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secrets

Bored with your healthy eating plan? Weight loss at a standstill? Then prepare for a boost with **Azmina Govindji's** top tips for staying focused and motivated to succeed.

1 So you're on a diet and your weight loss has reached a plateau.

What do you do? Firstly, learn from the experience. What worked, and what didn't? What have you found helps you when you feel like giving up? Try to recognise the cause of your boredom or slow weight loss. Is it that the choice of foods on this 'diet' is limited? Have you been reaching for the cookie jar because nothing else will do the trick? Is it that you're doing all the right things but the weight just isn't shifting? Write down your answers and you'll find that your mind automatically comes up with at least one solution to help you get back on track – just try it!

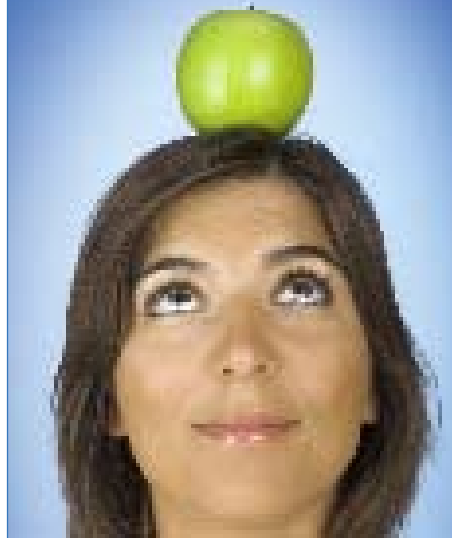
2 Make a list of your achievements and keep it with you.

This could be a simple positive act like climbing the stairs more often, or refusing a second helping. However small it may seem to you, enjoy the success and note it down so when you're feeling low, you can look at your list and feel better.

3 Keep a snack-attack box handy.

Have one in the fridge and one in the larder. Ideas for fridge snacks include olives, veg sticks with low-fat yogurt or tomato dips, smoked salmon, water chestnuts, sweetcorn,

“Take time out for meals; it's important to be conscious of what you're eating”



of the TV: jogging on the spot in front of your favourite TV drama, or keeping fit with an exercise DVD all help you to be more active.

8 Get support from a friend, a family member or join a group.

The best way to keep to a weight loss plan is to have a buddy. There is lots of research to show that this helps, so find yourself someone you're comfortable with and who shares your goals. Then you can encourage each other, which is especially helpful when one of you needs a willpower boost.

9 Get into the habit of thinking about healthy swaps.

For example, swap white bread for granary, which raises your blood glucose more slowly; swap a croissant for peanut butter on toast, and swap a dessert for a low-fat fruit yogurt. When you're faced with a choice, ask yourself which choice will get you closer to your goal.

10 Shopping lists are essential.

Go to the supermarket armed with a list of good foods that will help you to stay on track and that you enjoy. Keep to your list so you're not tempted by unhealthy foods.

11 If you haven't got one, invest in a good non-stick pan with a lid.

It will help you to cook with less fat as

of weight loss success

strawberries or other berries or chopped fruit. For the larder, try breadsticks, small portions of nuts (unsalted, no more than 25g/1oz a day), oatcakes, diet hot chocolate sachets, apricots and other dried fruits.

4 Preparation is the key, so having the right foods to hand will help you avoid eating on the hop.

For example, buy chicken or turkey breast, cut into strips and freeze it in small freezer bags. It's a low-fat meat and you can use it for a quick stir-fry or pasta dish. Stock up on some cans of beans and lentils. They are slow to release energy, high in protein and fibre and low in calories. Just open the can, drain the water off and throw the beans into a pot of pasta, a salad, a curry, a stew, or even add it to a ready meal to make it healthier.

5 Give away your party leftovers and any unhealthy snacks you have around.

Out of sight really can be out of mind. If you

have young children, keep their treats in a separate cupboard so you're not tempted to indulge. Keep foods around that help you to reach your goal.

6 Eating fewer processed foods benefits your waist and your wallet.

Doing some easy cooking really can get you closer to the new you. You might like to try some of the recipes in this issue, or treat yourself to a quick and easy recipe book. You can make a meal in 15-20 minutes and at least you'll know exactly what's in it!

7 Make a list of all the physical activity interests that you've ever fancied doing.

Commit to trying them all over a period of time. Examples may include: kickboxing, salsa, Pilates, yoga, horse riding, skiing, cycling, ballroom dancing, and so on. You will only keep it up if you enjoy it, and there will be an activity that's just right for you – all you need to do is find it! You can even exercise in front

you will only need a little oil, saving you unnecessary calories.

12 Try spray oil.

It really helps you to cut down on fat and calories. If you don't like the ones in the supermarket, simply put some rapeseed oil (high in healthy mono-unsaturated fats) into a spray bottle and use this in cooking. It will still help you use less.

13 Are you someone who eats lunch at your desk?

Take time out for meals. It's important to eat consciously, to be aware of your food. It not only adds to the enjoyment, it helps you to eat slowly and to notice how much you're eating! Think about the Mediterranean way of eating: not only do they eat healthy foods, they also take time over their meals.

14 Drink more water.

Often when we think we're hungry, we're actually thirsty. So have a glass of water

Healthy weight/motivation

when your between-meal hunger pangs start and then see if you really need to reach for the snack. Obviously, if you have low blood glucose, it's important to eat.

15 **You may think five fruit and veg per day is boring old advice, but see how you can put it into practice.**

It's as simple as having a glass of unsweetened fruit juice with breakfast, or maybe a sliced banana with your cereal, then a salad with your lunch (or some veg and salad in a sandwich) with a piece of fruit, and then a veg with your evening meal followed by a piece of fruit. Fruit and veg are so low in fat and calories that they really do help you to feel full and keep to your weight loss plan.

16 **Be aware that alcohol can pile on the pounds without you noticing.**

Two glasses of wine can give you more calories than a 35g bag of crisps!

17 **Set yourself short-term targets and reward yourself for reaching them.**

The most common pitfall when people are changing their lifestyle is that they lack the motivation to carry on. It can be daunting to think about losing 10lbs, but that's actually just losing 1lb ten times! If you reward yourself (with a new book, a day out, a magazine, for example) when you have lost 5lbs, you'll be more motivated to aim for the next five.

18 **End your day by congratulating yourself.**

Just look in the mirror and tell yourself that you have done something well. Don't let your mind wander to all the things you haven't done (your mind is very good at telling you off so silence that voice for a few minutes!).

19 **Although recommendations on exercise are five sessions of 30 minutes a week, you don't need to do the 30 minutes all at once.**

Split it into two 15-minute sessions. It will still burn calories and protect your heart. Just make sure you feel warm and are slightly out of breath but can still hold light conversation.

20 **Check food labels.** Many foods have the FSA traffic light scheme, so just compare labels (you don't need to get bogged down with the figures) and choose foods with greens and ambers. Try to avoid the red lights whenever you can. See page 36 for more on food labelling.

21 **Use distraction techniques.** When you feel that you have a craving, but it isn't time for your next meal and your blood glucose isn't low, then distract yourself.

“Your mind will help you to get what you think about, so keeping positive mental images of how good you will look and feel will help you succeed”



Move away from the TV, kitchen or wherever you are. Get on the phone to a friend, get out in the fresh air, do some chores. Anything that gets your mind off the thought of food. You will find that if you distract yourself well, your craving will go.

22 **Keep reminding yourself of how the 'new you' will look and feel.**

It helps you to keep focused when you feel like giving up. See an image of yourself fitter, healthier, looking great!

23 **Write down what you're eating.** It may sound strange, but there is research to show that if you simply make a note of what you're eating, you will become more conscious of it and that in itself will help you to cut down.

24 **Have a sense of confidence about your new lifestyle.**

Be proud of it; let it show in your posture, your smile, and your clothes. You *will* be that fitter, healthier person. The more often you say it to yourself, the more you'll believe it. This in turn will change the way you interact with people around you. When you ooze with confidence, you are more likely to want to stay on track.

25 **Make up your mind to succeed. Failure is not an option!**

Your mind will help you to get what you think about. So if you think positively about reaching your target weight and staying there, keeping mental images of how good you will look and feel, how well your blood glucose and cholesterol levels will be controlled, and so on, you are more likely to have the frame of mind that will keep you motivated.

About Azmina

Sweet's expert is consultant nutritionist and registered dietitian Azmina Govindji, who was chief dietitian to Diabetes UK from 1987 to 1995, and now runs her own practice working with national organisations such as the British Heart Foundation, World Cancer Research Fund and the Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation.

Azmina regularly appears on TV, such as ITV's *This Morning* and Five's *The Wright Stuff*, and has written 14 books, including *Healthy Eating for Diabetes* with Antony Worrall Thompson. See page 18 for more on Azmina's latest recipe book.

