

Weight Loss Success

by Dr. Russ L'HommeDieu, DPT



Shift your focus from weight loss to building a new life you will love to live.

What does it mean to be successful at losing weight? Does success come at that moment you reach your goal weight? There is no doubt that each pound you lose is a hard earned achievement, but to be truly successful, you probably want to keep the weight off. I can't think of anyone who wants to re-gain weight after struggling to lose it, but that's what often happens. I, for one, lost 85 pounds when I was a teenager only to gain it all back and more. Then, in college, I lost 125 pounds only to gain it all back and more. After that, my adventures on the weight loss roller coaster continued with no less than two more bouts of significant weight loss followed by weight gain. The irony of all this is by the time I was 35 years old, I had over 30 years experience losing weight and yet I still weighed over 400 pounds. It would appear that being 200 pounds overweight after working at it for over three decades made me a failure at achieving my weight loss goals. Or did it?

The truth is that I was not a failure. I was incredibly effective at losing weight. So what was my problem? How could it be that I was so successful at losing weight and so unsuccessful at keeping it off? In his book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Dr. Stephen Covey observed that highly effective people "begin with the end in mind." Their success comes, in part, by knowing exactly what they want to achieve. In my case, I set out to achieve weight loss and that was exactly what I got. I never achieved weight maintenance because that was not my focus.

Focusing only on weight loss is like having the GPS in the car set to the ditch right next to your real destination. While most of the steps of the trip are correct, the final destination is all wrong. If you do not adjust that GPS, you would always end up stuck in the ditch. This is why so many people are able to lose weight and so few can keep it off.

The reason it is so hard to get excited about maintaining

weight is because it is characterized by the notion that nothing is happening. It is boring and demotivating. It is hard to dream with anticipation about days filled with all the things you will do to maintain your weight. While I agree, "keeping your weight the same" is not a very compelling destination, it is critical to set your mental GPS to a destination beyond just weight loss. This is the only way you are going to stay out of your old rut.

What if weight loss success was not about losing at all? Maybe focusing on loss is the very thing that is derailing us. As you begin with your end in mind, consider an end that transcends weight loss. Start to think about everything you will gain by losing weight. There are two main advantages to this. The first is focusing on what you gain is always exciting while focusing on what you lose is exhausting. The other advantage is that the motivation you get from gaining is renewable. You can always strive to gain more, but when you are

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How is it going to **feel**?

Who would you like to **become**?

motivated by loss, the motivation evaporates when you lose the weight or when you hit a plateau and stop losing.

For this to really work, you need to believe that you can do this. For nearly 20 years, the National Weight Control Registry (<http://www.nwcr.ws/>) has been studying over 5,000 people who have lost at least 30 pounds and successfully kept it off for at least 5 years. If 5,000 ordinary people can accomplish long-term weight loss, so can you. In fact, the study was originally started to disprove the growing belief that lasting weight loss was simply not possible. What they are learning is that life-long weight loss is very attainable, but it is not about a specific diet or a rigorous exercise regime. It's a lot more about how you think and how you view yourself as a person. In the end, those that are able to both lose weight and keep it off are those that re-invent themselves and actually become different people. They become people that never have to diet again.

The idea is to shift your focus from weight loss to building a new life. Once you believe that you can build this life, you need to design it. Just as you would never build a house without a complete design, all successful weight losers also take the time to design the life that they will LOVE to live. According to the cutting edge design firm Ideo, "Design thinking is a deeply human process that taps into abilities that we all have but are overlooked by more conventional problem-solving practices. It relies on our ability to be intuitive, to recognize patterns, to construct ideas that are emotionally meaningful as well as functional, and to express ourselves through means beyond words or symbols." In other words, the design process taps into the unbelievable power of human passion and creativity. Let's face it; the old model of relying entirely on problem solving to achieve the life you want just isn't working. The design process will allow you to create a deep well of motivation and ease a lot of the emotional stress that accompanies this amazing transformation. The time you invest in the design of the life you love will be returned to you many fold.

The first step in the design process is to set your intent. What is your final design going to look like? How is it going to feel? Who would you like to become? The beauty is that you get to decide, but you have to start thinking about it now.

Let's do an experiment. Find a quiet place that is free from distraction and sit comfortably. Set a timer for five minutes. Close your eyes and take ten deep breaths. As you take these breaths, try to clear your mind. Focus only on the breaths. If you have a thought, acknowledge it and dismiss it by asking it to "hold please." It does not matter how important you think it is, I have never had an important thought fail to return to me after I meditate. After your ten breaths, take the remainder of your time and create a vision of who you would like to be. Use other people as models. Who do you want to be like? What

about who they are, how they appear and how they behave interests you? How can you integrate the best of them into the new you? Maybe it's not a person, but a group. Maybe you want to be like your neighbor, the yoga instructor, or maybe you just want to be like those healthy looking people that shop at Whole Foods. Don't limit yourself to one person or group. Think of a lot of people and create an image that includes all the attributes you admire. As you assemble these pieces, remember that you can design anyone you want. These models are only guidelines. Once you have an idea of who you want to be, write three or four sentences to describe this person.

Just as a business has a mission statement, this is your identity statement. Keep it simple and concrete. It might be something basic like, "I am a fit, energetic vegetarian that practices yoga." Now, don't panic, I am not suggesting that you become a yoga guru or a vegetarian but, as you imagine this person, you can probably guess how they might behave at an all-you-can-eat buffet.

What I am proposing is that you figure out who you want to be. Once you have that clear in your head, doing what it takes to get there will be easier. It is like a mental shorthand. It will be a lot easier to show up for the first day of yoga class and resist that second helping of short ribs when you remember that you are trying to liberate your inner yoga guru.

And don't worry if you can't figure out who you want to be after five minutes. You may need to do this meditation five minutes a day for a few days or weeks to arrive at a working identity statement. When you do, try it on. If it fits, keep it. If not, go back to the meditation. Either way, email what you get to losewt4good@gmail.com. If you do, I will send you a free guide on how to continue the design process. ●

about dr. l'hommeDieu...

Dr. Russ L'HommeDieu, DPT is a Doctor of Physical Therapy. He has also lost over 230 pounds and is maintaining it. He is now dedicated to partnering with people whose weight is keeping them from achieving their maximal potential. As his clients lose weight, their energy levels soar, and he loves to help them use that energy for the benefit of others. His goal is to help people lose weight so that the size of their impact is greater than the impact of their size. When people partner with Doc Russ, they lose weight for good! Dr. Russ is a regular contributor to WLS Lifestyles magazine, a WLS blogger, managing editor for WCBS radio's healthy exchange web site, and owner of Lose Weight for Good!, a telephone weight loss coaching business. For more information, please email losewt4good@gmail.com.