

Bariatric Surgery Class

CLASS ONE: GETTING STARTED



The first week of this class will help you develop a better understanding of weight loss surgery. We will also be discussing how this class is designed to help you prepare for the changes after surgery.

What we will cover this week:

- Class rules
- Types of weight loss surgery
- Surgeon and financial information
- Possible complications after surgery
- Changes to make now and after surgery
- Resources for more information

Surgery Connections Class (SCC) Rules

1. You may not miss class 1 or class 2.
2. You may only make up one of the remaining classes (class 3-6).
3. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be asked to make up the class.
4. You may not leave class early.
5. You may not bring guests to class, except for our Friends and Family night, which is class 4.
6. You may not call into class unless you live more than 50 miles from any of our class locations. If you live more than 50 miles from any class location, please let your instructor know and we will make special arrangements for you.
7. Please respect your classmates. We share a lot of personal information in class and we expect everything discussed in class to remain in the classroom.
8. You must abstain from all sources of nicotine (no smoking, no vaping, no nicotine gum, no nicotine patches).

Background Research

Technical details of gastric bypass surgery

This surgery produces physical and physiological changes that will help you reach your weight goal. It is one tool to use for overall weight management; new eating habits and skills are still required to maintain your weight loss.

Gastric bypass surgery impacts the body in two ways:

1. You eat less calories

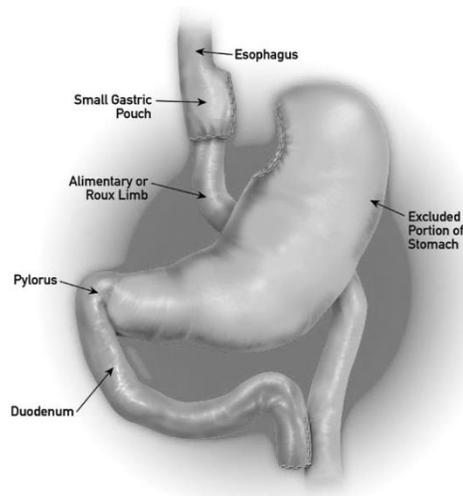
- This surgery is restrictive. The size of the stomach is reduced from about the size of a football to the size of an egg (called a “pouch”). The surgeon staples the upper stomach and disconnects it from the lower, larger part of the stomach. No part of your stomach is removed (see picture below). The larger part of the stomach still functions and is important, although food will not pass through it.

2. You don't absorb all of what you eat

- This surgery causes malabsorption. The first part of the small intestine is bypassed and re-routed to the new stomach pouch. The intestines are reconnected lower in the digestive tract so that gastric juices can still leave the lower, larger part of the stomach and mix with food passing through the digestive tract (see picture below). Because the gastric juices mix with the food at a lower part of the digestive tract, not all the calories will be absorbed.

You will lose approximately 70-75% of your excess body weight within the first year after surgery. Gastric bypass surgery results in weight loss because:

- the stomach pouch only holds a small amount of food;
- the digestive process slows so you can feel full despite eating less food;
- you do not absorb all the calories you eat;
- you may experience dumping syndrome if you eat high sugar or high fat foods; and
- there are hormonal changes that affect appetite



Background Research

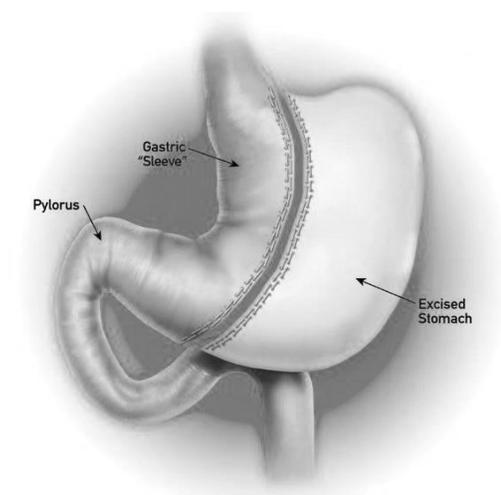
Technical details of vertical sleeve gastrectomy (“Sleeve”)

This surgery produces physical and physiological changes that will help you reach your weight goal. Yet it is up to you to change your behaviors around food and eating. This surgery is one tool to use for overall weight management as new eating habits and skills are still required to maintain your weight loss.

Vertical Sleeve Gastrectomy helps you eat less. **It is a restrictive surgery.**

- The size of the stomach is reduced from the size of a football to the size of a banana (called a “pouch”). The surgeon staples the stomach and removes about 60-80% of the stomach to create a sleeve shaped pouch.
- Unlike gastric bypass, this surgery does not alter the small intestines, so there is little to no malabsorption of nutrients.
- In order to avoid dumping syndrome, you should no longer eat high sugar or high fat foods which may help with weight loss by reducing your calorie intake.

The vertical sleeve gastrectomy is a relatively new type of weight loss surgery. It has been traditionally used as the first stage procedure in patients that had been considered too high risk for weight loss surgery. This surgery was performed with the expectation that a second surgery, typically the duodenal switch, would be conducted safely after the patient had lost enough weight to reduce risk of surgery. It was discovered that many people successfully lost weight with the vertical sleeve gastrectomy and did not require a second surgery. If you follow the recommendations, you will lose approximately 60-65% of your excess body during the first year after surgery.



Surgery and financial information

Currently, there are two surgeons performing weight loss surgery, for Kaiser Permanente Colorado.

- Dr. Audrey Bauer - Metabolic Surgical Weight Management. 303-861-3400
- Dr. John Raheb - Metabolic Surgical Weight Management. 303-861-3400

You will have a choice of surgeons when you are scheduled for surgery. The surgeon will talk to you about which surgery is right for you. Your care after your surgery will occur primarily with Kaiser Permanente.

Weight loss surgery typically lasts 1-2 hours and you will be in the hospital for one night. Nearly all surgeries are performed with “laproscopic” tools, so you will have 5-6 small incision sites on your belly. Most people need about 2-4 weeks off from work after surgery, however the time off you will need depends upon your healing and the level of activity you have at your job.

Surgery Financing

Costs for covered members

Most covered members will pay a coinsurance amount for weight loss surgery. This means that you may pay 30–50% of the total cost of your surgery and hospital stay. The exact cost for surgery depends on how long you are in the hospital, the surgical procedure, and the specific medical care that you require during your hospital stay. If you have a 30% coinsurance benefit, you may be responsible for about \$5000 to \$10,000 and it will be billed directly to you by the hospital, the surgeon, and the anesthesia group. The cost of surgery will increase significantly if you require a longer hospital stay. There are payment options available and this will be discussed with you prior to surgery.

Remember, your benefit for surgery is what it is on your surgery day. Be aware of any changes in your benefits.

- St. Joseph’s Hospital offers payment options for large co-payment amounts. You can contact the hospital directly for financial questions, pre-registration, and to set up payment plans. Contact: **(303)812-3478 or (303)812-2655.**
- Contact Kaiser Permanente billing department when you receive your first anesthesia bill. If you have a question about a Kaiser Permanente bill after surgery, call Patient Business Services at **303-743-5900.** If you have a question about a bill from the hospital or surgeon’s office, call the Claims Department at **303-338-3600.**
- Plastic surgery website: **infoplasticsurgery.com**—offers information on options for plastic surgery for excess skin removal, includes costs and information on scarring. Average national costs for a full body-lift are \$14,500, single procedures range from an average of \$5,000-8,000. Plastic surgery for excess skin removal is not a covered benefit by Kaiser Permanente.

Possible Complications

There are risks with any type of surgery that requires anesthesia. There are also risks with weight loss surgery in general. Although we are careful in helping you reduce your risks, there are still complications and side effects that can occur. These can include:

- Excess bleeding
- Infections at the incision sites
- Leaks at the surgery sites
- Blood clots
- Obstruction or perforation at surgery sites
- Strictures
- Ulcers (especially in smokers and those using anti-inflammatory medications)
- Hernia (with gastric bypass)
- Respiratory problems related to anesthesia
- Gallstones
- Hypoglycemia
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Heartburn
- Constipation
- Dehydration
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Hair loss
- Continued hunger
- Weight regain
- Mortality (less than 0.5% risk)

Despite the changes in your digestive system created by surgery, **weight loss failure or weight regain can occur after gastric bypass or vertical sleeve gastrectomy surgery.** It is essential that you change your behaviors around food and eating. Knowing what affects your weight management and making behavior changes NOW before surgery is important. It is never too late (or too early) to make changes in eating habits and learn new coping skills.

How can I start preparing for surgery?

Getting prepared is best accomplished by making changes in the way you eat, move, and live so that after surgery you can focus on the unexpected challenges.

Changing the way you eat

Bariatric surgery changes your digestive system and so you will need to make changes in your diet to avoid getting sick.

Making the following changes now prepares you for the surgery and will maximize weight loss and minimize sickness after surgery:

- Elimination of foods and drinks that have sugar
- Elimination of caffeine just before surgery
- No carbonated or calorie containing drinks (including alcohol and juice)
- Eating three, regularly scheduled meals each day
- Eating mostly low-fat and high protein foods
- Drinking fluids slowly and throughout the day (at least 8 glasses)
- Eating very slowly—taking about 20-30 minutes to eat
- Taking small (dime-sized) bites and chewing well
- Taking vitamins everyday
- Practicing no drinks at meals (and at least 30 minutes before or after meals)

Changing how you move

Exercise is an important part of not only weight loss, but also weight maintenance and overall good health. It is important in helping to prevent complications both during and after surgery. Daily exercise will be a major part of your surgery success. We want you to develop a routine that you can safely do without causing injury and then adjust it as you lose weight and some of your physical limitations become less prohibiting.

Accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity, such as a walk, at least 5 days each week. If you are just starting to exercise, start with 5 to 10 minutes. Your goal should be to increase the duration to at least 30 minutes per day by week 6. Next week, we will talk more about physical activity and exercises that will help increase your strength.

Changing your lifestyle

Living with weight loss surgery means that you will need to make changes in the way that you live. For example, in order to follow the diet and exercise recommendations, you will need time in your day to spend on weight loss and maintenance. This may be a big change if you are typically caring for other people throughout the day and are rarely left with time for yourself. There are also the changes that occur in your relationships with others as your weight becomes much less and you are spending more time caring for yourself.

Your preparation for surgery will include making these changes now. Each week we ask that you make changes that will impact your long-term success.

Learning to pay attention to your eating is a critical skill for preventing difficulties after surgery. To increase your attention while eating, you must focus on your eating in the moment. Focused eating requires that while you are eating you avoid: watching television or using the computer; carrying on conversation; or reading. Take small bites and chew thoroughly; write down what you eat when you eat it; and notice the taste, texture, and smell of the food. Practice this mindful eating prior to your surgery.

Eating changes to make NOW

Do not eat or drink anything with sugar.

After surgery, sugar might make you sick and will keep you from losing enough weight. Start losing weight now by choosing not to eat foods that contain a lot of sugar. Drinking sugared beverages, such as soda pop, beer, and juice, increases your calories and can cause you to gain weight.

Unsweetened tea and coffee are fine to drink. Foods and drinks that have 5 grams of sugar (or less) in a serving are okay. Using sugar substitutes, such as NutraSweet, Equal or Splenda and drinking sugar-free beverages, in moderation is fine.

Drink 64 ounces (8 glasses) of water every day. Avoid carbonation and drinks with calories (even juice and V-8).

Drinking eight glasses of water throughout the day will keep you hydrated. Staying hydrated may also help you feel less hungry. Drinks with carbonation can cause stomach pain and other complications. One of the major benefits of surgery is the ability to stay full with less food. Drinking beverages with calories overrides this benefit because fluids pass through the new stomach pouch far too quickly.

Eat 3 meals every day.

If you eat 3 meals during the day you will be less hungry and won't eat too much at your next meal. If you don't eat 3 meals every day, you will be too hungry when you eat again. After surgery, skipping meals will keep you from getting proper nutrition as well.

Eat slowly, over 20-30 minutes.

After surgery, eating too quickly and too much are the most common causes for throwing up and stomach pains. This happens when you do not have planned meals and then eat too fast or when you are distracted when you eat and then eat too much. Creating time to eat and stretching the meal out over a longer period of time will help you notice when you are full and avoid overeating.

Eat low fat proteins and eat these first at every meal.

Protein makes you feel full, helps you heal, and keeps you from losing muscle. Eat low fat, high protein foods first at each meal before you eat anything else. Eat meat first, then eat vegetables or fruit, and then starchy foods (like potatoes or pasta).

Take vitamins every day.

If you do not take vitamins every day you could get very sick. We will give you a list that tells you which vitamins to take after surgery. Review the recommendations, you may need to be taking vitamins prior to surgery.

Practice not eating and drinking at the same time.

After surgery, if you eat and drink at the same time, the water will push the food through your stomach too fast and you will feel hungry sooner. You may also feel sick or throw up. In addition, if there is water in your stomach pouch, you will not have room to eat food. After surgery, you should not drink ½ hour before you eat, while you eat, and ½ hour after you eat.

Choose one of the activities listed above and practice it this week.

Internet Sites

- Obesityhelp (obesityhelp.com)
A large site dedicated to weight loss with or without surgery. This site has message boards related to the topic of weight loss surgery. The information provided comes primarily from others who have had surgery.
- American Obesity Association (AOA) (obesity.org)
Site includes a variety of resources for weight loss with diet and physical activity information. Specific information on the site is related to weight loss surgery.
- Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.com)
This site has a section devoted to weight and weight loss surgery. Also includes interactive tools for weight loss surgery information.
- Ethicon Endo-Surgery, Inc. (weightlossurgeryinfo.com)
This site includes comprehensive information on all types of weight loss surgery. Also includes interactive tools for viewing the procedures.
- Obesityaction.org
This site will give information on current research and advocacy movements in the field of obesity.
- Makeitalifestyle.net
Information on upcoming events, weight loss surgery, message boards and recipes
- Bariatricktv.com
Two weight loss surgery patients host a weekly talk show to “talk” about common issues and entertain.
- **kphealthyme.com**
Go to Weight Loss Medication and Surgery tab, click on Weight Loss Surgery, watch both videos on this page

Books (find these on Amazon.com)

- Living a Lighter Lifestyle: A guide to successful weight loss and maintenance following weight loss surgery by Gaye Andrews
- This is NOT Brain Surgery...But There IS a Magic Pill by Teri Kai Holtzclaw
- Weight Loss Surgery: Understanding & Overcoming Morbid Obesity by Michelle Boasten.
- Life is Hard, Food is Easy by Linda Spangle
- The Healing Power of Stories by Daniel Taylor, Ph.D.
- The Emotional First Aid Kit: A practical guide to life after bariatric surgery by Cynthia Alexander
- Weight Loss Surgery For Dummies by Marina S. Kurian, Barbara Thompson, Brian K. Davidson
- Megayoga with Megan Garcia. Yoga DVD

Relaxation

- Relaxation Body Scan and Guided Imagery for Well-Being CD by Carolyn McManus

Magazines

- WLS Lifestyles (wslifestyles.com)

This magazine offers information for the pre- and post- op patient. Issues are released quarterly, and cover a variety of WLS topics, written by WLS professionals and post-op surgery patients.

- The Internet Obesity Magazine Online (obesity-online.com)

Offers information on obesity research and treatment. Includes an online forum for WLS discussions

Other Resources

- Bariatricadvantage.com website for supplements
- Blog – The World According to Egg Face. theworldaccordingtoeggface.blogspot.com
Articles and recipes written by Michele, a woman who had gastric bypass surgery in 2006

Calorie and Protein Counting and Tracking Resources

- calorieking.com
- myfitnesspal.com
- mynetdiary.com
- fitday.com
- sparkpeople.com
- Baritastic.com
- The Protein Counter book by Nolan and Heslin



Bariatric Surgery Class

**CLASS FOUR: FRIENDS AND
FAMILY NIGHT WITH GUEST SPEAKERS**



Bariatric Surgery Class

CLASS FIVE: EXERCISE AND TRACKING



What we will cover this week:

- Information on physical activity
- Tracking your food and activity
- How many calories to follow before surgery

Physical Activity and Weight Loss Surgery

Being active is an important part of not only weight loss, but also weight maintenance and overall good health. It can also help you build strength for recovering from surgery. Learning to become more active despite physical limitations may be challenging, yet it will make surgery safer and more effective in getting you to your weight goal.

A key principle is to work toward incorporating regular physical activity into your lifestyle. This does not happen overnight. It's important to start gradually and increase as your body allows. You'll likely be surprised at how small activity changes start to add up to make a positive difference to your health. And, remember your goal is to develop a routine that you enjoy and plan to stick with for a lifetime.

Regular exercise prior to surgery will help you to establish a routine and aid in your long-term success. Before beginning any exercise program, please notify your doctor to be sure you are medically cleared. Let your instructor know of any personal limitations or concerns. If you currently have trouble with the activities below, talk with your primary care physician about getting a referral to physical therapy.

- Getting in and out of bed
- Sitting down and rising from a chair
- Rolling over in bed
- Walking in the hospital
- Getting in and out of a car
- Sitting up straight



Physical Activity and Weight Management:

It is important to work toward incorporating regular physical activity into your lifestyle. This does not happen overnight but you can gradually start to change now. Remember, your goal is to create a lifelong habit of regular physical activity. Sustained physical activity is important for the prevention of weight regain.

An ideal long-term goal for person is to work toward getting 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical activity on most, and preferably all, days of the week.

Sample activities include walking, swimming, dancing, gardening, bicycling, weight training, and aerobics.

Tips for success:

- Start slowly.
- Choose an activity you enjoy.
- Encourage your family and friends to support you.
- Exercise with a partner.
- Challenge yourself.
- Vary your activities to prevent boredom.
- Exercise at your own pace.
- Reward yourself.

We want each person to do both **aerobic** and **strengthening** exercises.

Cardio (aerobic) exercise:

This type of exercise helps you burn calories and maintain weight loss.

Examples: _____

Assessment: Currently I am doing cardio exercises _____ days/week.

Action Plan: To increase my cardio activity up to or beyond 150 minutes/week I will:

1. _____

2. _____

Strengthening exercise:

This type of exercise makes your muscles strong.

Examples: _____

Assessment: Currently I am doing strengthening exercises _____ days/week.

Action Plan: I can add or enhance my strength training by:

1. _____

2. _____

Making time for changes

Lack of time can derail even the best efforts to make a change in our habits. Something that is easy to do is to perform an “audit” of your week to see where you might have a block of time to devote to exercise. Some easy ways to open up more time include the following:

- Waking up a half-hour earlier to fit in a walk
- Packing your lunch the night before to free up morning time
- Dropping the kids off a half hour earlier at day-care to fit in a walk
- Packing a lunch to save time driving to a restaurant at lunch (use the saved time for a walk)

Assessing barriers:

What is getting in my way of being physically active on a regular basis?

Action Plan: I will overcome these barriers by doing the following:

1. _____
2. _____

How hard should I exercise?

You don't need to exercise hard to be healthy. For most people, moderate intensity is best for sticking with it. Use the Talk Test - If you are exercising at a moderate intensity you can still talk during activity, but can't sing.

Resources:

<http://kphealthyme.com/Physical-Activity-Resources-and-Tools>

Tracking Websites and Apps

My Fitness Pal.com
Sparkpeople.com
Livestrong.com
DailyMile.com
MapMyWalk.com
Endomondo.com
Every Body Walk (Kaiser Permanente App)

Tracking Devices

Pedometer
Fit Bit
Garmin
Nike Fuel Band

Keeping Track *“You cannot change what you are not aware of”*

Recording your food is the systematic observation of those target behaviors that impact weight.

- This is the **cornerstone** of successful weight management.
- Food recording puts you in charge of your own weight management. Consider yourself a detective... figure out the who, what, where, when and why of your weight management “case”.
- You can track online or on your smart phone for free. Here are some tracking tools: Myfitnesspal.com, MyNetDiary, LoseIt.com, Sparkpeople.com

Research studies have shown that people who keep food diaries:

- Lose more weight than people who do not
- Do not gain weight over high risk periods, e.g. holiday periods
- Become more aware of patten and can make more sustainable changes.

It is wise to track:

- Everything you eat and drink every day
- Your physical activity
- Your weight at least once a week

What about calories?

The hard part in the weight loss process is to determine the number of calories necessary for you to maintain your present body weight. Eating fewer calories than this will cause WEIGHT LOSS.

There are several methods to determine your calorie needs. One is to use a formula. Another method that is much more accurate is to have your calorie needs measured by undergoing a resting metabolic rate test. We have simplified this measurement by using the following table:

Your Starting Weight	Calorie Goal
250 pounds or less	1200-1500
More than 250 pounds	1500-1800

Note: The above table reflects calorie goals for weight loss **before** surgery. After surgery your calorie intake will be significantly less than what is listed in the above table. Practicing calorie counting before surgery will help you prepare for tracking your intake after surgery.

Bariatric Surgery Class

**CLASS SIX: BAGGAGE,
SUPPORT, RED FLAGS, VISUALIZING
THE SUMMIT**



You have a history of weight loss and weight gains. Your past experiences may continue to sabotage your future success if you do not have a plan for letting go. Leaving your past behind will help you move forward to overall weight management.

What we will cover this week:

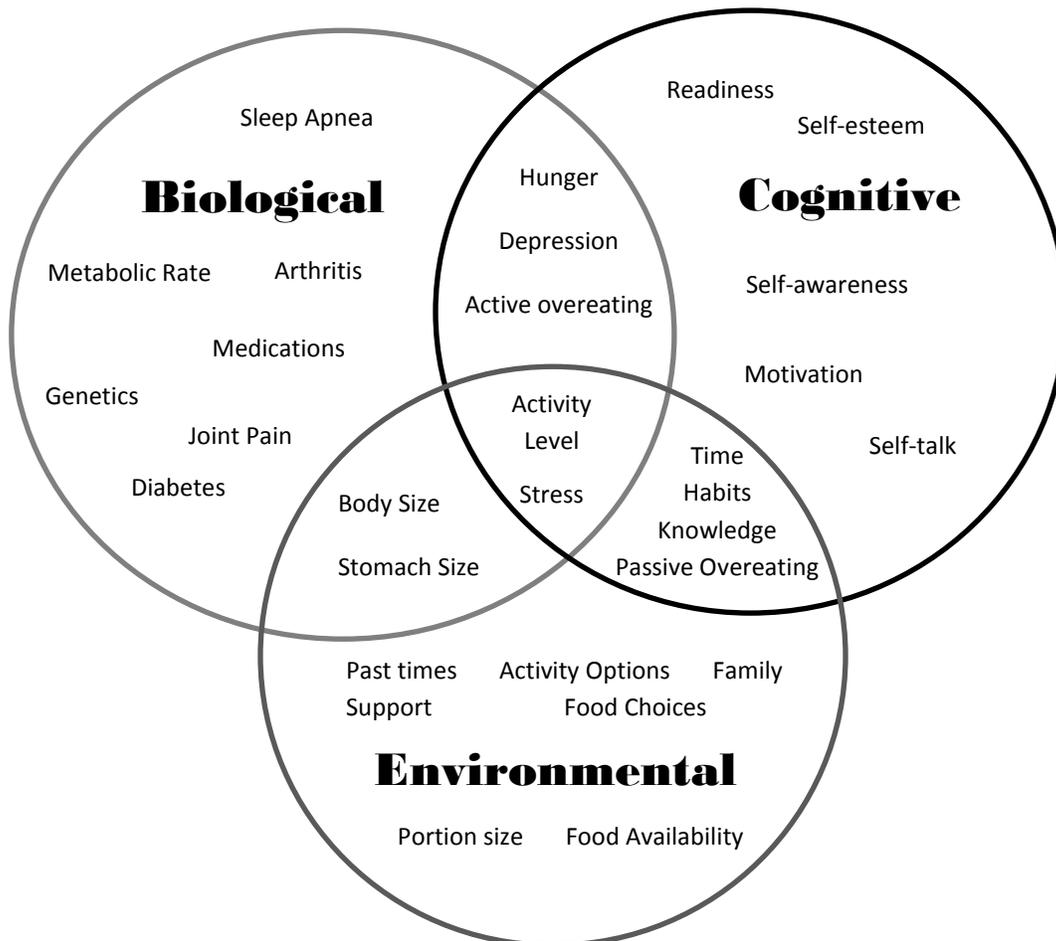
- Weight loss concepts
- Identify sherpas (supporters)
- Developing successful strategies for weight loss
- Identifying red flags
- Creating a NEW story

Concept Circles

Knowing and understanding what changes your weight is very important. This is also very difficult if you are used to following diets. You may think your weight is affected by one or two things, but you will find that weight is affected by the *interaction* of many things.

The Concept Circles offer a new way to think about your weight. Understanding the *connections* between your **biology**, your **cognitions**, and your **environment** will help you to start planning the changes you will make as you lose weight.

- Your **biology**, or body, impacts your weight. For example, weight can be affected by metabolism, age, stomach size, medical conditions, or medications.
- Thoughts, or **cognitions**, affect your weight because the beliefs you have about your eating or activity determines whether or not you will change your behaviors. This includes the messages that you give yourself around changes in food choices, eating, exercise and your previous weight loss experiences.
- The **environment** affects your weight because your surroundings impact food or activity choices. For example, family traditions, work parties, celebrations, or restaurant portions likely impact the choices you make.



Identifying your baggage, gathering your gear

Attempting to lose weight is in many respects similar to climbing a mountain. Like others, you have tried multiple times before to scale the mountain of weight loss without success. You've likely been at base of the mountain before, looking up at the elusive summit peak. It is likely that you've started to believe that there is no way that the summit can be reached. Each time you've been on this climb you have needed to accumulate different gear and training strategies. Every time you have turned around, heading down the mountain, you have developed a store of self-talk about the weight loss climb - in essence, you have accumulated a great deal of weight loss **baggage**.

Baggage-- Beliefs that Prevent You from Making Weight-Supportive Choices

Negative beliefs:

- Beliefs about the “right” way to lose weight; “I can’t eat carbs”
- Beliefs about your ability to lose weight and keep it off; “I never stick with it”
- Thoughts of how you should look or act how you should look or act; “I have to exercise every day or it isn’t any good”
- Reactions to how you feel about starting another weight loss plan; “Nothing works for me”

The baggage from your past attempts impacts your future climb. The first step in confronting your past challenges with weight loss is to get rid of the baggage that causes you to lose focus, get fatigued, and want to give up. Once you identify your baggage, you can gather the **gear** that will make this climb easier and more successful. You have likely had weight loss successes in the past, but dismiss them because you didn't reach your ultimate goals. It is critical that you carry the positive gear you need, and leave the negative baggage behind.

Gear--Beliefs that Help You Make Weight-Supportive Choices

Baggage Examples:

I never...
I always...
If, then, so...
Tomorrow I will...
I paid for it, so I will eat it.
I want it, I will have it.
It isn't fair that...
Why should I be the one who...

Gear Examples:

For today I will...
This choice will mean...
Right now I can...
I can do this...
This will help me...
This will get me to my goal.
This is for me.
My choice is to...



Keeping a Log

Identifying your baggage means spending time each day reflecting on what leads you to make one choice or another.

Writing down the thoughts you have when you make a food or activity choice can give you insight into your baggage. As you become clear on your baggage, you can develop a plan for building your gear.

Identifying your Baggage

Describe a typical dinner table scenario from when you were growing up.

What was your role in the family?

Was food used in a rewarding or punishing way?

How did your financial situation impact your food choices as a child? Now?

When did you first become aware of your body size being different from others?

Family meal times and activity

As a child, you developed specific rules or messages about food from the experiences you had at the dinner table.

Your parents or grandparents likely influenced your choices by continuing messages they received from their childhood. For example, were you ever told to finish the food on your plate because it was wasteful to throw it away? Or hearing that children were starving in China? These messages, relevant or not, have often been passed down for generations.

Another common issue from childhood is the impact of the size of the family. Families with several children can create an interesting dynamic at the table. For example, you may have realized early on that if you ate quickly you would be able to get seconds. These types of messages can be confusing, especially for a child who is fighting with both the signals from the body and the family dynamic.

Activity can be equally affected by upbringing. The parents' physical activity levels can predict how active a person will become as an adult.

Household responsibilities

Many times, people will recognize that their role in the family as a child continues into their present lives and decisions. Often, the issues within the family create an unnatural order of responsibility within the family.

For example, children raised in a house of substance abuse often find that they took on a role of caregiver for their parents or other siblings. If this is familiar to you, you might find that you play caregiver in your life today and that your goals and aspirations easily take the backseat to others.

Relationships

Even if your childhood was relatively “normal” and you were not overweight in your youth, you likely have seen the impact of relationships on your weight. For many people, this comes with marriages or divorces. As you reflect on your weight changes over time, you may recognize a pattern of weight gain or weight loss associated with these types of changes.

Social situations and traditions

Often, the cognitive and environment circles are filled with parts of your life related to traditions and the role of food in your social network. Eating is a common way of socializing with family and friends. When there is a celebration, food is often the primary focus of the planning. This occurs within friendships, families, and workplaces.

Traditions, cultural and/or family-based, dictate the types of foods that a person prefers. When you try to lose weight, you need to change some of your food choices, yet it can be challenging if you are making changes that are dramatically different from your traditions.

Messages about weight

Often a person's first experience with weight loss is negative and started at an early age. You may have been given messages about how difficult it would be to lose weight or that you were different in some way because of your weight.

Getting the support you need

When climbing high mountains, many climbers choose to use a “sherpa” to help ease the load of the climb. A **sherpa** is someone who supports your efforts during challenging times on the climb.

On the climb to your weight goal you will experience many challenges. These situations can be devastating without the right skills and tools.

One important tool for starting the climb is gathering support from those around you. Different people in your life will offer different types of support. For example, you may find a sherpa in a classmate or a co-worker who offers to walk with you at lunch.

How do you find the right sherpas?

Finding the right person to support you can make all the difference. Sometimes the person that you think “should” support you may not be the one that actually becomes your sherpa. For example, your spouse may be supportive at times, but isn’t willing to give up having certain foods in the house. You will likely find that you have different sherpas for each part of the climb.

How do I get someone’s support?

First, **identify where** you need support. Make a list of specific areas where you need support. For example, you may need support in making healthy choices at lunch or going to water aerobics classes in the morning.

Second, **identify the best person** to support you with these changes. You may find a coworker is your sherpa for making healthy lunch choices but your sister is your exercise “buddy” and will call you to get you out of bed.

Finally, **make a specific request** for how they can help you. Sometimes we don’t get support because we think our sherpa should be a mind reader. It is important to give someone the words of how to best support you. For example, “I really need you to remind me of the Disney vacation I want to take when I am staring at the menu.”

Gathering your sherpas:

Write down three areas where you need support and state one sherpa for each of these areas. How will you request their support?

The areas I need support are:

Area #1:

Area #2:

Area #3:

The right sherpa for the job is:

Area #1:

Area #2:

Area #3:

Here is my request of this sherpa:

Area #1:

Area #2:

Area #3:

Maneuvering a Backslide

Backslides—reverting to old behaviors and losing ground on your climb

Backslides are inevitable, but the extent of a backslide can be controlled. The difference in experiencing a short backslide (versus completely turning around and heading down the mountain) is related to the strategy you use during challenging times. If you have a strategy for maneuvering a challenge with minimal damage to the overall climb, you are setting yourself up for a successful summit.

One tool that can minimize a backslide situation is the use of the **Options 1, 2, or 0** tool.

Option 1 = the most weight supportive choice (i.e. taking your lunch to work)

Option 1 is a strategy for advancing up the mountain, avoids backslides

Option 2 = the next best option (i.e. ordering Weight Watchers choices from the menu)

Option 2 is a slower advancement up the mountain, delays backslides

Option 0 = making your usual choice (i.e. ordering a high calorie choice)

Option 0 keeps you where you are on the mountain, begins a backslide

Using the Options 1, 2, or 0 tool allows you to make a choice in the moment. Have you ever gone home and felt guilty for ordering the high calorie choice on the menu? Did you say to yourself, “I could have ordered the Weight Watchers choice, but didn’t even think about it.”? The best part of the Options 1, 2, or 0 is that you put yourself in control of the choice. Using this tool *in the moment* will allow you to think about the choice you make before you have made it, lessening the guilt you experience later. Even if you chose Option 0, you still have an opportunity to stop the backslide and continue with the climb.

Describe a recent challenging situation.

Complete the options below for that situation.

Option 1=

Option 2=

Option 0=

What would it take for you to choose Option 1 the next time that situation occurs?

Red flags

As you have tried to lose weight before, you know how easy it is to get off track and find yourself “off the diet” again. Backslides are an inevitable part of losing weight. There will be times when you don’t follow the plans you made and are at risk for turning around and heading back down the mountain.

Your experience with weight loss will pay off now as you do this activity. If you know that you are at risk for heading back down the mountain, why not plan ahead a little? This is part of setting yourself up to succeed with your current efforts. There are specific “red flags” that you can identify to tell you when you are getting off course.

Red flags are often behaviors that you do that you know get you off course quickly. They are also behaviors that are easy for you to fall back on (i.e. stopping at Starbucks more than you planned).

Training Activity

Fill in the following statement with at least 10 behaviors you know to be true.

I will know I am getting off track if I find myself...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now, decide on a place that you can post this list of behaviors. Put it in a place that you see often (i.e. bathroom mirror or your nightstand). The more you remind yourself of these red flags, the more likely you are to quickly catch yourself getting off track. It can mean the difference between a few pounds of weight re-gain and regaining all of your lost weight.

Building Positive Energy

Creating a new story

The belief you have in your story will control the course you take on this journey. This belief in your past story (your history) is strong and can interfere with your ability to change your behaviors. Your history has great power over your health choices because it has driven your behaviors for a long time.

Now it is time to visualize your journey and the “new you” by choosing the new story you will live. Remember, the actions you take are directly related to your story.

Your new story should:

- Make you feel confident and motivated
- Put you in charge of your journey
- Cause you to feel good about your choices
- Relieve self-doubt and guilt

Writing a new story is challenging because of the history and comfort in your past story. Are you willing to leave your past story behind? **Focus on visualizing the summit (the “new you” at the end of your journey).** Are you willing to experience your new story starting today? What will it look like when you reach the summit? What will you do when you reach the summit?

Training Activity

Using the considerations from above and take time to write your new story. Remember, in order to live the story, you must practice it. As part of writing this story, include strategies for making it a major part of your life.

When you are in the moment of making a health choice, what will motivate you towards the weight-supportive behavior?