Use these 7 secrets to lose 23 pounds in 3 weeks

As we get older, it becomes harder and harder to lose weight. Some people struggle with weight issues their entire lives. When you add the stressors of everyday life, work duties, family life, and more, it can be very difficult to stay on the "weight loss wagon."

Weight loss isn't just about vanity. It's also about your health. Health is one of the most important things that we have in life. When we are healthy, we feel better, and we physically have the ability to do most of the things that we want to do.

In turn, you also feel better all around. When you're healthy, you're more confident in your capabilities and your appearance.

There's a lot of pressure in the media and pop culture telling people that they have to be perfect. They have to have to be good parents, loving spouses, breadwinners at their job, and still somehow maintain a perfect body. The focus, however, should not be on "perfection," but rather on *health*.

Living a healthy lifestyle is not a simple task. It can be very difficult to find a weight loss or health plan that works for you. It can be equally as hard to stick to that plan.

For example, you may decide that you want to start running. But once the weather gets icky, this plan may go down the drain. The next thing you know, you're skipping your daily exercise routine and life is back to normal.

Similarly, you may decide to go on a diet. It might be easy at first when you prepare your own meals. But when you go out to a restaurant with friends or family, you may eat something that is not a part of your diet plan or you might end up overeating.

Or, you may be currently on a diet plan. You feel as if you've been sticking to it, but for some reason, you're not losing weight. Even if you've invested in "diet" foods, you might still be overeating.

One cause of this might be stress. If you're sitting at your computer and worrying about a project, you could be mindlessly shoveling handfuls of your healthy snacks into your mouth. Despite the fact that this food is healthier than vending machine snacks, the calories still add up.

If you've been trying and failing for years, it's time to reassess your methods. You need to take a closer look at your specific needs and devise a weight loss plan from there.

Today, we're going to discuss some keys to help you get back on the wagon, stay on the wagon, and to lose weight.

Secret 1: Stop and Think

Your brain and body work together. When approaching the topic of weight loss, it's important to first sit down and discover the elements that have been contributing to your weight gain.

Have you slacked off on exercising? Are you too tired to exercise? How much sleep do you get each night? Is it enough?

Are you newly married? Did you recently have a baby? Did you gain a lot of extra weight? Have you had difficulty shedding these pounds?

Are you constantly stressed? What are the things that contribute to your stress? Do you overeat? Do you notice that you're overeating while doing so, or do you only feel the results after a meal?

Have you experienced any major life changes that have affected your emotions?

Have you noticed that you've been eating more or that you instinctively choose junk foods over healthier foods?

What are you putting in your body on a daily basis? Are you taking any medications that potentially cause weight gain? Are you doing everything correctly but still are unable to lose weight? Have you spoken to your doctor about any possible health issues, such as an over-active thyroid?

To lose weight, you must be conscious of the things that are affecting your brain and body on a daily basis.

Do your part to get these elements under control. You have to make adjustments within your everyday life so that you can increase your chances of success. Take steps that will help ensure that you start a weight loss plan and stick to it.

For example, try to calm your stress with meditation. A lot of people enjoy practicing Yoga as a form of stress-control. It's also great exercise.

If you're too tired, make a point of going to sleep an hour earlier each night. Or, if you hit the snooze button several times each morning, try setting your alarm for later. Set it for a more realistic time, and give yourself those few extra minutes of sleep that your body is craving.

Secret 2: Think Realistically and Positively

Keep your expectations in check. Don't expect results overnight. It takes time to lose weight, build strength, and live an overall healthier lifestyle.

Think of it this way, you wouldn't just attempt a marathon if you've never even ran a mile, would you? No. You would need to build up to it. Even after you're ready to run a marathon, the effort doesn't stop there. Once you reach your goal, it still requires hard work and dedication.

Don't get frustrated. Try to change your perspective on your body and your abilities. Avoid viewing things negatively. Instead of saying, "I can't do this. I'm done for the day." Say, "If I keep working at it, I WILL be able to do this."

Talk to yourself as if you're talking to a good friend whom you love. Remind yourself of the positive benefits of looking out for your health. Say, "I make myself stronger every day."

Think of all of the good things you are doing for yourself and the things that you WILL be able to do if you keep up your hard work.

As with any goal, it's important to decide specifically what you want to achieve, and then break that goal down into smaller, more manageable steps.

Be honest and specific with yourself. Don't just say, "I need to lose weight," or "I need to drop 100 pounds, stat."

Seriously consider how much you realistically need to lose. How much is possible over a specific period of time?

Consider of a valid reason that you want to lose weight or start exercising.

Are you almost 40 years old and have discovered that your metabolism has started to slow down? Maybe you're turning 50 this year and have been inactive for the past ten years. Perhaps you want to ensure that you are around to see your grandchildren. Maybe you want to improve your mobility so that you are able to walk your son or daughter down the aisle.

Do you want to lower your cholesterol? Do you want to be able to climb a flight of stairs without getting winded? No reason is too small or insignificant.

Here's an example of a realistic, clear goal: "I would like to lose 20 pounds by next year so that I am great shape for our next family vacation."

From there, you can say that you'd like to lose four pounds a month until you reach your goal. You can decide the best way for you to tackle those four pounds each month.

Getting specific and choosing an attainable goal helps propel you into action because you it provides you with a clearer path to your goal. When you say, "I need to lose weight," it's too open-ended.

Once you chose definite numbers and deadlines, you can plan from there what actions you must take to help you achieve your goals. Example: "I lose 10 pounds in the next 60 days".

Secret 3: Get Moving

To stay healthy, your body needs to move. Exercise is critical, and it can have many positive mental and physical benefits.

Although 60 minutes of exercise each day is optimal, it may not be possible. The important thing is that you get moving. You can do one long workout each day, or you break up your exercise into portions throughout the day.

When you're first starting out, it doesn't matter what you do. You can do little things, such as walking, taking the stairs, taking a stroll around the block for 10-20 minutes during your lunch, or biking to locations instead of driving. Adjust little things, and you'll start to notice a difference.

Make sure that you mix things up when necessary. If you get bored, you're more likely to slack off or start skipping workouts.

Keep things fresh so that you stay motivated and excited about improving your body. You can change your form of exercise or do something as simple as altering your route when running to keep your interest alive!

If you need help thinking of a good workout, go to the internet for suggestions. Ask friends or family about their favorite methods. The options are endless and the ideas are creative.

You can run outside or on a treadmill. You can invest in some equipment for your home, such as weights, a stationary bike, or an elliptical.

You can also always purchase a gym membership. This will give you a place to workout year round, so when the weather gets crummy, you don't have an excuse not to exercise. Most gyms also have a variety of machines and classes that can help keep you motivated.

You can use your television to do programs such as P90X, Insanity, Pilates, or a variety of other home workouts. If you live in a temperate location, you can go hiking. If typical workouts seem boring, take a dance class or do Zumba.

Get up and stretch at work. Give yourself some energy by doing 20 push-ups or jumping jacks. You have to do 50 sit-ups while watching your favorite television show each evening.

You don't have to go to a gym to improve your health. Sometimes it's as a simple as making slight adjustments to the things that you already do every day, such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

I know a person who chooses to golf eighteen holes every day. But instead of using a cart, like most of the other golfers, he walks the course. To ensure that he doesn't hold anyone up who's behind him, he clips along at a fast walking pace.

He probably walks four to five miles a day on the golf course. Then he goes home and walks his dogs for 30 minutes each evening. The amazing thing is that this woman is 73 years old! If he can do all of this at his age, you certainly can too.

When I asked him why he chooses to do so many activities every day, he smiled and replied, "I never want to get the point where I have to stop moving."

If you have trouble staying motivated, consider finding a workout buddy or investing in a personal trainer. These serve as forms of accountability and will help to keep you on the right track.

Ask a friend to take a morning or post-dinner walk with you each day. If you enjoy playing sports, ask around to see if you can join a club or a league.

Again, don't get frustrated if you don't see immediate results. Download apps on your phone that chart your progress. Invest in a pedometer to count your steps. Strive to do more than you did the day before.

Technology continues to evolve and there are new products released every day that can help you track your progress. Even if you can't physically notice the results at first, it's rewarding to see what effect your hard work is having within your body.

Secret 4: Watch What You Eat

Food is vital for life. But to be your healthiest, you must watch what you eat. Not all foods are created equal. A lot of foods contribute to weight gain and poor health.

It can be easier to head to the vending machine or run to the convenience store for snacks than to actually take the time to prepare a quality dinner at home. It can also be costly to purchase healthy foods. However, even though it's time consuming and expensive, it's also absolutely worth it.

Here are some tips to help you make healthy choices, lose weight, and find a plan that works for you.

Secret 5: Cut Out The Crap

Diets can be intimidating, but if it works, go for it. The thought of eating less and saying "no" to negative foods can be overwhelming. Odds are you've been eating these foods for years, have developed unhealthy eating habits, and crave a lot of things that are bad for you.

If you worry about falling off the wagon with a diet plan, start small. Again, it's important to be realistic. It's also important to be fair to yourself. You can't simply stop eating.

If you need a little push toward healthy eating, try cutting out one negative thing and see if you notice any results. Eliminate potato chips, bread with dinner, soda, alcohol, or your late night snack.

Any positive change helps, and each change adds up over time.

To assist yourself in this process, replace something negative with something neutral or positive, such as a glass of water or green tea instead of soda, or a small side salad instead of bread.

Be aware, though, that just because something is healthy does not mean that you should over-do it. As the saying goes – everything in moderation.

Don't eat an entire bag of carrots in one sitting. Don't force yourself to guzzle a gallon of water. Don't eat ten rice cakes in lieu of a snack-size bag of potato chips.

Also, not all "diet" foods or drinks are healthy. Drinking too much diet soda can also have negative effects on your body. It may have less sugar, but it's higher in sodium.

Make small changes. Substitute junk foods and drinks with healthier options. Don't over-do any one particular thing.

Secret 6: Start Your Day Off With The Right Food

Although it can be good to cut out certain elements, you should never cut out breakfast. Breakfast is critical for your energy and metabolism.

Eating a quality breakfast kick starts your metabolism. On the other hand, when you skip breakfast in the morning, it slows your metabolism down.

You should also make sure that you eat foods that will fill you up and help push you through the day, such as proteins. When you're hungry, you tend to feel fatigued. This can lead to overeating. Prevent this chain reaction by eating a good breakfast.

Secret 7: Make A Diet Plan

It's hard to know which diets to trust. There are a lot of "quick fixes" and fad diets out there, but most of them are ineffective.

Avoid crash diets, miracle pills, or anything similar. The best way to lose weight is to eat well and exercise often.

The last thing you want to do is attempt a diet and quit. This will make you feel like a failure and as if you're simply unable to lose weight. Find a diet that works for you and remain steadfast. Everyone is capable of losing weight and being healthier.

You must find a plan that works for you and that you won't abandon when times get hard or temptations arise.

One useful plan is a low-carb diet. The nice thing about low-carb diets is that they present a lot of additional benefits besides weight loss.

When you eat a diet high in proteins and low in carbohydrates and fats, you lower your risk for diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

As I mentioned before, protein fills you up, takes longer to process, and keeps you satiated for longer. This means less unnecessary snacking and more pounds shed!

Low-carb diets are also helpful in getting rid of belly fat, which is notoriously difficult to lose.

When you eat a low-carb diet, you will have to make some sacrifices with your meals. But in the long run, it's simpler than counting calories.

Again, you can replace one food group with another. So, instead of eating two pieces of buttered bread with your dinner, you can ask for a side of vegetables or fruit.

When you go low-carb, focus on what you're eating, instead of what you're missing. Concentrate on how the protein and healthy fats are helping to slim you down and make you feel full.

Some great Health Magazines states: "Protein is doubly essential for making sure you lose fat, not muscle. Your body uses the amino acids in protein to build lean muscle, which not only makes you stronger and more toned but also fries calories even when you're not active—unlike lazy fat."

Also, beware of portion sizes. In this day and age, a typical restaurant "serving" is much too large. At most places, an entre for one could actually serve as an entre for two or three people!
That's a ton of calories for one person to ingest in one sitting!

When you eat at home, try to cut down portion sizes. In general, each food group should be no bigger than a clenched fist. In fact, certain food groups should be smaller, such as carbs and fats.

When you go out to eat, try cutting your plate in half. Take a knife to each food group, and only eat half of each. Or, if you get full before eating the complete half, simply stop eating.

Start taking notice of when you feel full. Many people continue to eat even after they feel "stuffed." This is overeating and over eating leads to weight gain – not to mention discomfort!

It can be particularly difficult to practice self-control when you go out to eat with friends of loved ones. You're having a good time, enjoying yummy food, and you want to eat until it's gone.

You look around and think, "If my spouse/friend can eat a full plate, it is okay for me to do the same." Everyone's bodies are different, though. People get full at different times. Men and women require different amounts of food. Trust your body to tell you what it needs and what it doesn't.

When you start to feel full, and are tempted to keep eating, force yourself to take a "break." Give yourself a few minutes to decide if you REALLY need to keep eating, or if you simply WANT to keep eating. You can always box food up or save it for later.

It's always a nice treat to remember that you have leftovers in the fridge that you can eat for lunch or the next night's dinner.

Another trick you can use to keep yourself from overindulging is to drink one or two glasses of water (or healthy smoothie) when you're hungry and before a meal.

This will help you to distinguish between thirst and hunger. It will also help to fill you up and satiate that "starving" feeling. It can also prevent you from gorging on foods because you feel ravenous.

It can also be helpful to do a little research about the place that you're going to eat so that there are no surprises or you feel the need to break away from your diet. You can also learn which menu items are better for you.

For example, I remember going to a popular chain restaurant with my friends when I was in college. Sometimes we would share appetizers. Sometimes we wouldn't. I later learned that one of them appetizers that I would occasionally order for myself contained over 2,500 calories!

Had I known this at the time, I would have shared that particular appetizer with the entire table, instead of munching away at it by myself!

If you have a difficult time with over-eating, remind yourself that "being healthy is more important in your life". Keep things in perspective. A dish may taste good, but you should always stop when – or before – you feel full.

When you feel "stuffed," this means that you have over-eaten. If you feel this way often, it means that it has become a habit for you. Just like any bad habit, you need to get rid of it if you want to be healthy.

Losing weight and changing your habits takes effort. One thing that can be useful is a journal. You can use this journal to document food choices and exercise routines.

Keep a log of what you've eaten throughout the day. You need to note how these things make you feel. It's also a great way to continue to chart your progress. When you have to write down your choices, it can really illuminate how much you're actually eating, areas that need more work, and areas in which you are thriving.

Drink Water

Your body needs water. Water makes up over 60% of your body. It's helps to boost your metabolism and keeps you hydrated.

A lot of people mistake thirst for hunger. When "hunger" pangs strike, pour yourself one to two glasses of water and see if it helps.

Try to keep water nearby at all times. Buy a 24 pack of bottled water and keep it in the backseat of your car. Invest in a water filter for your fridge. Carry a reusable water bottle in your bag or purse. That way, you'll always been able to quench your thirst.

Give Yourself A Break

Allow yourself to rest and enjoy a treat from time to time. No one's perfect. When you succeed at eating healthy and making good choices, you deserve a reward.

Give yourself at least one day a week in which you do not have to work out. This will help your body to refuel and will ensure that you don't get burned out.

Similarly, if you've been good all day or all week, permit yourself to enjoy something yummy – whether it's a cup of frozen yogurt, a small piece of chocolate, or a glass of wine.

Remember, though, it's called a "treat" for a reason. It's only special (and healthy) if you enjoy it every once in a while.

Reward yourself for your hard work, and you'll be motivated to keep pushing ahead to reach your health goals.

Conclusion

Weight loss and a healthy life style are *choices*. They take consideration, effort, and determination.

Setting goals is good, but you must *continue* setting goals for yourself. The path to have a healthy lifestyle never reaches an end point. Think of the 73 year old person who's still moving and shaking. Don't you want to be that healthy when you reach her age?

Once you've reached your desired weight, your health journey is not complete. Rather, it's an ongoing journey. Now, you must work to maintain the body you've created.

This means that you must continue to make positive food and activity choices.

Surround yourself with people who support you on your journey. If your friend or spouse chooses to work on their health, as well, this can be very helpful.

The bottom line is that no one can make you lose weight. No one can force you to make healthy choices. You have to want to do it for yourself.

You may be of the mindset that you can always start your diet "tomorrow." But each day that goes by is another day in which you are not taking care of yourself. When you're not healthy, you're not living life to the fullest.

Furthermore, by living an unhealthy life, you're increasing your chances of serious health problems down the road. Life is shorter than you think. Make the most of it by doing everything you can to make your body healthy and strong.

When you feel good inside, you'll feel even better on the outside. You'll like your appearance. You'll be more confident and happy. You'll have more energy to live the life you want, take care of family or loved ones, and be more productive in the work place.

You'll be proud of your abilities. It's a great feeling to be able to run up the stairs, pick up a child without feeling terribly stiff, or keep up with your friends and family members when walking.

We've all looked back at photos and witnessed ourselves during unhealthy times. When we see these photos, we want flinch and burn these images. We say, "Oh my gosh, my face was so fat," or "I don't want anyone to see this because it's embarrassing."

Don't let these images drag you down. Instead, use these images as inspiration to better yourself. Create a healthier, happier you – inside and out.

The important thing is that you find your motivation, regardless of what it is. Find a reason to start taking care of you. Perhaps you're content with your weight, but you would like to increase your level of activity so that you stay spritely and vibrant.

Find your inspiration, and get started with your health journey. If some diets work, so sticks with it.

For more information and tips, be sure to check out our newsletter! Thanks for reading!

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