

## 6 Ways to Bust Through Your Weight Loss Plateau

### **It happens to all of us at some point – the dreaded plateau!**

Trust me when I say I know what it's like. I remember thinking, "I'm NEVER going to lose this weight!" I was so fixated on the number on the scale and that only kept me frustrated, discouraged, and worst of all STUCK. I finally took a step back and realized I needed to change my mindset and my focus if I ever wanted to move forward.

YES, I wanted to lose the weight I had gained, but the most important thing for me was to be healthier and feel better. I knew a quick fix was not the answer because I didn't just want to lose the weight – I wanted to *keep it off* so I didn't have to focus on losing the weight ever again. I knew it needed to be a lifestyle change. I wanted to look and feel healthier, not just be thinner.

There are many reasons for hitting a plateau or getting off to a slower start than we'd like. Everyone is different at the rate they lose weight and where they lose it, and it's really easy to get discouraged.

The bottom line is that if you continue to keep your new healthy habits in place, you WILL see results. Most people get discouraged and give up too soon – before they ever have a chance to see the results they want. "I just can't lose weight" or "I'll never reach my goal weight" are things we tell ourselves. But it's not true – we just tend to give up when it doesn't happen within *our* desired time frame.

If you can change your focus to getting healthier, making better food choices and exercising smarter you will do more for yourself than obsessing over the number on the scale. For example, if you aren't getting enough sleep, have a high level of stress and you're eating a fair share of processed foods, you're going to have an uphill battle losing weight.

By addressing it from a 'taking better care of yourself' perspective, the rest tends to fall into place. Because while we can't always control the number on the scale we CAN control how we take care of ourselves. In the long run, this is much more important in order to have a healthy, happy life.

### Here are 6 strategies that can help:

1. **Focus on eating the healthiest, most nutrient-dense foods you can.** Think 'REAL' food here, not foods with a list of ingredients you can't pronounce. The more healthy whole foods you eat (with plenty of protein and healthy fats), the less room you'll have for higher calorie processed foods. When you give your body what it truly needs, you'll have fewer cravings for empty calories and 'junk food,' which usually leads to consuming fewer calories.
2. **Reduce stress and get enough sleep.** This is a big deal! When you're under stress and/or you're not getting enough sleep, the stress hormone cortisol is elevated and this can hinder weight loss. When you're tired, you're also more likely to eat more (studies show people consume up to 25% more calories when they're tired). Do you notice how you reach for a

quick energy fix when you're tired? This usually comes in the form of sugary snacks and drinks and/or processed foods.

**3. Mix up your workouts.** Adding resistance training is key if your goals involve reshaping your body. Avoid doing the same routine week after week. Our bodies adapt rather quickly to new stresses put on it, so by switching things up you will see results quicker. Doing cardio-only exercise is not going to work long term and can actually stall your weight loss efforts. It's good to change your routine every 30 days or so.

**4. Increase the time, frequency and/or intensity of your workouts.** If you've stopped seeing results, it's also good to look at how often you're working out as well as the length and intensity of your workouts. If you've been exercising 3 days a week, it's probably time to bump it up to 4 or 5 to start seeing results again, OR do longer workouts on the 3 or 4 days if appropriate. Also, check in with yourself – are you giving it 100% or just 'showing up' most days? We all have days where we aren't 100% and that 70% effort is certainly better than no effort, but evaluate your effort level on most days.

**Note:** If you're already tired and feeling run down, you would be better off getting the rest you need so you can recharge and give more effort at your next workout.

5. **Food Journal or tracking.** While I don't focus a lot on calorie counting, it can be helpful to have an approximate calorie goal range. If you're stuck with your weight loss progress, this is a good time to evaluate your food intake and choices. It's not always that your calories need to be lower – if you've been eating too few calories, weight loss can stall too. Try playing with the numbers and see what works. If you go too low, you're going to lose muscle, which is NOT what you want as that will affect your metabolism negatively.

I like apps for tracking food – my favorites are Lose It and Myfitnesspal. Most of us carry our phones at all times, which makes tracking convenient.

6. **Don't skip meals.** This is a biggie! Clients of mine that skip breakfast and eat a small portion for lunch actually find that they start losing weight *when they start eating regularly*. This balance makes perfect sense because our bodies keep track – so if by late afternoon you haven't had enough to eat, you're going to be really hungry and make less healthy choices. This is what happens when you 'diet' and you feel like you've done great until around 3:00pm and then you're starving, eat everything in sight and don't understand why you can't control your appetite. Your body needs real food on a regular basis. Eat breakfast, lunch and healthy snacks when needed and *don't wait until you're too hungry* to have something to eat.

**Bonus Tip: Hydrate!** Be sure you're drinking plenty of water every day. Water helps with digestion and elimination. Water intake is an important element of our overall health and it can be helpful for weight loss too.



If you're feeling a little discouraged, focus on the positive and how you're making better choices. Do the best you can for your health each day and you WILL see and feel changes. Be patient and just keep moving forward, one healthy choice at a time. Slow and steady is the way to go for long-term success.

There could be other underlying conditions including hormonal imbalances that can hinder weight loss, so it's a good idea to seek a health care practitioner that deals with this, such as your physician, naturopathic doctor or functional medical doctor.

*Promise yourself you are not going to give up...you are in this for the long haul and you're worth it!*

Disclaimer: The information provided is for general education purposes only and should not replace the advice provided by your health care practitioner.

Always check with your health care provider before starting a new diet or exercise routine.

