



NEW BEGINNINGS ***Personal Training Studio***

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Writing Down EVERYTHING You Eat DOUBLES WEIGHT LOSS

At some point in time, I have told most, if not all of my clients, to write down EVERYTHING they put in their mouth. Many of them tried it for a little while, while some couldn't be bothered. I am now here to tell you, with documented proof, in the struggle to lose weight, picking up a pen might be just as useful as putting down the fork. That is according to a new study that found that people who kept daily food diaries lost **twice** as much weight or more as those who didn't keep a tally of their meals.

"There is a myth in this country now that weight loss is almost impossible and very few can lose weight," says Victor Stevens, a researcher at Kaiser's Center for Health Research in Portland, Ore., and co-author of the study, which appears in the August issue the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

"But it was shown that with a simple, straightforward approach, nearly 70 percent of participants were able to lose enough weight to make significant improvements in their health." Overall, two thirds of the study subjects lost 9 pounds or more during the six-month study. But those who kept a food diary every day of the week dropped up to 20 pounds, more than twice as much as those who didn't record their every bite.

That held true for Julie Satterwhite, 46, a yo-yo dieter in Portland, Ore., who previously struggled to lose weight. She credits the food diary with helping her shed 30 pounds during the study and in turn being able to reduce the dosage of her high-cholesterol medication by *half*.

After the study ended, she continued to lose weight over an additional eight months by using the food diary on her own. All told, she lost 55 pounds, dropping from 205 pounds to her target goal of 150.

The weight loss also was good for her joints. Satterwhite has an arthritic knee, so the reduced weight on it felt like “a huge improvement” she says.

Dieters Don't Want To Write It Down

“It had a very big impact,” Satterwhite says of the diary. “If I was walking through the kitchen and wanted to grab a cookie or a brownie, I would think twice because I knew I had to write it down.”

That was a common experience among those who kept diaries, notes Stevens. “ Study participants said, ‘I thought about eating a second helping of chocolate cake but I didn’t because I didn’t want to see it in my food diary,’” he says.

This is the point I often make to my clients. By writing everything down, you are held accountable for every bite. That alone, discourages people from eating something they know they should not be eating. The food diary also helps people see where extra calories are coming from, and also to recognize the hidden calories in familiar foods.

Karen Donato, the coordinator for overweight and obesity applications at the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) in Bethesda, Md, thinks “one of the big effects of the diary is that it can help people realize when they’re just eating out of boredom or stress”.

“A lot of times people do mindless eating, under stress, at their desks, bored, just eat things without thinking about it,” she says. “This strategy can help people avoid that.”

Free Food Diary, Menu Planner

A free website, I often use is Fitday.com. I find it extremely user friendly and very eye opening. Each day you must enter exactly what you eat and it actually determines calories, as well as percentage of protein, carbs and fat you’ve consumed during the day. It has various reports including caloric intake and nutritional breakdown, in addition to how many calories you burned vs. eaten during the day. It is not only very interesting to see what you **ACTUALLY** eat in a day, but also very educational. I think it gives the typical person a new understanding of how they eat, as opposed to how they **think** they eat. It makes it easy to see where changes need to be made in order to lose weight. Without getting into too much detail about the program, I suggest logging on, signing up for your free account and playing around with it. If you have any questions about it, results, what they mean, what your targets should be, feel free to email me anytime at:

Rmullin66@hotmail.com. I will be happy to answer any questions.

The NHLBI Website also offers free a food diary and a menu planner that automatically calculates calories in common food items.

These programs are especially helpful for those not accustomed to calorie-counting. That's why it is recommended that you write down everything you eat or drink that has calories. I suggest using a calorie guide available online or in bookstores for at least the first month to help figure out how much you are consuming.

Most people eat about 30 to 40 different things, so with a little practice, they usually quickly learn how many calories are in the food they are eating so they don't have to look it up every time.

"Of the 70 percent, in the study, that lost 9 pounds or more, their weight was still dropping when the study ended, so it is likely they would have continued losing even more had the program continued", the researchers say.

Satterwhite says, "it was easier to maintain the weight loss using the food diary than her past efforts using Slim-Fast, Atkins high protein regime or other fad diets."

"The difference was that it was a slower, stable lifestyle change than doing some crash diet that you see on TV or read about in a magazine," she says.

Struggle with Food Diaries

While I know there may be a lot of resistance when it comes to tracking your food intake, it is absolutely worth trying. Many feel it is burdensome to record it, but the truth is, it works. Even if you do it for a couple weeks, just to truly see what it is you're eating, will help you make better choices. Not to mention, it will keep you from eating things you shouldn't, because the truth is, you will be held accountable!!! It is not as much fun eating that bad choice when you know you have to write it down. It definitely takes some of the enjoyment out of it. So why don't you give it a try and see how it goes. I promise, if you do this, it will work. It just depends on how badly you want it! Good luck and let me know how you do.

Rachel Mullin