

*In Weight... Lost! Dr. Nuesse dives deep into the broken system of weight management in the developed world. He ties his own clinical experience working in weight loss with concepts from traditional philosophy.*

## **Weight... Lost!**

**Changing perceptions on losing weight, getting healthy, and living happy**

By Matthew Nuesse D.C. CME

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# WEIGHT... LOST!



*Changing perceptions  
on losing weight,  
getting healthy, and  
living happy*



**MATTHEW NUESSE D.C. CME**

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## Introduction

So, what exactly is the point of this writing? Why should you read this instead of the thousands of other books on weight loss, health improvement, etc.? I understand your time is valuable, so I am going to address the why before I even start to address the what's. The point of this writing is to inform people about what it takes to lose weight and the importance of being mentally ready to embark on the weight-loss journey. To answer question two, I certainly feel that this writing is going to fill a huge need. I believe that people need transparency in the minefield that is the weight loss industry, along with a dose of reality. There are things that I have learned through years of research and experience (seeing thousands of clients over almost two decades). I want to use this knowledge to convey some troublingly overlooked (in my opinion) facts about losing weight and, more importantly, keeping it off, all while feeling happy and content. Believe this if you believe nothing else that I will say: This is not a pipe dream. Losing weight naturally, keeping it off, and being happy with how you are living your life is fairly easy to achieve if the right plan is utilized. As you will see as you read on, the key is having the right plan for YOU. This writing is not a comprehensive weight loss plan, however. In my opinion, a plan must fit an individual in order to truly be successful. To that end, the full answer to the second question is that you certainly should not ONLY read this. Read and learn as much as you can from many different sources, and only start the process of losing weight, transforming your health, etc. when a plan really “clicks” with you. In keeping with

the theme of transparency, hopefully now you have at least enough information to decide if you want to continue reading.

First, let us make no mistake. I do not want to waste anyone's precious time. My focus is helping people lose weight. This is not always the same as "eating healthy" or "eating clean." Intentionally trying to metabolize body fat is more complicated than that. Certainly, there will be crossovers between these and other concepts. Eating good, clean food—fruits, vegetables, and lean meat—is going to be part of losing weight in a healthy way. But, to use one of the more tired cliché, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Intentionally trying to get the human body to metabolize fat and keeping to a schedule that will allow for that process to happen over an extended period of time is just a bit more complicated than "just eat less and exercise more." One thing that I am fully confident in is that I know why weight-loss programs fail and I know why they succeed. I know how to succeed, what to do, and when to do it. But knowing what to do and doing it are often different things. There is a major challenge with living in modern society while maintaining a healthy weight. People are becoming more and more conditioned to believe that there is a magic pill or a miracle cure for being overweight. Either this or they are becoming more and more lazy and "believing" in these miracle cures as simple self-narcotization. It feels better when you are "trying" to improve. They don't believe it will actually work, but they take out their wallets and lay down their hard-earned money anyway. And the vulturous companies eat it up. Pills, potions, shots, classes, gurus, meetings—none of them can fix the underlying issue on their own. They may be useful as part of a plan, but a comprehensive plan will no doubt be needed. For

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reasons we will discuss, it is much more complicated than many may lead you to believe.

At its core, what is losing weight really about? Is it really about lowering blood pressure or controlling blood sugar? Is it really about fitting into a dress or bathing suit? Yes, and not completely! At its core, losing weight is about living a healthier and happier life overall. This is the whole meaning of life. The most important asset anyone will ever have is their time. And having more of it and enjoying it more are the keys to actually “living.” Unfortunately, in my experience, struggles with weight are the number one issue that people face with getting to this place of “living.” That is certainly not to say that everyone who is overweight is unhappy. Of course, there are countless people who are not at their ideal weight and are perfectly content. Cheers to them. Congratulations! But we are not talking about these individuals (I have no idea why they would be reading this anyway). I am speaking to those who feel trapped in their own bodies, don’t like looking in the mirror, have extensive health problems, etc., that can be attributed to their weight. In my experience, being overweight is the number one thing that makes people feel that they are not living life to the fullest. At the end of this, you don’t have to do what I say. You don’t have to use any of my methods or even research my programs specifically, but hopefully you will want to do SOMETHING. And hopefully that something will be what fits YOU... for LIFE.

There are fundamental truths to living healthy and at a healthy weight. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on how you look at it, these truths can be difficult to hear. We are almost programmed today to want things quickly and easily. We crave shortcuts and

results with minimal effort. We want our food to be cheap and filling and our packages to arrive the next day (sometimes the same day). We have become spoiled. We are victims of our own success and status. We are victims of living in a world where comfort isn't just attainable; it is the norm. This comfort is a product of the rapid advancement of technology and industrialization and, for the most part, in my opinion, is a positive thing. It is, however, a double-edged sword and can lead to people falling into what Nietzsche would call "decadence." This concept basically means the erosion of what made a civilization great (hard work, self-reliance, etc.) and a shift towards apathy and gluttony. This may sound harsh, but I think if we all take a step back, we can see how Nietzsche's concept of decadence rings true for many in western culture. Me telling you later on that real effort and sacrifices may be required to lose weight, get healthy, and maintain your healthy weight for the rest of your life may then seem off-putting (although empirically, I feel like anyone can see that it makes sense). With health and weight loss, however, sometimes we just don't want to hear it. Fair warning, then. There will be some of that.

At the same time, we do have the science, knowledge, and understanding to make the process of living at a healthy weight manageable in a convenient way for literally anyone. We can also work smarter while working harder (I never understood why these two are consistently thought of as mutually exclusive). In order to be successful long-term, we need to use science and combine it with an individual's lifestyle, body type, motivation, and preferences to come up with a "plan" that does not feel like "a diet." For the vast majority of people, diets just don't work long

term. You can find some short-term success by counting calories, taking a pill, or even starving yourself, but these are always short-term plays. They never lead to a sustained healthy lifestyle or living at a healthy weight. These are strategies that have no long-term foresight. To get off the rollercoaster of losing and regaining weight, we need to start playing chess instead of checkers. We need to think of long-term strategies from the start, not once we are approaching the goal.

The writing contained hereafter will be primarily directed at those who do want a more permanent option for weight loss—those who have yo-yoed in the past or have tried and failed numerous times throughout their lives. This is my intended audience.

It is very rare for someone to go from gaining weight over an extended period of time (their entire life) and not watching what they eat or exercising, etc., to immediately taking on the changes needed to reduce weight and get healthy permanently. Yo-yoing is almost a pre-requisite. Most people who feel that they are ready to lose weight and get healthy after a lifetime of not being concerned with their weight fall into the trap of thinking that the solution is in a bottle, starvation diet, an extreme exercise program, etc. And why not? These options are generally cheap, simple, and promoted as miracle cures for obesity. Throughout my career, it has been exceedingly rare for me to encounter someone who is ready to take on the responsibility of the changes needed for permanent weight loss without having been burned by fad diets multiple times in the past (although admittedly, it has happened). Hopefully, for some, this writing can bring awareness to this trend and then prevent them from falling into this pattern.

More likely, however, this is for those who just don't want to be taken advantage of again.

None of this is to say that wanting to lose weight “quickly” or “temporarily” is inherently “wrong.” Honestly, people should do and be allowed to do whatever they want. For example, if you go into the process with a clear mind and only want to drop a couple of sizes to fit into your wedding dress and are completely unconcerned with what happens with your weight afterwards, then fine. You are an adult, and you get to choose what is best for YOU. It is the false expectations and promises that I feel are so inherently dangerous. Just to be abundantly clear, this type of short-term weight loss will not be covered in any great detail going forward.

Remember that the best plan will always be the one that is best for you. The plan that fits your lifestyle, body type, and preferences will always trump a well-thought-out and scientifically sound plan that you won't stick to. This plan beats the newest plan that all the celebrities are talking about in Hollywood and even the one your best friend lost 50 pounds doing. Later on, I will give suggestions and my best advice for healthy weight loss, but I will stop short of describing a full “plan.” After working with clients for almost two decades on weight management, I know that the cookie-cutter “just do this and it works” approach just doesn't work. This is a huge pitfall, with a lot of “nutrition experts” that have “science” on their side and expect clients to “just stick with the program.” To illustrate this further, before anyone can begin one of our programs, we require a fairly thorough screening process. We would rather not take someone on as a client if we feel that the likelihood of success

with our program would be low. Trying and “failing” can be even more destructive than doing nothing at all. I certainly encourage anyone interested to take our screening questionnaire for themselves by referring to the links in the resources page at the back of this book.

Before we get too far along, let’s talk just briefly about what we actually need to do if we are to win at healthy weight loss. Do we need to deal with stress better? Do we need to learn to distract ourselves from cravings? The simplest answer to “What do we need to do?” is that we need to simply control the action of putting too much junk food into our mouths. That is it! Obviously, this is much, much easier said than done. The obesity epidemic is still worsening, so taking this action consistently must be a complicated matter. Mental retraining helps. Getting a distracting hobby can help. The reality, however, is that we gain and lose weight based on an action, not based on a mental state. The enemy we are fighting is the action of overeating. Defeat that enemy, and the game is won. Again, this is not simple, but I feel that it is important to note that pragmatically, action, not emotion, is what truly matters. Mental retraining simply makes positive actions more likely and consistent.

Do me one favor from the onset, please. Do not feel guilty about the past. Maybe you lived a gluttonous life of excess, or maybe you just fell away from being concerned about your diet or exercise for a short while. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle. The truth is also that the past is the past. Feeling guilty or ashamed of things that happened in the past does us no good. This is not to say we should forget about the past. Certainly not! We should learn from it, just not feel bad about it. Let go of the

negative feelings about the past. The past is the past, and the future is yet to be written. You write the future with the actions that you take in the present. If you want the past to become the future, don't change a thing. If you want a different future, understand that changes will be needed. You have already taken one action by starting this reading. The win or lose question will be "Are you ready to take further action?"

## Success and Failure

### What is SUCCESS?

We first need to define what success is. Actually, “we” don’t need to define success. “You” need to define success. What success looks like can be vastly different from individual to individual. You may want to get to a certain number on the scale, fit into a particular outfit, lower your blood pressure, feel more confident, etc. I cannot be the one to dictate to you what success will look like. What I can definitively say is that success, as it relates to this writing, is going to be defined very clearly. Success, in the grandest sense, equals getting to a healthy weight where you feel comfortable and then being able to live at that weight without feeling like you are “dieting.” In my offices, only once a client reaches this point do I consider them successful. By this definition, “success” is rare in the weight-loss industry. By this definition, “success” may seem difficult or even impossible. Fortunately, one concept does not lead to the other. Just because something is rarely achieved does not mean that it is impossible. As I mentioned earlier, and we will discuss later in more detail, the key to success, at least in part, is the selection and execution of a plan that fits you.

Know this: weight loss, by nature, is a game of diminishing returns. The more fat you lose, the less fat you have to lose. So, by that logic, you SHOULD see a decrease in daily, weekly, and monthly weight loss as time progresses. This means that you are doing it correctly. This means that you are tapped into metabolizing body fat and that you are running out of body fat to

get rid of. If during the first month you became accustomed to losing about 3 pounds per week, in month two, you may need to adjust your expectations to only see a 2 pound per week loss, and so on. This is a good thing! You want to lose fat and not muscle! You actually want to see a slowdown in weight loss over time.

So, let's now imagine what that success might look like for you, and then I will share some stories of other successes. To do this, we will pick an arbitrary start date. Let's say you start a weight-loss journey on May 1. Typically, we see clients who are extremely motivated, maybe have tried many things in the past, and are sick of yo-yoing. When we first evaluate if a program will work for a client, we initially look for this motivation. We don't need a client to be knowledgeable or have the best habits, but we do need them to be motivated. A motivated individual on a sound plan that fits their physiology and lifestyle is an extraordinary thing. They become like an unstoppable superhero. They take the appropriate actions, and they are consistent. When this type of client starts with us, they will immediately start metabolizing body fat. The combination of natural appetite suppressants, metabolism boosters, a sound eating pattern, and stick-to-itiveness (due to the motivation) allows our clients to pretty easily metabolize fat in a way where they see weight loss on a near-daily basis. In my opinion, if you are not seeing steady weight loss over the first two weeks of a new program, then, quite simply, you are on the wrong program. The only other explanation that has any credibility is that you are not following the program closely enough. But this would also simply mean that it is not the right program for you.

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So, you start on May 1, and you are losing a little weight every day. By the end of the first week, you are down 4 pounds. By the end of the second, you are down 7 and feel like you are on cruise control. Eventually, one of two things is going to happen. I want you to be prepared because these are expected and are part of any weight loss process. Either your body will naturally hit a plateau, or you will have some event or occasion where you will stray from the plan. Let's attack each issue individually.

Let us say that on June 1, you leave for vacation. You are going on a cruise. This is obviously not an ideal situation when you are trying to lose weight, and you realize it. You are fully aware that working the program will be a struggle while on a cruise ship. That is certainly not to say that it cannot be done. (Never let anyone tell you that something simply can't be done. Everything is achievable. What may need to change is the effort level.) But the vast majority of clients that I have worked with will take these situations as "time off." Up to this point, you have lost 15 pounds, however, and you don't want to unwind all of your progress. If maintaining is the goal and it is honestly what you want, then a successful vacation would entail not gaining (or losing) any weight from the time you leave until the time you come back. If you leave for your trip down 15 pounds, you want to come back down 15 pounds (give or take 1–2 pounds to account for water weight). You do this by following the parameters of whatever program you are on "most of the time" (we give our clients stricter guidelines than this). You take the products that you were using, eat the way that was working, etc., with "off meals" every so often. You may alternatively decide that you want to be completely free of whatever plan you are on for that week,

no matter the cost. In this case, you should expect a weight gain (not all of the weight but a significant increase—let's say 5 pounds). In this case, this 5-pound increase would constitute a 1/3 regain of the weight you lost over the first month. So, the realm of viable options in this scenario ranges from:

1. continuing to lose weight and body fat as you were throughout the first month because you make no alterations to the program. Again, these instances are rare, but we have had clients who have achieved this. It is simply a decision put into action. It requires fierce motivation.

2. You follow the program you are on “close enough” so that you don't regain any weight from the time you leave until the time you return.

3. You decide that regaining the weight is not as important as having freedom from whatever program you are doing. In my opinion, again, this third option would likely mean that you have not selected a plan that best fits you.

Whichever you decide, what is most important is that you go into the situation with your eyes wide open. Be ok with the scale not moving or even moving up based on the actions that you take. Don't feel defeated or ready to quit. Losing, maintaining, or gaining should be expected results and therefore should not blindsides you. You have to be a realist and understand that certain actions WILL have certain outcomes. So, using the arbitrary dates from above, you are down 15 pounds on June 1, and then by June 7 (end of the vacation), you are either: a. down another 3 pounds (18 total), b. still down 15 pounds total, or c. down 10 pounds total.

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The alternative thing that will eventually happen is more nefarious. Eventually, despite your best efforts, your body will stop losing weight. We call these periods plateaus. Before all of the air (that hopefully we have added) comes out of the balloon, let me assure you that these are always temporary and are a perfectly normal (and expected) part of the weight-loss process. These plateaus, however, can really mess with a person's mind because there is seemingly nothing that causes them. You are doing exactly what you have been doing, which has been working, and your body decides to revolt. It's like Einstein's definition of insanity, but in reverse. Again, you need to be mentally prepared for this to occur. There will be no warning, no trigger. Your body is a machine that is built to perform in an environment much different from the one we currently reside in. Thousands of years ago, the only reason we would need to tap into stored body fat was if we had a particularly harsh winter or a famine. During these times, if the body was losing stored fat, it was a signal that you were starving. Today, we never run out of food. It is accessible literally 24/7. Our bodies do not know this, however, and when we intentionally try to lose fat, the reaction from our body is still one of starvation. I feel like it goes without saying, but the human body does not want to starve to death. The defense mechanism that is built in to prevent this is the stopping of fat metabolism and, in most cases, weight loss altogether. In this scenario, you could go several days without a weight drop, even though you feel like you are doing everything right. If you are unprepared for this, it can end up being very mentally deflating. According to the arbitrary example above, you have lost 15 pounds by June 1. From June 1 to June 5, you don't lose anything (maybe you even gain a

pound). Rest assured that these natural plateaus cannot last if you are continuing to do what was working in the past. A permanent plateau would violate the first law of thermodynamics, where the energy being used by your body to maintain its existence would be greater than what you are giving it (food) without any use of stored energy (fat). Plateaus are temporary speed bumps on the road to a healthy weight loss. I certainly understand, however, that when they occur, it can seem like they take eons to get past. This can certainly be mentally taxing. Sticking with it eventually works. But changes (either temporary or permanent) can be made to speed up the process. We call these plateau breakers. Generally speaking, these plateau breakers are just about getting the scale moving to keep the client's mind in a positive place. Simply sticking with it almost always eventually leads to continued results. Negativity bias, that is, the tendency to overvalue a negative event in comparison with a positive event, can be destructive during these periods. Make sure you clearly recognize all of the positives and value them accordingly.

So, what typically happens when you hit a plateau? Well, first, you probably get frustrated. You may cuss the plan you are on and think it is a scam. You may cry. You may scream. All of these reactions are natural, and all are acceptable. What is NOT acceptable is quitting. A well-thought-out, scientifically verifiable plan that was working is not a scam. Your body/metabolism is not broken. You are just going through a challenging time. How you respond to these challenges ultimately determines how successful you will be. Here is where the wheat gets separated from the chaff. This is the genesis of the yo-yo diet. Quitting here, because it is tough, leads one down the path of bouncing from "diet" to "diet,"

looking for the answer that will not have these slow periods. They quit just when they are about to unlock greatness if they persevere. Whatever the reason, these flat spots in weight loss are good. Going through them and coming out the other side with more positive results helps to solidify in the individual's mind that what they are doing is working and is actually a new way of life.

So, if you do not quit after a vacation, holidays, or plateau, one way or another, your weight loss will start again. And while this weight loss may slow down as time goes on due to the natural reduction in body fat, you will continue to lose. And then you hit another bump, and you continue to press on. Eventually, your mind can accept these slowdowns without going through the “freak out” process. This, then, just becomes a way of life. Only then can we truly consider someone “successful.” And even then, success is elusive because of the world we live in. Temptation has a way of creeping in when you least expect it. Weight management is a continuous battle. I will give a preliminary definition of success as just continuing to fight the battle (more on this later). In that sense, true success is never really attained. You simply continue to live “successfully.”

### **Failure and Success**

At this point, let's talk about failure (yes, this early on). First, we need to define what failure even is. I have heard from past clients what it means for them to “fail.” In my opinion, it is often a very low threshold that they describe needing to meet before they consider the process a failure. I hope here to define failure differently. The definition I am speaking of is when someone is beginning a weight-loss journey and is doing well, losing weight,

feeling good, and then something happens. They attend a wedding, they go on vacation, or the holidays hit. They then CHOSE to go away from the plan that was working so well and enjoy typical wedding, vacation, or holiday foods. To be crystal clear, we are speaking about junky, high-calorie foods that are probably incongruent with losing body fat predictably. If they are on a plan that fits their lifestyle, that they are actually enjoying, and that results in regular, predictable weight loss (like the ones we typically recommend for clients), these periods can be difficult. These times can be difficult because they get used to seeing those regular weight losses. They get used to feeling good and feeling successful. Here is where this misconstrued (in my opinion) definition of failure can come in. Potentially, and I would dare to say predictably, in these circumstances, weight loss will grind to a halt. Instead of seeing small daily losses (we like to shoot for some body fat metabolism that shows up on the scale nearly every day), they see the same number or potentially even (dun, dun, dun... in my best horror voice) an increasing number. In some cases, with some people, this will feel like a failure (negativity bias once again). The thought process of “I’ve screwed it all up now!” or “I blew it!” may creep in. What I have noticed is that this happens most typically with people in two distinct situations.

1. Those who have not been prepared for this. This one is huge. From the beginning, if the goal is permanent and lasting weight loss, if we are talking about health—living longer and happier—then this issue can be pervasive. Weight loss (if this truly IS the goal), as stated, is a game of chess. We are thinking FROM THE

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BEGINNING about what IS GOING to happen in the future, three, four, or five steps ahead. Of course, the present is important, but we need to be informed and prepared for inevitable situations like these (vacations, holidays, etc.). From the beginning, we teach clients that lifelong weight loss plans have to include periods where we gain a little weight. We can't lose weight indefinitely, obviously. Every client I have ever worked with, no matter how wildly successful in their ultimate weight loss number, regains weight (dun, dun, dun... Ok, I'll stop). This does not mean that we accept cycling weight in huge increments. Here we are talking about gaining and losing 5–10 pounds, which is completely reasonable for the given examples above (holidays, vacations, etc.). I am particularly susceptible to this during the holidays. My wife has a large family, and November–December is “party season” for them. Food is a plenty. We're talking pies (my favorite is pecan), turkey (obviously), Christmas cookies, etc. This food is not the enemy. It is not “wrong” to eat it. You should not be ashamed if you do. It is a choice. The action of eating differently from how you are to lose weight comes with pretty predictable outcomes (weight stagnation/gain). Predictability is great! Being aware of this is of supreme importance. I have heard from a lot of clients in the past that simply understanding this concept can make it easier to choose to avoid these foods in situations where they traditionally would have just adopted the “awe screw it” attitude. If the program does not inform you FROM THE BEGINNING of this

situation, then I am informing you now. Weight gain is a normal part of the process.

2. Those who have dieted multiple times in the past and are accustomed to “quitting” when things get tough or once they break, for any time, from their program parameters seem to also be particularly susceptible to this misguided feeling of “failure.” Yo-yo dieting naturally breeds this into individuals. Trying something with halfhearted intentions or without having a plan that truly fits you makes quitting super-duper easy. Quitting then makes subsequent quitting on the next program even easier, so there is an unfortunate snowball effect. Indeed, quitting becomes easier and easier, and if you do find a program that would truly work, you may quit on it simply due to this habit. This situation, then, is particularly insidious, as “not following through” with the commitment to lose weight, get healthy, whatever, becomes ingrained in a person. It simply becomes the norm. This also, from my experience, seems to be the norm. If it becomes a trained response, not an innate one (as I believe), then it can be untrained. To some effect, the process becomes similar to the example above (not being prepared from the start). Again, from the beginning, the expectation must be set to accept occasional weight loss stalls/gains. In this case, I typically also make an additional effort to explain that what the client is about to undertake, if they so choose, is different from what they have done in the past. There is an acceptance (or not) of this, and an arrangement including accountability must be

established. Accountability, by no means, means shame. There should never be shame. Shame is completely counterproductive to the goal, and we only want to implement advice or techniques that further the goal of weight loss and health improvement. Accountability, with only mutual acceptance, can be extremely effective in achieving these goals. Obviously, accountability can only be effective if the process is well understood and respected on both sides. This is certainly not to say that this list of literally two is complete or that these are the only two instances where individuals can feel like failures. These are simply the two situations that I have encountered most often where clients use this definition of “failure.” Others may just get overwhelmed emotionally, have a true psychological condition predisposing them to these types of feelings, or any other number of individual reasons.

With all of this being said, I would like to formally ask to redefine “failure.” I think that the concept of “failing” or “failure” is valid, useful, and needs to be understood. Failure is not gaining weight. Failure is not eating “what you’re not supposed to.” It’s not any of these empirically temporary situations. These are mere speedbumps. True “failure” is allowing these situations to cause the action of quitting on a perfectly good overall plan. This presupposes that the person is on the right plan for them. This cannot be overstated. It is certainly not a failure if someone quits doing something that is unhealthy, unsustainable, or just generally doesn’t fit into the person’s long-term lifestyle. Quitting one of these “diets” is actually an insightful and future headache relieving move. Hopefully, this is recognized sooner rather than

later. True failure, then, is moving along a weight loss journey, having success, liking the process, learning how to make the process fit into day-to-day life, and then hitting one of these speedbumps and consequently throwing it all away. That is my definition of failure, as difficult as it may be to hear for some. My definition does not even encompass those who “take breaks” from their particular programs. There is nothing wrong with taking breaks in the weight loss process from time to time, either due to a life event, to avoid burnout, or for any other number of valid reasons. And any reason that an individual comes up with is a valid reason if they come to it with the honest idea of getting whatever life event in order and then resuming. This would be better than trying to push through while not following through with commitments in the program and then feeling the need to stop or take a break. This can breed immense frustration. This is not a failure. This is a strategy in a lifelong plan. We take this “break” process so seriously that we have put together maintenance programs that we often have our clients partake in along the way if life throws them a curveball during the weight loss process (or if they simply decide that a break is best for them). Therefore, the only true definition of failure in weight loss is completely quitting a solid plan. But unfortunately, failures do happen, and they happen all too often.

Conversely, let’s briefly define success. Does success mean losing weight? Well, kind of. Certainly, losing weight is 99.9% of all individuals’ main goal when making the attempt. In my opinion, however, success cannot simply be defined as reaching a target number. Again, as stated earlier, there is no end to the battle that is weight loss/maintenance in life. To that end, can anyone

ever truly say that they were successful, or are we always on a journey without an end? Well, if success is the true opposite of failure, then I feel an acceptable definition of success is losing weight, and once you get there, you are much healthier and no longer feel like you are on a “diet.” The last part of that definition is of particular importance. With our clients, I really hammer home the point that eventually one must no longer feel like they are “dieting” if they have any chance of maintaining a weight loss long-term. No one, not me, not the person with the strongest willpower in the world, is going to do something, purely by choice, day after day, that they hate. And make no mistake, people hate (as they should) “diets.” With that being said, I think that we can have a definition of success that is achievable but involves both a physical and a mental change. In my experience, people get way too focused on the physical side and underestimate how important the mental change is. If we use this definition, then we are at a point where every diet/program that someone undertakes either absolutely fails, absolutely succeeds, or is abandoned because it wasn’t vetted properly before starting. Again, one of the main purposes of this writing is to help eliminate the first issue.

So, to insulate ourselves from failing, we must:

1. Have a plan that we understand fully.
2. Have a plan that fits your lifestyle.
3. Understand that weight fluctuations are common and that gaining weight temporarily is not the end of the world.

The main issue isn’t feeling the sense that you failed but instead how the concept of feeling like you are a failure makes

you act. Failure is simply the reality in many cases, and a lack of planning (not having a plan), unrealistic goals, expecting a “miracle cure,” etc., inevitably lead to failure. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Again, it is important not to fail because failure breeds resentment and an attitude of “I just can’t do it, my metabolism is shot, I’m too old, etc.” (none of which are ever true). The truth is that failure or success is almost 100% dependent on what is between one’s own ears, not metabolism, gender, or age.

## **Goals**

Ultra-specific weight goals suck. But we have to have them because that is generally what a client wants. Doctors have BMI (which is fatally flawed, but that is a discussion for another time), trainers have body fat percentage, and brides have dress size, but everyone has weight as a goal in one sense or another. It’s fine, I guess. We have had to adjust our programs to incorporate estimations for how much weight an individual can lose. And this used to not be the case. When I was first starting out helping people lose weight, I was typically seeing individuals (patients) who were significantly compromised in their health (sick) due to a disease process that could at least in part be attributed to excess weight. With these individuals, I would implore them to lose weight in a healthy way, slowly and steadily, over time, but I tried not to focus on the weight. The goal was to lower blood pressure, reduce cancer risk, take pressure off of the knees and back, etc. Getting to a specific weight goal was not nearly as important as improving health. I believe that long-term weight goals are as unimportant now as I felt they were then. But WEIGHT LOSS is

what the market wants, so achieving a specific weight is what we have to provide while working on a client's mindset behind the scenes so they can come to a point where they no longer have to be ruled over by their weight. Weight loss ultimately means fat loss anyway. Weight loss and improving health end up being one in the same if done correctly.

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung once stated that “unattainability is no counter argument against the ideal. Ideals are merely signposts, never the goal.” If we take Jung's statement and apply it to goal-setting when it comes to weight loss, the goals actually become much less important. I agree, for the most part, with his sentiment. Setting long-term weight loss goals can be counterproductive, especially if they are missed. Who cares if you step on that scale one day and the liquid crystals line up in just the right way to form the number you were hoping for? Weight is simply the force acting on you by the acceleration of gravity. It's a way to label objects of different masses. It isn't arbitrary, but the units of measurement are not even standardized (pounds, kilos, etc.). It's only a number. To Jung (and to me), weight—and any other technical measurement (waist measurement, BMI, etc.)—are not goals; they are indicators (signposts) that what you are doing is working (or not). They are useful pieces of information, as they can boost your confidence or help you make decisions about changes that are needed. They are not technically goals, however, because what we are talking about is lifelong health and weight maintenance. There is no end, no goal, until death, if maintenance is factored in. This is true for me, for you, for Arnold Schwarzenegger, etc. Getting your mind around this fact could be

seen as the ultimate “goal.” The “goal” then becomes the acceptance of never actually reaching a “goal.”

What about short-term number goals to help with motivation? Well... maybe. Some individuals respond well to short-term, concise goals, and some feel overwhelmed or defeated if they miss the target. Remember how strong a motivator negative results can be. It is important to know which type of individual you are. In our offices, we have a system to figure this out on a client’s first day. (Our app and website are also equipped with a questionnaire that a potential client must pass before they can start one of our programs.) Mini goals can be an important part of the process for some. Make no mistake, these mini goals are all about keeping the client focused. They really don’t serve any other pragmatic purpose (other than maybe informing us of changes needed). Whether a certain weight goal is hit, surpassed, or missed will never matter to the long-term process of healthy weight achievement and maintenance. Remember that the end “goal” is not a weight number or pants size; it is the ability to easily live in a healthy way to maintain a healthy weight. If these mini goals do help you with motivation, then they should look something like this:

1. In one month, I am going to participate in my first 5k. My goal is to lose enough weight and get into good enough shape to be able to complete the entire race, even if I have to walk most of it.
2. I am going on vacation in six weeks, and I would like to lose 10 pounds by then because then I would be able to fit into this cute bathing suit I used to wear.

3. My BMI would be in the “normal” range if I lost 50 pounds. I think that losing about 5 pounds per month is reasonable based on my lifestyle. In order to know that I am on track, I would like to lose 5 pounds by the end of this month.

Again, these are just simple examples. Each individual is going to have their own particular wants and desires when it comes to goals. The key to these short-term goals is to use them as a target, something to shoot for, but **DO NOT** get rattled if the target is missed. Keep in mind that the purpose of these short-term goals is not an end point but a “signpost,” as Jung would say. Whether they are hit or not shouldn’t factor into your decision to continue. The exception to this would be if no progress was being made at all. At this point, refer back to our discussion on selecting the right plan for you.

### **Lifelong Battle**

It seems, then, abundantly clear at this point that losing weight and then maintaining a healthy weight for life will be an ongoing and perpetual process—a lifelong battle. And the battle is, and will be, real. While I obviously don’t necessarily ascribe to the concept of “food addiction,” we can draw some parallels to overeating and other substances that people can get addicted to. There is, however, one large and glaring difference between overeating and abusing drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc. We have to eat. We cannot quit eating (although with some “diets” people unfortunately try). You can’t give food up. You can certainly modify what you are eating and give certain things up, but you can’t quit food entirely. I would be ok with someone saying that

they are sugar addicted, or even more specifically, addicted to soda, crackers, pasta, etc., but not food in general. In order for the addiction model to serve any purpose, there must be a mechanism for human beings to completely abstain from the substance, or habit, in question. It only serves as a crutch and an excuse if we label something as addicting that cannot be given up. So be addicted to pasta, soda, chips, pretzels, etc., but not food in general. If someone truly believes they are “addicted” to one of these (or any other junk food)—I still don’t like using the term, but I am willing to accept it for the sake of making this point—then they can break that addiction through abstinence.

I also don’t think that this type of black-and-white abstinence or prohibition is necessary or even the best way to go about reaching and then maintaining a healthy weight. Again, I am ok with it just to illustrate a point. Certainly, substitution is preferred. Abstinence, in my experience, fails in the long term. We need to lead our lives and not feel deprived. If a client truly expects to transform their life for good and has one thing they just can’t give up, then we must find a substitute for this item or not proceed at all. Fortunately, we live in a world where low-calorie or low-carb options can be delicious. Below are just a few of my preferred popular options with their “unhealthy” counterpoints.

Coke – Green Cola, Zevia

Pasta – Miracle Noodles, Palmini products

Cheese – Kernel Seasons Sprinkles

Chocolate – Hershey’s Zero Sugar, RX Sugar

Many more are available on the Brand NUE mobile app (of course).

Saying that there are an almost infinite number of suitable substitutes for common junk food items that people typically miss when trying to lose weight does not mean that the lifelong battle that we are talking about is one with this single revelation. Instead, it further highlights the fact that losing weight will be a struggle. No, there is no silver bullet. No pill, no injection, no low-cal food is going to fix the problem of obesity by itself. In order to “fix” the problem, this must be fully understood.

By nature, and more accurately, due to progress that is counter to nature (depending on how you define nature)—industrialization—weight loss can have no end goal. We must eat, and due to the industrialization of the food industry, food is more abundant than ever and more nutritionally devoid than ever.

So, you are not addicted to food. I would argue that you are not even addicted to sugar or chips or whatever (not in the traditional sense anyway). What you are is programmed by nature to want to consume these foods because they provide a great energy source, and you live in a world where they exist in abundance.

So, weight loss will be a lifelong battle—or perhaps a more appropriate word would be war. You can certainly lose some battles along the way. You can slip up on a program because you got sick, you went on vacation, it was the holidays, or any other reason. Losing a battle stinks, but you can regroup and proceed forward. You only lose the war if you truly fail, as defined earlier.

This I can promise with a relative level of certainty: the easier you make the process of losing weight and maintaining it, the fewer battles you will lose (I hate even using the term “lose” in this way). There is no heroism in asceticism. But even “easy”

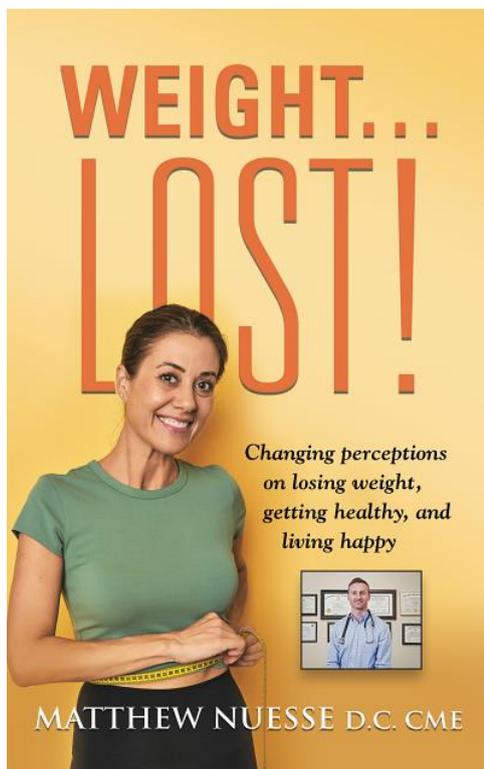
plans will have stumbling points. Move on afterwards! More appropriately, move forward! Lose a battle, stumble, whatever, but don't "fail." Don't quit. Don't let the feelings of discouragement affect your actions to this extreme. Unfortunately, negative outcomes tend to affect us more than positive ones do. If we have a negative experience, it resonates with us much more powerfully than a positive experience does. This is the basis for negativity bias. If we see weight go up (even just once), it hurts more than the joy of seeing weight go down for several days in a row.

We have to keep in mind that gaining weight is not bad. It is certainly not the end of the world or a reason to throw in the towel. I mention this again because it truly is the most pervasive and mendacious force that exists when trying to lose weight. And this goes for gimmicky, unhealthy strategies and even the most well-thought-out strategies. The battle cannot be completely eliminated. To be successful when so many are not is going to require a level of sacrifice. The level just needs to be as minimal as possible to give it the best chance for long-term success. There is absolutely no reason to make the process harder than needed. Do not select a program (and there are a ton out there) that is like driving your car and never being able to shift past third gear. They may help you lose weight temporarily. They may even be easy to follow. But are they the best, most efficient, and, just as importantly, the program that fits YOU?

Weight loss is, and will be, a lifelong battle. Even once traditional "goals" are reached, the process will continue. If you are going to be on this journey for life, you had better be aware of it from the beginning and have strategies and protocols in place

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that help you lose weight very efficiently AND are convenient to do indefinitely.



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