

28 Days

Weight Control

Journaling Challenge



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Introduction

If you are like many people, standing on the scale at the doctor's office or at home is not something you look forward to. If you aren't happy with your weight, the experience may bring up negative feelings: dread, embarrassment, sadness or pain.

Maybe you have recently put on a few pounds that you aren't happy with. Maybe you frequently battle a negative body image and harmful self-talk. Maybe you have struggled with fluctuating weight all of your life and don't know how to break the pattern.

Whatever your situation is, you know that your weight is not just a number. It is something that can have enormous power over how you feel about yourself and even how you define yourself.

When you see that number on the scale, a jumble of different thoughts may run through your mind (none of them very loving or supportive). Do any of these sound familiar?

- I gained another five pounds?! What is wrong with me?
- I've always been the fat kid, and I will always be the fat kid.
- I hate how my clothes fit, but going shopping only depresses me.
- I look awful – I'm so self-conscious about my body.

- I have tried every diet in existence, but nothing ever works.
- Everyone in my family is overweight, so I guess I'm just destined to be this way.

Stop right there. It's easy to fall into a damaging cycle of self-criticism, self-denial, guilt and shame when talking about weight, but that is not the place we want to come from. That kind of thinking is toxic to your self-image and counterproductive to your weight-loss goals. Instead, we want to approach weight loss from a place of love, support and empowerment.

Why do you want to lose weight? Deep down, beneath the surface of appearances, what are your reasons? Do you worry about your family's history of heart disease? Do you want to be able to hike like you used to? Do you want to feel confident and good about yourself when you meet people for the first time? Focus on these fundamental reasons as the motivation for your journey toward fitness, health and happiness.

Setting a goal to lose weight can be intimidating, especially if you have tried diet after diet in the past. You may be asking yourself: Why will it be any different this time? The answer is: this time you have your journal to help you every step of the way.

Why Journaling

Study after study has found that keeping a food journal is an effective weight-loss strategy. Writing down everything you eat or drink helps you be aware of your habits, keeps you accountable for what you consume and motivates you to make healthier choices.

In a 2008 study from [Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research](#), researchers found that keeping a food journal can double a person's weight loss:

"The more food records people kept, the more weight they lost," said lead author Jack Hollis Ph.D., a researcher at Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research in Portland, Ore. "Those who kept daily food records lost twice as much weight as those who kept no records. It seems that the simple act of writing down what you eat encourages people to consume fewer calories."

In a 2012 year long [Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research study](#) of overweight women found that food journaling was the biggest key to success in weight loss:

Women who kept food journals consistently lost about 6 lbs. more than those who did not, for example, likely because they held themselves responsible for everything they ate, the authors said. Food journaling isn't easy or convenient, but done consistently, it can help steer dieters to more healthful choices since it allows people not only to keep track of calories, but also to gauge the overall quality of their diet. The authors advise dieters to write down absolutely everything in their food journals, including condiments, toppings and sauces, and always to keep track of portions.

How to Use This Book

It couldn't be simpler to start this weight-loss journaling challenge. The only three things you need are:

1. **A journal**
2. **A pen**
3. **A commitment to 28 days of honest writing**

There are two parts to this challenge.

Part I

Over the next 28 days, you will keep a detailed food journal. If your journal is too large to carry around, keep a small notebook with you and take a few minutes to write down anything you eat or drink throughout the day, then transfer it to your regular journal later. This may seem tedious at first, but after a few days, the habit will become more natural. In your notebook, record:

- What you ate or drank (including any toppings, condiments or additives)
- How much ate (estimate the portion size)
- Where you were, who you were with and if you were doing anything else besides eating (watching TV, reading a book, checking your email)
- How you felt while you were eating (bored, tired, ravenous, sad, etc.)

It's important to be completely honest in your food journal, even if you aren't happy with your choices. Your journal is not here to judge you; it's a friend on your side, but you have to be truthful to make progress.

Part II

The food journal is an important component of this challenge, but that's not all you'll be doing for the next 28 days. In this workbook, you will find daily readings, tips and exercises to give you encouragement and help you put your thoughts and emotions into words.

Your journal will be your coach, trainer and sounding board as you make strides toward losing weight and feeling good about your body. Good luck!

Day 1:

On Your Mark, Get Set...Go!

It is important for you to tune into your emotional and mental state as you begin your transformation.

Welcome to your first day of the weight-loss journaling challenge. You should be proud of yourself for embarking on this new journey and committing to making positive changes in your life.

Over the next 28 days, you will be paying close attention to your physical health as you keep a food journal, listen to what your body is telling you and make an effort to become more active. Weight loss is not just a physical process, however; it is also incredibly important for you to tune into your emotional and mental state as you begin your transformation. This workbook will help you explore through journal writing some of the victories and setbacks that arise.

Journaling Exercise #1

1. Today might feel like the first day of school. You're excited and maybe a little nervous about learning and trying new things for the first time, but you can't wait to get started. Take advantage of that energy and use it in your journal!
2. Free-write for 10 minutes about how you feel right now, both physically and emotionally. Check in with your body and mind, and describe your starting point for this challenge.

What feels good or strong? What hurts or feels tired? What are your expectations and hopes for the next month? What are your worries?

3. Read over what you have written in your food journal so far (even if it's just one entry). What about food journaling are you looking forward to? What will take some getting used to? Jot down your initial thoughts.

