

How to be a big loser

Q: I want to lose 60 pounds. Seems impossible! How can I reach my goal?

A: Losing 60 lbs. is possible but not everybody does it. Here are 10 steps to becoming one who does it.

- 1. Believe.** For long-lasting weight loss, believe two things: 1) that it is hard work and 2) that you can accomplish hard work. You cannot lose weight without exercise and healthy dietary control. You must believe that you are capable of the hard work of lifestyle change. Are you? Say YES because you ARE.
- 2. Time Is On Your Side.** You didn't gain this weight overnight, so you will not lose it overnight. Count on a minimum of 18-24 months to get close to this goal. People too often give themselves short periods of time to work toward their goal and then give up when they haven't reached it. Give yourself PLENTY of time. DON'T focus on the 60-pound goal, but on smaller, shorter-term goals, such as 5-pound increments. Think of it as 12 five-pound steps to 60 pounds. Allow yourself 4-6 weeks to lose each 5 pounds. Some will come off quicker, some may take more time.
- 3. Know What You Put In Your Mouth** The necessary evil of weight control is keeping a journal of what you eat. It is the single most effective weight loss strategy. A recent review of 22 weight loss studies found that diet journals *consistently* predicted weight loss outcomes (Burke et al 2011). Users swear by www.MyFitnessPal.com mobile application, a very handy diet and exercise tracker with a social network.
- 4. Fall in Love With Exercise.** Stop saying "I hate exercise." It's simply not possible that you hate all forms of bodily movement. The objective is to find an exercise that you enjoy. Try a few different things. Pick the one(s) you like the most. Learning to embrace exercise is essential to long lasting weight loss.
- 5. Race for Your Cure.** A lot of "big losers" do races as a motivational tool. Sign up NOW for a distance walk or run (5K, 10K, etc). This gives you a fitness goal to strive for, and it will help you stay on track with your exercise. If you sign up for 3 or 4 of these a year, you will always be in training. Find races near you at www.active.com. Race for a charity close to your heart to make it even more meaningful. Increase the distance of races over time (e.g., after 2-3 5Ks try a 10K) and strive to beat your previous race time at every race. Your physical limits are FAR beyond your imagination. Cross that finish line, it's one of the biggest highs in life.
- 6. Face the Scale.** Weigh yourself once a week or more. NEVER allow a week to go by where you haven't weighed yourself. Routine weighing is another common denominator of successful "losers."
- 7. Your weight loss trajectory is not going to be a straight line.** Expect many bumps in the road. You might have a week where you gain a couple of pounds, and weeks in a row where you plateau. The bumps are all part of the process, NOT a sign of failure. Too many people get frustrated at the first sign of slowed weight loss and quit. Big losers DON'T do this, they forge ahead. They are unstoppable!
- 8. Develop a Regular Eating Pattern** Never let 3 hours go by without eating something. Appetite control involves avoiding extreme hunger. Never skip meals and plan snacks for times when you start to get hungry. By avoiding extreme hunger your tendency to overeat will dramatically decline.
- 9. Conquer your sleep and stress issues.** If you are chronically sleep deprived or overstressed, weight loss will be extremely difficult to impossible. Sleep deprivation and stress both stimulate the hormones that increase appetite.
- 10. Start building your "community" because you cannot do this alone.** Support and accountability are essential to this process and need to come from people **who are on the same road**. With My Fitness Pal you can be "friends" with other users, see each other's progress, support each other, and chat. Also, take advantage of social networking, Weight Watcher groups, or blogs to build your community. Check out these blogs of people who lost from 50 to 140 pounds, add your comments, and think about starting your own blog: <http://www.chicagonow.com/blogs/cubicle-dad/>, <http://www.344pounds.com/>, <http://diaryoffatwoman.blogspot.com/>, <http://www.fatgirlfightsback.com/>

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