

# WHY diets DON'T WORK

**L**OSING WEIGHT ISN'T AS hard as some would have you believe. Successful weight loss involves a combination of diet, exercise and the right mindset. But diet and exercise are like Velcro – they can be torn apart. So think of mindset as the glue that holds them together.

Most weight-loss attempts fail due to lack of motivation or consistency. These are mind issues, not body ones.

Change your mind and you can change your body – and, indeed, your whole life. The key to healthy, guilt-free living is to change how you think so that you don't want to eat unhealthy foods quite so much, and actually do want to exercise. And once you've made this significant shift, not only will you be able to lose weight easily, you won't struggle to keep it off.

So, how do you change your thinking? You need planning, not plans! There is diet information overload out there, and this, combined with our ever-increasing waistlines, screams the truth that diets just don't work. Almost any good diet or exercise plan will work for a while if you follow it religiously. But people are not programmed to do this. Once we stop the plan, we struggle with our weight again. Naturally slim, fit and healthy people don't follow a specific diet and exercise plan, nor do they have "good days" and "bad days". They don't feel deprived when they sit down to eat and they don't suffer guilt when they eat a slice of cake.

As Albert Einstein said, insanity is "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results". Are your new weight-loss attempts merely variations on a theme you've tried previously?

Have you tried every diet under the sun? Health and fitness mentor **Sally Symonds** lost more than half her body weight and kept it off. Here, she shares her secrets to successful, sustainable weight loss.

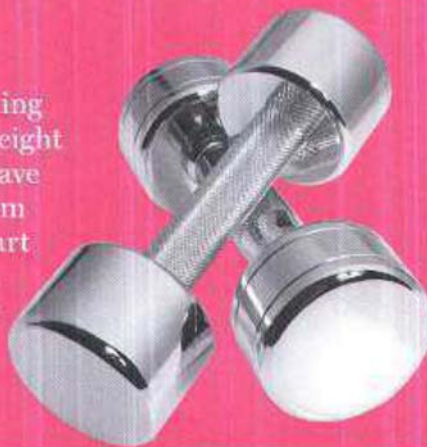
According to the Dietitians Association of Australia, 96 per cent of people who lose weight put it all back on – and then some – within two years. One of the major reasons for this is the lack of thought people needed to employ during their weight-loss program. Many people who lose weight while following a particular plan don't learn how to integrate healthy living into their everyday life. They end up stuck in a yoyo pattern of weight loss and weight gain, spending their entire lives as slaves to one diet or another, often becoming more and more overweight as each attempt fails.

## LEARN SELF-EMPOWERMENT

Many weight-loss experts will tell you to use rewards to motivate yourself. But rewarding yourself for good behaviour is a somewhat simplistic approach that only works for simple tasks and simple minds (like children, pets and sometimes husbands!) Psychologists are now finding that the key to real and long-lasting motivation for more complex tasks (such as successful weight loss) lies in self-empowerment. Being in control of your own weight-loss journey ensures you become both curious and creative in your approach and that you become motivated by desires other than just losing weight. You learn to think in terms of "how can I?" rather than "I can't" and are much more mindful of the consequences of your behaviour in terms of both food and exercise. Taking responsibility for your own actions ensures that you develop independence on your healthy life journey that, in turn, can also boost self-esteem.

## Unleash your inner gym bunny

Exercise is one of the leading predictors of long-term weight management. You don't have to start thinking like a gym junkie, but it's great to start looking like one. Exercise enables your body to tone up in a way that diet alone won't, so what are you waiting for?



While protein supplements may originally have been just for gym junkies, low-carb mini protein bars are one of the best 3pm pick-me-ups to eat on the run. Similarly, with exercise, there are some concepts that can make a huge difference to the efficiency and effectiveness of your exercise time. These include: ● Interval training – bursts of high-intensity exercise alternated with periods of recovery. ● The Perceived Rate of Exertion (PRE) scale – a measure of how hard you are working out. On a scale of 1 to 10, if 1 represents doing nothing

### You are an individual

The National Weight Control Registry, in the US, contains the largest collection of data in the world about people who have lost weight and kept it off. While there are some commonalities, there is no "magic bullet" for sustainable weight loss. The only key seems to be that you need to keep exploring all of your options until you find enough healthy living strategies to easily integrate into your life every day, eg, to accommodate your varying moods, workplace, family, social life.

and 10 is working to capacity, you should aim to exercise between a 4 and an 8.

● Periodisation – dividing your training schedule into smaller blocks and then varying the intensity to avoid plateaus and the potential for injury.

### WEIGHT LOSS ISN'T THAT IMPORTANT

Anyone who has lost weight and kept it off will tell you the weight loss itself is really just a minor benefit. The sense of power and achievement is much more impacting. Weight loss isn't about achieving a goal weight; it's about making the most of your life. Successful, sustainable weight loss means you no longer need to spend time and energy obsessing over your weight. It frees you to redirect your efforts into much more fulfilling and rewarding endeavours ... like living your life to the fullest!

