

Say Goodbye to Yo-Yo Dieting

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One would have to live under a rock to miss the media attention about fat, food and fitness. Those who are overweight have been educated, informed, scolded, cajoled and shamed in the name of helping, usually by well-intentioned professionals who attempt to apply the medical model to issues much more complex.

I admit, I was relieved when the professionals came to the foregone conclusion that people who had a lifelong struggle with their weight had a problem related to their biology and Fen-Phen was the solution. I tried it, and developed congestive heart failure as a result. Another example of a cure that is worse than the original problem.

A couple of years ago the National Institute of Health came out with a report suggesting that people above a certain weight should consider weight loss surgery. I did that in 1978, became very ill and had to have the surgery reversed after seven years of misery. In both situations I regained the weight lost, plus some. Supposedly the procedure is safer and more effective now, but I know the risks, and hear the horror stories from those for who, it did not work. There are many other stories with the same theme: restrictive dieting or procedures resulting in weight loss, and the subsequent weight gain when the restrictions are removed. Hence, the life story of a yo-yo dieter.

For those who are ready to get off the roller coaster, there is good news and bad news. The bad news is that there are no simple solutions and you will have to make changes in your life to become more healthy. The good news is that many have discovered a way to become more healthy regardless of their current size by replacing restrictions with self care that leads to better choices and improved fitness.

Self care, as opposed to the traditional self loathing that often precedes dieting, requires that we become willing to shift our focus from the numbers on the scales and clothing tags to other indicators of health and fitness. It requires that we become interested in being more healthy, rather than weighing a certain amount. If you must monitor numbers, perhaps you can keep a check on your blood pressure, cholesterol or glucose levels instead. Those are indicators of your overall health and fitness, which becomes the focus with a self care regimen.

The choices we make daily determine our commitment to self care. Our priorities often need to be assessed to determine if our lives are balanced enough to make good choices and practice self care. If not, a shift in priorities may be the first step toward improved health. Planning and preparation are crucial, whether that is scheduling time for movement in your life several times a week, going to the grocery store or a few moments of quiet time to get centered during the day.

With regard to the actual choices we make when practicing good self care, those are related to our food, movement and emotions. Good self care with regard to food begins with the basics: learn to check in with your body to see if you are hungry, determine what you want to eat, savor the food while you are eating and stop eating when you are full. Sounds simple, but it is NOT if you are not in touch with your body. Movement is as important for connecting the mind and

body as it is to improved health and fitness. It requires you find things you enjoy doing, which may be a challenge, but it can be done. Even those who can't stand can find ways to move their bodies more everyday. The other focus is on learning to manage your feelings so that you use food less for emotional reasons than nutritional. It may require new ways of thinking and skills that can be learned. These changes require on-going support.

Kelly Bliss is a plus-size fitness coach who works with people all over the country to become more fit regardless of their size. Join her for a workshop in Columbia May 16 to learn more about self care as a solution to weight and health concerns. The Grand Goddess Body Image Studio will offer continuing support and gentle movement classes after the workshop. You can request information about these services or the workshop by calling 803-738-9874.