



Recovering from Obesity

Learn to live a life of recovery...
making healthy decisions a day at a time.

by Connie Stapleton, Ph.D.

Recovery from obesity? What does that mean? Recovering from weight loss surgery, that makes sense. You know – having nurses and doctors interrupt you at the hospital every time you try to get some rest to check this or that. Then going home and taking some time off while your wounds heal from the surgery. But, recovering from obesity? What is that all about?

The word recovery actually means “a return to health from sickness,” which is what that time off your feet (and hopefully off work) after having surgery is all about! Another definition of recovery is “to make up for or make good (loss, damage, etc., to oneself) and to regain the strength, composure, balance, or the like, of (oneself).” Thank you, dictionary.com!

What I love most about that second definition of “recovery” is the word **BALANCE**. Being obese throws your entire life off balance! Your physical capabilities are limited if you are obese, as your weight prevents you from walking around comfortably and prevents you from exercising. Your social life becomes imbalanced when you are too uncomfortable to go out, or if you are embarrassed to engage in social activities due to your weight. As a result, you may isolate yourself from friends, family and social activities. Emotionally, your weight may have negatively impacted you, as well. Did being obese cause you to feel depressed or worsen the intensity of your depression? Were you more anxious in public? And what about that self-talk?! Most of us are notorious for verbally abusing ourselves with criticism. (That sort of stinkin’ thinkin’ becomes a bad habit and not one that is easily changed. Definitely something to work on for a lifetime). Being obese prevents people from living healthy, *balanced* lives.

Another part of the definition of recovery that fits well when describing the process of recovering from obesity are the words, “regain the strength, composure, and like of oneself.” If you are a formerly obese person, you know from experience that losing weight and keeping it off improves your sense of self. People who have lost weight and who are now living healthier lives hear the words, “You’ve changed,” regularly. The person who is saying “You’ve changed” may not

always mean it as a compliment, but the person who has lost the weight will gladly accept those words as being complimentary. The healthy-weight person knows how much better they feel about themselves after shedding extra pounds. They feel better physically and emotionally and most definitely have an increase in “strength, composure and like of oneself.”

People in recovery from obesity feel better about themselves and live more balanced lives in a number of ways. Most obviously, they are more physically healthy. They have moved from a physical state of imbalance (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, etc.) to having few, if any, weight-related health issues. *Balance*.

People in recovery from obesity set healthy boundaries for themselves. They say “no” to people, places and foods that are not a healthy part of their life. They take care of themselves and are better able to care for others as a result. *Balance*.

Recovering from obesity means using positive self-talk. People in recovery from obesity focus on the things they do well and encourage themselves to do better next time when they make an unwise choice.

Living a life of recovery means making healthy decisions a day at a time – about what you eat and in all areas of life. Recovery means choosing supportive friends who encourage your healthy lifestyle and letting go of destructive relationships. Being in recovery means: behaving in appropriate ways even if you don’t feel like it, remembering that the hard times do pass, remind themselves that living at a healthy weight is a life-long journey that requires consistent effort, knowing there truly is no gain without some (physical and emotional) pain, and most importantly, live all aspects of life with an attitude of gratitude! ●



about connie....

Connie Stapleton, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist who works directly with surgical weight loss patients before and after weight loss surgery. Author of *Eat It Up: The Complete Mind/Body/Spirit Guide to a Full Life After Weight Loss Surgery*. Dr. Stapleton

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