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NUTRITION, EXERCISE SCIENCE, WELLNESS COUNSELING

Lose 100 Calories a Day and Lose Weight

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Does the thought of starting yet another diet cause you to roll your eyes? Can you bear the deprivation, restriction and boredom all the while knowing that you will probably gain the weight back? According to well-known authors Dr.'s Mehmet Oz and Michael Roizen, "the entire obesity epidemic is about 100 calories a day. That's right. If you try to lose more, your metabolism will slow down to try to keep up, so you will just feel more pain and frustration". Let's explore that concept.

One pound of fat contains 3500 calories. One hundred calories a day for a week equals 700 calories, about one-fifth of a pound. Too slow you say. But look at it this way.

One hundred calories a day is a slice of bread, a medium-size cookie or baked potato or a few French fries. That's not inconceivable for the over two-thirds of us that are overweight. Or try wrapping your brain around the idea of 30 minutes of walking a day, broken up into two or even three increments. That's not an overwhelming prescription for exercise.

I have found that people are more successful in managing their waistlines when they understand a little of the science of weight loss and how their bodies work. The ability to make decisions about what crosses your lips gets easier.

Let's start with caloric restriction. As mentioned previously, one pound of fat contains 3500 calories. If we want to lose one pound a week, we have to reduce our intake by 500 calories a day for seven days. That would put most of us below our basal metabolic rate which is the number of calories one needs for physiological functions to occur (heart, liver, kidneys and lungs, etc.) independent of activities of daily living or exercise. If we stay at this level of intake, our metabolisms will slow down as a protective mechanism because our bodies think there is a famine. Hence, the inevitable plateau where you stop losing weight, you eat even less and then start to think, "how much less can I eat?" The fact is, we are fat-storing machines thanks to our Paleolithic ancestors. Otherwise we would not have survived as hunter-gatherers when food was scarce and not readily available on a daily basis.

With no impending famine and definitely no shortage of food, slowing down your metabolism is the last thing you want to do when trying to lose weight because it affects your long-term ability to lose weight. Therefore, a reduction in calories needs to come from a combination of a mild caloric restriction, such as 100 calories a day, and an increase in energy expenditure through exercise. That way, your body doesn't get the "I better hold onto my fat" message. Quite often I have to get people to increase their calories before I can decrease them. It can be terrifying for someone who is overweight to eat more in order to weigh less. That's why there is no quick fix if you want a long-term solution.

Research shows that the folks who diet lose weight faster, but those that exercise, keep it off. Reducing your caloric intake by 100 calories a day will eventually pay off, but adding a small amount of daily exercise will get you there much faster. My philosophy is simple: take the time to unlearn years of bad habits, take the time to lose the weight for the last time, and get a coach to help motivate you and keep you on track.

Gerizatcoff recently left the Westport Weston Family Y after over 12 years as Fitness Director to start Zatcoff Wellness, a comprehensive, personalized wellness program comprised of nutrition counseling, fitness training and consulting, lectures, and cooking classes. For more information, call Gerizatcoff at 454-5560 or visit www.zatcoffwellness.com.