there are some individual variances in metabolism, research suggests that “naturally thin” people (those who seem to be able to eat whatever they want without gaining weight) do not have a higher metabolism. Instead, they have a higher total energy expenditure per day due to increased NEAT (Non Exercise Activity Thermogenesis) — little movements like twitching, fidgeting, or tapping throughout the day.

MYTH: “DIETING” SLOWS AND “SCREWS UP” YOUR METABOLISM

Another popular belief is that dieting, particularly low calorie diets, “screw up” or slow your metabolism.

Your metabolism will only slow down if you’ve consumed less than 50% of your required calorie intake for several weeks or months AND even then only by 10% at the most.

This means you would still continue to lose even if you reached this point. (I don’t encourage you do, I’m just making a point to show even if you did “screw up” or “slow” your metabolism, it doesn’t matter. A slowed metabolism does not equal weight gain or lack of loss.)

New research has also started to show that fasting can speed up your metabolism while encouraging the body to burn fat not muscle as another myth goes. (For more information see pg 7-8 & 18.)

Finally, numerous studies have shown that your metabolism goes back up to expected levels once your weight has stabilized.

**Bottom line:** Dieting or creating a caloric deficit will likely not slow your metabolism, and even if it did, it would not be slowed enough to cause weight gain or prevent loss. More importantly, your metabolism will return to what it once was after a period of weight stability.
MYTH: YOU SHOULD EAT 6 MEALS PER DAY TO BOOST METABOLISM

Whether you have tried to lose weight or put on muscle, at some point someone probably told you to “eat 6 small meals a day” and never, ever skip breakfast (or any meal).

The idea is if you’re constantly eating, you’ll rev up your metabolism and/or your metabolism will never slow down because you’re stoking the metabolic fire, allowing you to burn more fat throughout the day.

Hocus pocus.

There is little you can do to change, “jump-start” or speed up your BMR since it’s driven by the demands of your vital organs.

What you can do is watch your total caloric intake — create a deficit if you want to lose weight, and/or increase your total energy expenditure with physical activity (which also creates a deficit, just via output rather than input with food).

Certain individuals with special dietary needs or medical conditions might benefit from consuming multiple small meals per day, but for the majority of us, the most important factor is quality and quantity rather than frequency.

In fact, when it comes to frequency, modern research tells us less is more. We know that when we eat more than we need, we store the excess as fat — the metabolic dollar stored for a rainy day… except it never rains anymore. We’re never without food.

You’ve got to create a drought (a.k.a. a caloric deficiency).

The new name of the game is intermittent fasting (IF). The premise is by fasting, you’re finally creating a situation where the body can burn fat as fuel (spending those metabolic dollars!) without breaking down your muscles.

There are a number of different fasting strategies, but the one I tried involved eating during a consecutive 8-hour window every day.
I was already at a healthy weight and BMI when I started, so it’s not surprising that I only lost two pounds, but the benefits I experienced were well beyond fat-loss.

**Experimenting with intermittent fasting helped me find a better relationship and awareness with my true hunger.**

It helped me see that I don’t *need* to eat all the time, or all day, and that if I’m hungry, I can wait, I’ll be okay.

Previously, if I was hungry, I immediately became stressed and ate whatever I could to fend it off, which meant it was typically an unhealthy choice. I now know that even if I’m really hungry, I can wait until I get home or I can procure a healthy choice. I don’t have an excuse to shove in whatever is convenient or “instant” anymore.

Others have also said fasting teaches them that hunger is like a wave, which ebbs and flows, but never gets bigger. They now know they can ride the wave if they have to and not eat out of fear of it getting bigger and “out of control.”

Intermittent fasting also forced me out of eating just because it was a certain time and fussing constantly about when I was going to eat and worrying if I need to eat before I do this or that.

Fasting basically stops clockwork-systematized eating while simultaneously creating boundaries which did wonders for my “I’m bored” snacking habit. (It also made me realize I basically conditioned myself to feel hungry at certain times.)

**If you think about it** — it’s only in our recent history that humans have had such glorious access to an abundance of food. Our three meals a day habit is exclusive to the developed world, too. This is not the norm in underdeveloped nations.

Perhaps what surprised me the most was the noticeable increase in clarity and productivity, especially in the mornings. I expected to feel foggy or have low energy having not eaten, but I was more alert.

I also used to suffer from horrible bouts of “hanger” — feeling angry from hunger. I would
frequently wake up in the morning or middle of the night ravenous, and if I ever did skip a meal, I would be insatiable the rest of the day. All of this disappeared after my experiment with intermittent fasting, and never returned, even though I no longer strictly maintain a fasting schedule or window.

My guess is eating all day long created a lot of shifts and ranges in my blood sugar, which lead to those unpleasant feelings. By eating larger meals less frequently, I stayed more level.

And before you think I’m crazy: The New York Times also ran an article on the benefits of having a shorter eating window (proposing a 12-hour period) citing ample new research that eating less frequently can help cure and prevent obesity.

Interestingly, when I dabbled in intermittent fasting, so did a pal of my hubby. Brendan lost more weight than me, but he had more to lose and did not lose as much as he wanted. However, he was still eating garbage (i.e. Chick-fil-A) just in a designated window, so I firmly believe that a good diet and calorie deficit is still required for best results.

Bottom line: You can’t really change or boost your metabolism, but eating less frequently may help improve your performance, alertness and weight-loss. Health and weight-loss is accomplished by consuming a proper diet every day.
MEAL TIMES
MYTH: YOU NEED PRE- AND POST-WORKOUT SNACKS

Does this sound familiar? “I’ve got to eat to fuel my workout!” “Time for my recovery shake!”

The pre- and post-workout supplement business is a BIG business. And largely a scam.

**Unless you are underweight or doing extreme exercise for over 1 hour, you don’t need added nutrition. Especially if you’re trying to lose weight.**

Your body naturally stores around 1,200 calories of “ready to use” energy (your glycogen) which will power you through a workout. PLUS what you eat before or after exercise is a fairly insignificant portion of your overall diet.

**Consider this:** If you put 1 gallon of premium gas in your car with 12 gallons of the cheap stuff, is it really going to make a difference in the car’s performance?

Would even one full tank of premium matter all that much in the life of the car? For top performance, your overall diet matters. It’s about good maintenance. You have to be consistent…because your body is building, recovering, and maintaining 24/7.

Eating systematically (especially when you don't feel hungry) also overrides your hunger cues which can negatively affect future satiety AND corrupt your appetite thermostat.

Modern research continues to turn all the anabolic window, meal timing, “fat burning” phase theories on their head.

Intuitively, you know a single post-workout shake, or pre-workout meal will have minimal impact on your overall nutrition. And that it’s your OVERALL nutrition, not acute meal timing, that determines performance.

**Bottom line:** Unless you’re a high performance athlete or trying to gain weight, chances are you don’t need pre- and post-workout nutrition. But you DO need to be consistent with your diet.
MYTH: EVERYTHING YOU EAT AT NIGHT TURNS TO FAT

The problem with eating at night isn’t that it’s late in the day, dark outside, or after dinner.

It’s that when you eat late at night, you’re usually not chomping on asparagus.

Your body does not have an internal clock set to store anything eaten after 8 p.m. as fat.

Refraining from eating after a certain time has numerous benefits: you sleep better, for one, and having a “cut off time” creates a boundary so you’re at less risk for overeating your total calories, making poor choices, and so forth.

**Bottom line:** Generally speaking, having a meal late at night isn't any worse than eating at any other point during the day as long as it’s healthy.

MYTH: YOU’LL GO INTO STARVATION MODE

While starvation exists, “starvation mode” does not.

“Starvation mode” is a popular explanation among dieters for why they have not lost weight or have stopped losing weight. They say because they are “not eating enough” their body is holding on to the weight (or storing every morsel of food they eat as fat) because eating too few calories has put the body in “starvation mode” to conserve calories. This is absolutely incorrect.

**Research shows there’s no point at which your body stops burning fat, even during prolonged low calorie diets or fasting.**

As long as you create a calorie deficit (meaning you consume less calories than your body burns) then you will lose weight no matter if that deficit is small, moderate, or extra-large.

This is why people suffering from eating disorders such as anorexia, or POWs held captive with little to no food, will continue to lose weight, even once they are already underweight.
Shows like *Survivor* and *Naked and Afraid* are other good, real world testaments that “starvation mode” is a myth: Contestants are routinely put in situations where they have little to no food for 20 days or more. Predictably, by the finale, all of the contestants have lost noticeable weight and are *very* lean. If “starvation mode” existed, they would not thin out before our eyes. They would look and weigh the same on Day 22 as Day 1.

To be clear, I’m not encouraging or recommending an extremely low calorie “survivor” diet (as they are unhealthy and nutritionally inadequate), I’m simply making a point.

**Bottom line:** If you still have body fat to burn (meaning you’re more than 5-10% body fat), you will continue to burn body fat with a caloric deficit.

**If you’re not losing fat, a caloric deficit is not present. It’s as simple as that.**

Short-term plateaus aren’t anything to worry about, but if there is no change over a significant period of time, there is no deficit. You may be underestimating your caloric intake, overestimating your caloric output, or engaging in a little (unknowing) self-deception (see pg 17 for more information).

**MYTH: IT’S OKAY TO HAVE “CHEAT DAYS”**

One notable difference for me between meal plans and all the other diets I’ve tried in the past is I never want to “cheat.”

I’m not waiting for that “cheat day” to come when I go off my diet.

If I feel good and the weight is coming off, why would I want to stop what’s working?

When I was a personal trainer, my clients were always asking me how often they could cheat -- one day a week? one meal a week? Once a week period?

Here’s my answer: You can cheat as much as you want to cheat on your dietary goals, but don't expect the same results.
If you need a reward, search for a non-food one. Read a book. Go to the movies. Sleep in.

If you worked hard all week to make good choices, why undo all of that on one weekend bender? A day filled with candy, fried foods, excessive alcohol or poor food choices can easily -- and quickly -- rack up the calories, calories you've spent all week trying to burn.

AND when you step on the scale you’re going to be up several pounds. Most of that will probably be water retention from all the salt and junk, but when you see the sky-high number you’re not going to be rational and think that way.

Plus if you want real, lasting change it has to be permanent. If you continue to have bad habits, even one day a week, you do yourself a disservice.
You’re preventing your body, taste buds and mind from adapting to a new, healthful diet.
You'll reignite your taste addictions to excessive salt, fat or sugar.

When I was a personal trainer I noticed clients who had scheduled cheats lost a lot of the good progress they made with their diet slowly over time. They waited for their cheat days to come, becoming less and less enthusiastic about the days in between.

Sooner or later cheat days started turning into cheat weekends, or cheats two nights per week. Little by little they crept closer to their old lifestyle making eating right a diet and not a dietary change. (If Sunday becomes fun day, Monday-Saturday turns into food purgatory.)

Meanwhile clients who committed to the meal plans and a healthy lifestyle 24/7 (but would occasionally splurge at random) didn’t miss a beat.

Their splurges were smaller and more controlled. More importantly, periodic splurges didn’t seem to unravel their progress. Many even found renewed vigor and inspiration after 'cheating' -- “I felt so bloated! I’ll never do that again!”

Binge eating (which invariably happens to most of us on a “cheat” day or “feast” day) can also lead to more binge eating (there is a very fine line between a cheat day and a free-for-all).

The myth of moderation has done a doozy on us, too. All you hear is "live a little" and "treat yourself" but is feeding yourself things that aren't good for you and maintaining a food addiction really how you treat yourself well?
EXERCISE
MYTH: YOU BURN A LOT OF CALORIES WORKING OUT

“Exercise is good, but for most people it’s a lot easier to give up the candy bar than walk 2.7 miles to the vending machine.” — Brian Wansink, *Mindless Eating*

Exercise is a rather ineffective weight-loss strategy. Not only because you can’t exactly run off a chocolate chip cookie but because of how much effort it requires to burn calories and body fat. For example, to burn 3,500 calories (the equivalent of one pound of fat) you need to run a marathon — 26.2 miles.

It’s a lot easier to create a deficit on the input side than on the output side (and we give ourselves too much output kudos!)

I thought I burned 400 calories doing an intense workout DVD and I joined a spinning class because the girl told me I could burn 600 to 800 calories in a single spin class.

I’m not saying those figures are *impossible*, but they’re not reality.

Our bodies are incredibly efficient at saving gas (energy). Think of it as a Prius, *not* a Hummer.

How many calories will you burn doing 10 pushups? 40 jumping jacks? 21 calories.

This isn’t news we want to hear. We want to believe our handwork makes a greater impact (but it doesn’t) and it’s no surprise that study after study confirms we greatly *overestimate* our calorie burn.

And we’re not the only ones.

**Even the more expensive apps and gadgets grossly overestimate what you’ve actually burned.**

A recent study concluded trackers can be off by as much as 23%! 
Cardio machines are also unreliable, overestimating calorie burn by an average 19%! The worst is the elliptical, which overestimated calorie burn by a whopping 42%. The treadmill was better at 13%, but that’s still quite an overestimation!

**If you eat back the calories you think you expend during exercise, you’ll unintentionally undermine your efforts to lose weight.**

Estimating calorie output is not an exact science. It can’t be determined purely by plugging your age and weight into an algorithm or formula, which machines and apps use to estimate.

One big, missing factor in the equation is total body fat percentage.

For example, a 150 lb woman with 35% body fat will burn *more* calories than a 150 lb woman with 20% body fat running at the same pace, but the machine or application would display an identical reading for both women.

Body temperature, environmental temperature, heart rate, and hormones come into play also, and these variables are always fluctuating creating even more inaccuracy.

**Even apps and tools that simply count your steps overestimate calorie output because they cannot account for your form or running/walking efficiency.**

For example, someone who is new to walking or running will burn more calories than an experienced runner or long-time 10,000-steps-a-day walker. The more we walk or run, the more efficient we get with our movements. We reduce our side-to-side movements and bouncing, for example, both of which expend more energy (calories).

The point is, you’re burning less calories walking 10,000 steps today than you did walking 10,000 steps two months ago.

(But your tracker doesn’t know that, or tell you that!)

Apps and machines are still helpful tools, however. Use them as a benchmark, but be mindful of their margin of error.
Be as brutally honest with yourself as possible when using these apps.

For example, when I was a personal trainer, I noticed many clients checked the “moderate” or “active” activity box on our survey because they went to the gym four times per week. However, during our one-on-one interview, I would learn they were walking on the treadmill, taking yoga classes, or using other machines. While these activities are not nothing, they fall well below what a calorie calculator or app would consider “moderate” or “active” physical activity.

If an app or machine thinks you’re more active than you really are, it’ll prescribe you more calories than you actually need — removing that deficit.

**Bottom line:** If you eat back the calories you think you expend during exercise, you’ll undermine your efforts to lose weight because people, apps, and machines overestimate.

Unless you are underweight or engaging in rigorous activity for more than an hour, you do not need to eat more calories to compensate for your activities, and even then, you only need a little bit of food during and after to replace your glycogen.

**MYTH: IF YOU DON’T WORK OUT YOU’LL LOSE MUSCLE**

If you’re not working out and losing weight, it must be muscle loss, right?

Not quite.

If you create a calorie deficit, you burn fat as fuel which decreases the need for muscle (protein) breakdown.

Keep in mind that body fat is the metabolic dollar stored for a rainy day. The entire purpose of body fat is energy storage. When you oxidize fatty acids for fuel, you preserve muscle mass. Breaking down muscle (protein) for energy is a last resort.

**But can you lose muscle if you don’t work out?**
If a guy starts pumping iron like crazy and then decides to “forget it” and stop lifting, yes, over time he will lose some of that big, bulky bicep muscle because it was not natural for his body and Herculean efforts are required to sustain it.

Similarly, if you trained for a marathon, all that running would undoubtedly add a few pounds of extra leg muscle to your frame. If you decided to “retire” and never run again, that muscle would eventually decrease and go away, as you're not running 25 to 50 miles per week to sustain it.

See the point I’m getting at here? Could you lose muscle from not working out? Sure, but not in the scare tactic way trainers and the media lead us to believe. If you're losing weight, it’s because you are losing fat. Any muscle loss would be very minimal and arguably more natural for your body. Unless you're bedridden, you’re moving, which means you can’t lose all your muscle mass.

We must also stop viewing exercise as only Herculean efforts that happen in the gym. Exercise happens any time you move. You exercise when you wash the car, clean the toilet, carry groceries to the kitchen, mop the floors, and play with your kids.

More importantly, having large biceps or being able to lift some arbitrary number of weights does not mean we are healthy. Some of the most muscular people I know have the worst diets around. What do their arteries look like?

If you are worried about losing muscle mass, or want to gain muscle mass for appearance, start moving more in any way that jives with your personality or schedule. Deep clean your house and move furniture. Bike ride with your kids. Take a yoga class or start walking more.

**Bottom line:** When you lose weight, you lose fat, not muscle, even if you stop “working out.” The only way to lose muscle is to become bedridden (immobile) or if you were a bodybuilder and stopped, your muscle mass would decrease back to what is normal.

Most importantly, don’t exercise because you feel like you have to to lose weight. It’s often easier to lose by diet alone and exercise can very easily undermine your efforts (see pg 20 & 28 for more info). The best form of exercise is any body movement you enjoy doing.
MYTH: YOU SHOULD EAT BACK THE CALORIES YOU EXERCISED OFF

If you’re trying to lose weight, don’t eat back the calories you burn. You also don’t need a pre- or post-workout snack unless you are exercising vigorously for more than an hour (and even then you only need a small snack afterwards to replenish your glycogen).

For the average exerciser trying to lose or maintain their weight, exercise calories (200-500) do not make up a significant portion of your total calorie burn for the day (1500-2000).

By going out of your way to eat back these calories, you may unintentionally undermine your weight-loss efforts because it’s very easy to overestimate calorie burn (both from everyday activities and from exercise) and underestimate calorie consumption.

You also might “reward” yourself -- more sabotage!

These photos are prime examples:
(No matter how hard the workout was, there’s no way the ice cream and brownies are less calories… “reward” self-sabotage!)

I used to consciously think like that too… “Oh I worked out, I can totally eat this.” I believed eating poorly wouldn’t count, or my exercising would cancel it out… and that’s EXACTLY how my friend Maria GAINED 10 lbs. (Maria cleans houses, which is a lot of exercising when you think about it.)

“I told myself it didn’t matter if I ordered more guacamole or a second glass of wine because I was exercising. It was like learning I exercised at work gave me carte blanche to do things I normally didn’t. To slack on my nutritional excellence and meal planning,” she said.

Eventually I came to realize you can’t exercise off a bad diet, and that one hour on the treadmill could be lost in the two minutes it takes to inhale junk food. Or that I could never quite run off a jelly doughnut...

(And Maria realized being active doesn’t mean she can have whatever she desires.)

One of the reasons I’m so passionate (and diligent!) about using the meal plans is because I can prevent some of these subconscious self-sabotaging behaviors.

Exercise can also stimulate your appetite, giving you a false hunger pain. When that happens, check your hydration -- are you just thirsty? Also try doing something else for 15 minutes and see if the hunger pangs are still there. If it is, have a small snack like half an apple and try to wait until meal time.

Physical activity levels have remained unchanged during the past three decades, even as obesity rates have exploded.

There is also a growing body of scientific evidence showing that exercise alone has almost no effect on weight loss.

**Lifting the fork is more powerful than lifting a barbell.**
You don’t need a personal trainer, a gym membership, or P90X DVDs. You just need good food. (And not too much of it.)

Exercise does not cancel out low-quality food and science has proven the body reacts differently to different types of calories.

There’s no running off a bad diet, just like your car isn’t going to run on the wrong fuel no matter how hard you put the pedal to the metal.

Physical activity has a multitude of merits and benefits, but weight-loss is not one of them.

Our bodies are also incredibly efficient. Your body is a Prius, not a gas-burning Hummer, and it only gets more efficient the more you use it.

If you exercise for the purpose of burning calories, you get a very low return on your investment. It’s much easier to create a calorie deficit on the input side than the output side.

To lose weight, there has to be a calorie deficit. To gain weight, a calorie excess.

**It’s that simple.**
TRACKING WEIGHT-LOSS
MYTH: THE SCALE IS RELIABLE FOR TRACKING WEIGHT-LOSS

The scale is the easiest way to track progress, but often the least reliable.

If you still have a lot of weight to lose, the scale should show a gradual decrease in weight week to week.

Losing 0.5 to 2 pounds per week is ideal and healthy for an adult.

As you get within the last 10 to 20 pounds however, you want to also track progress with pictures, a pair of pants that you don’t wear around but try on once a week or so to gauge the fit, and/or having your body fat percentage measured professionally.

As you near the end of your total weight loss, the scale will begin to bounce dramatically, which can make it difficult to determine if you’re still progressing.

For example, I weighed myself everyday for a month, being diligent to do it at the same exact time every morning (after full urination and elimination) and there were several times where I gained or lost as much as 2 pounds day-to-day, which is physically impossible.

You cannot physically gain or lose 2 pounds of fat in a 24-hr period!

See for yourself:
Your body fluctuates significantly day-to-day, or even throughout the day. I could have been dehydrated or bloated, PMS-ing, or experiencing inflammation from exercise.

Think of it this way: If I throw a tennis ball in an Olympic pool, the rippling of the water would be almost unnoticeable. However, if I throw that same ball into the bathtub, the movement of the water would be very noticeable.

Also keep in mind that one pound of fat weighs the same as one pound of muscle, but they look incredibly different on the body.

I could line up three women (or men) that are the exact same age, height and weight (and have identical bone structure) and visually they would look very different. One would look super fit and muscular — like an Olympian. Another would look slender, but not fit or athletic, and the other would look soft and overweight.

A number on a scale can’t tell you what your body mass index is. And your muscle to body fat proportion makes all the difference in appearance.

**How to Weigh Yourself Properly:**

1. Always use the same scale and calibrate it regularly.
2. Weigh yourself once a week at the same time.
3. Weigh yourself naked or in your underwear (just be consistent).
4. Weigh yourself first thing in the morning after urination and elimination.
5. Stand straight up with your weight evenly distributed.
6. Ensure the scale is resting on a firm, flat surface.
7. Stand still and don’t look down until you have a reading.
8. Do not weigh yourself after exercise.
9. Do not weigh yourself if you’ve had alcohol or eaten out within 24 hours.
10. Use a home scale (public scales are inaccurate due to overuse).
11. Do not weigh yourself if you’re menstruating.

**Bottom line:** Most of us slowly and steadily gained, and that’s exactly how we’ll lose it, too. Remember that there is a smaller margin for error when you start zeroing in on your goal.
MYTH: ALL CALORIES ARE CREATED EQUAL

Excess calories may be what’s fueling the obesity epidemic, but it’s not just the total number of calories we’re eating. It’s the (low) quality of those calories, too. There have been massive increases in the amount of meat, cheese, oil, and sugar consumed.

Intuitively you know 100 calories of carrot cake isn’t the same as 100 calories of carrots.

Reducing calories to lose weight doesn’t have to leave you feeling hungry or restricted, either.

This is where the difference (inequality) in calories comes from.

With the meal plans, for example, we focus on caloric density: more food, more volume, less calories. Choosing nutritious foods that fill you up and satiate so you never feel hungry or deprived.

**Bottom line:** Low calorie doesn’t have to mean tiny portions! Choose the right sources for your calories.
WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS
TOP 6 REASONS YOU’RE NOT LOSING WEIGHT

#1 No Calorie Deficit

Maybe you’re underestimating how many calories you’re actually eating, overestimating how many you need, or you think you’re burning them off with exercise. In 99% of weight-loss plateau cases, a lack of deficit is the culprit. We often self-sabotage without knowing it!

In a recent study, Group A was told they were taking an “exercise” walk before lunch, while Group B went on a “scenic” walk. (Group C went straight to lunch, no walk, as a control group). Both groups walked the same distance at the same pace. Group A was told how many steps they took, calories burned, etc. Various plants and animals were pointed out to Group B.

People in the “exercise” group took LESS salad and MORE chocolate pudding (35% more!) They also took TWICE as many M&Ms a few hours later during “snack time!” When we believe we have sacrificed, we compensate by rewarding ourselves.

Many members who use calorie counters and apps don’t log their exercise -- only their calories and find that gives them a good buffer so they keep losing without accidental sabotages.

Kelly shared her experience:

“I started the meal plans in May 2013, lost about 5 lbs between then and Nov 2013. That was not near my goal. I was exercising as well. Followed the advice I didn't want to follow or believe: stop exercising (too tempting to eat those calories back), eat only the low fat options of the meal plans, and log/weigh all my food. I was shocked at how much I was actually eating, and how much was fat. Calculated my Basal Metabolic Rate, kept the calories around 1200, lost 45 more pounds last year! Now I’m maintaining, feel great, get good doctor results at 1100-1200 calories most days. The BMR was key for me to know how much of a calorie deficit I need to lose pounds (everyone is different). This year, I’m not logging anymore, and eating the non-low fat meals.”
The most important exercise you can do: writing down everything you eat or drink, including little tastes of food while cooking. You might be surprised how many hidden calories end up in your day -- almond milk in your coffee, a piece of candy or gum you absentmindedly ate at work, 5 or 6 spoonfuls “to taste” while cooking, a sip off a friend’s drink, a nibble off your child’s plate, and so forth.

#2 Gut Bacteria Imbalances

If you’re ingesting a lot of sugar, coffee, alcohol, and other unhealthy foods, the bacteria in your gut could be part of the problem. New research suggests gut bacteria alters the way we store fat, how we respond to hormones that make us feel hungry or full, and what cravings we experience, if any.

Fortunately, you can kick out these unfavorable houseguests by deliberately altering what you eat. Choose healthy foods and chew them well to feed the good bacteria.

#3 Not Enough Sleep

While the physical act of not sleeping won’t directly cause weight gain (the way, say, eating a box of doughnuts will directly cause weight gain) not getting enough sleep creates a number of variables that make self-sabotage easier.

For example, when you’re short on sleep, you’re more inclined to reach for a large latte or other “quick energy” foods for a boost. And when you’re too tired to cook, you’ll reach for take-out or convenience foods.

New studies also suggest that when we’re sleep deprived, we’re more prone to seek out comfort foods because our brain wants a reward.

#4 Food Allergies

Being allergic to a food and eating it won’t cause you to gain weight, but it could lead to bloating and discomfort.
I’ve also worked with a few members who started losing weight (after a previous plateau) by cutting out allergens in their diet. New research suggests they could not lose weight because their guts were so inflamed and their digestive ecosystem so out of whack.

Of course it’s also possible that if you’re not feeling well, you’re more lethargic and you may seek comfort and happiness in unhealthy foods.

The most common food allergens are nuts, soy, wheat, eggs, fish, and dairy. (Fortunately the meal plans are always free of these items!)

#5 Medical Issues

Some medications and medical issues (i.e. thyroid) can make it difficult to lose weight, though this is very uncommon. Fortunately there are treatment options and once the condition has improved, weight-loss will resume. If you have tried everything else, visit your doctor for routine testing to check for vitamin deficiencies, unbalanced hormones, thyroid issues, or abnormal cortisol levels.

#6 Hate-Talking & Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

As long as you’re the person saying it, it’s going to be true. If you call yourself fat, or tell yourself you’re fat and that it’s hopeless and you can’t lose weight, you’re only going to prove yourself correct.

Your attitude makes a big difference in subtly guiding your day-to-day actions. Love yourself. Be kind to yourself. If you wouldn’t say these things to a stranger, don’t say them to yourself!

You also need to match your words with your actions.

For example, my friend Cheryl kept SAYING she wanted to lose weight, but her ACTIONS told another story as she kept eating ice cream, cookies, etc.

Cheryl knew EXACTLY what she needed to do to lose weight (follow the meal plans, stop
eating sweets) but she wouldn’t do it, often blaming cravings for her failure.

“After I eat something spicy I NEED something sweet to balance it out,” she’d say, or “I CAN’T give up chocolate ice cream.”

One day another Meal Mentor member corrected her and said, “Cheryl, you don’t ‘need’ it, you just want it really badly. Wanting and needing aren’t the same.”

That was a light bulb moment for Cheryl.

“It turned the whole thing around for me,” she explained, “I suddenly felt empowered and not powerless. I was in control. I DIDN’T need it.”

A simple shift in language created a huge shift in Cheryl’s mindset.

STOP saying “I can’t” and START saying “I will!”
Now that you know all the answers...

Keep this book handy for future reference (and read it a few times so it sinks in).

You know what you need to do: eat a little, but not too much, create a calorie deficit.

You know that your future self is dependent on the actions you take today.

Make it easy on yourself with the meal plans. No guesswork! No counting. All the planning and balancing is already done for you.

All you need to do is print, shop, and eat!

www.getmealplans.com