

## **5 Blunders that Sabotage Weight Loss**

by Diane Raymond

Are you eating right, exercising and still seeing the same number on the scale? Get to know these 5 diet-killers and watch that number shrink right along with your waste line.

### **Error #1: Mindless eating**

Start keeping a daily food journal. A bite of this, a taste of that...it all adds up quickly. Most of us think we eat less than we actually do. Writing down *everything* you eat will show you a more accurate picture of your daily caloric intake.

Here are a few tips for correcting any problem-eating areas that you uncover:

- If snitching food off the kids' plates is a problem, make a rule that you can have only one small bite of their leftovers per meal, then dump the rest.
- If you can't watch television without snacking, make healthier snack choices: an apple, air-popped popcorn without butter/salt, carrots with 2 tbs hummus, or a small handful (10-12) almonds.
- To avoid eating while you cook, drink a full glass of water beforehand. Eating a mid-afternoon snack will also keep you from being starved by dinnertime. Pick a snack that has both carbohydrate and protein, such as 4 whole-wheat crackers and a low-fat cheese stick (1 oz serving) or low-fat yogurt with ½ cup fresh fruit.

### **Error #2: Eating too few calories**

There is no question: if you restrict calories, you will lose weight – to a point. There is a fine line between restricting enough calories to elicit weight loss and eating too few. When you don't eat enough, the body goes into starvation mode. The metabolism adjusts by clinging to every last, stubborn ounce of fat, resulting in a plateau, or even weight gain.

To prevent a plateau, follow these tips.

- If weight loss is the goal: consume between 1300-1500 calories per day.
- Strength train 2-3 times per week, working all of the major muscle groups (this amounts to 10-12 different exercises; 10-12 repetitions of each exercise; and 2-3 sets of each).
- Perform cardiovascular activity for a minimum of 30 mins on most days of the week and at an intensity level that is 60-85% of your max heart rate.

### **Error #3: Exercising enough, but not hard enough**

The “target heart rate zone” can be elusive – train too hard and you won’t be able to sustain the activity for long; make it too easy, and you won’t burn enough calories. If you train within your ideal “zone” however, you’ll optimize your training sessions by working at an intensity that challenges you. The end result: you’ll burn more calories in less time.

### **To calculate your target heart rate zone using the simplest formula:**

Formula: 220 minus your age multiplied by intensity (usually a percentage between 55% and 90%).

Example:

33-year-old woman, seeking an intensity of 70 percent of maximal heart rate (a midrange percent frequently used by adults):

220-33 = 187 (estimated HRmax)  
187 x .70 (percent exercise intensity)  
131 target heart rate

For most healthy, active adults, a range between 60-85% is ideal. And remember: 30 minutes or more of sustained activity is the goal.

### **Error #4: Inconsistency: 1 step forward, 2 steps back**

You have one great training week followed by one lousy training week. Or, you exercise regularly for several weeks, then something derails your plan: the kids get sick, you get sick, your husband is out of town, you stub your toe, you have to work late, (i.e., “life happens”). The ability to remain consistent over the long haul will make the difference between reaching your fitness/weight loss goals, or not.

### **Here are the 3 best ways to stay on track:**

1. Do what you love. Find an activity that you can get excited about, that brings out the best in you and makes you feel alive and energized.
2. Take care of today. Rather than becoming overwhelmed by all of the workouts you need to fit in for the week, find 20 mins today and do something that raises your heart rate or strengthens your muscles. Often, 20 mins turns into an hour -- once you start, the joy of doing something good for yourself takes over and you just can't stop!
3. Plan your workouts just like you schedule any important appointment. Write the exercise appointments on your calendar every week. Preferably you will have 4-5 days of cardio, 2-3 days of strength training and 1-2 days of planned rest for muscle recovery. Cardio and strength might be on the same day (that is fine). Use the recovery days as make up days if you have to miss a workout.

### **Error #5: Fear of success**

The fear of success commonly stems from one or more of these beliefs:

If I am successful...

- I will be powerful, and if I am powerful, no one will love me
- Others will want something from me
- It will create situations I won't know how to handle
- I won't be able to maintain it and have to start all over again
- My friends/family will view me differently/treat me differently

The key to overcoming the fear of success is to retain your power, rather than give it away. You give your power away when you allow your fears to take over. Yes, this means realizing that you have had the power to change all along, and that you could have changed last year, or five years ago, or ten. This can be an overwhelming and disheartening thought. So, begin by forgiving yourself. This will empower success. Then, ask yourself why you held on to being powerless for so long? In other words, what did you hope to gain by being powerless?

Some common answers might be:

- To avoid...(something)
- To punish or love (someone)
- To keep from releasing an emotion (such as anger)
- To wait for a guarantee of success
- To manipulate others with my self-pity
- Because I feel better than or less than...(someone or a quality)

Ask yourself: what am I afraid of losing if I do succeed?

About the Author:

**Diane Raymond is a noted fitness expert and the founder of [Blue Sky Gym](#), a personal training business specializing in outdoor and in-home training, group classes, live workshops and health/fitness education.**

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