Common Sense Weight Loss Strategies

There is nothing new about what is written here – you already know what you need to do.

1. Weight gain and weight loss are governed by a simple equation (with few rare exceptions) – calories in (what you eat) minus calories out (exercise). If calories in exceed calories out – you gain weight and vice versa. While generally accurate, this equation has limitations when it comes to weight loss. The body does not like to lose weight, so exercise for weight loss has to be vigorous. Moderate exercise will help you stop gaining weight (a victory under any circumstance) but more intense exercise is generally required to promote weight loss.

2. Serving size is the most important thing in diet. A portion is probably much less than you think it is. The following video may be helpful: http://video.about.com/nutrition/Food-Portion-Control.htm

3. Remember that it takes 30 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain that it is full. If you eat quickly you can easily eat far more than you need before you even know that you are full.

4. Exercise is critical for both weight loss and general health. The most important thing is that you do it! No exercise program is helpful if you do not do it! Find several programs you like and rotate between them – if you do not like it you will not do it. Be systematic about your exercise program. Start with something you can handle fairly easily and slowly, week by week, minute by minute build your way up to 30 minutes. Once you can do 30 minutes for 1-2 weeks then try to increase the intensity of your exercise. Make a plan and then walk the plan. Practice patience and persistence.

5. Beware of the holidays. It seems like no big deal to gain 5 pounds over the holidays, right? It isn’t a problem IF you lose the weight. Most of us do not. You might be good all year but if you gain 5 pounds over the holidays – 5 pounds a year is 25 pounds in 5 years, 50 pounds in 10 years – 100 pounds in 20 years. A 160 pound 20 year old could weigh 260 pounds by the age of 40 doing nothing but gaining 5 pounds every holiday season. (Does that sound familiar?)

6. Weight loss should be slow. Try to make as much of this automatic as it can possibly be. Weight management is not about making a single decision to lose weight. Weight loss comes through the little decisions you make about diet and activity every day. If you are not making good decisions – take away your choices.
   a. Never, “go on a diet”, rather you should “change your diet.” This means make small sustainable changes. Your goal is to average 1 pound/week weight loss. More than that requires bigger changes in your diet that are not sustainable and usually result in the yo-yo effect – lose 20 pounds gain 25 pounds – over and over.
   b. Never eat fast food. If you want to know why, rent and watch the movie “Super Size Me.”
c. Get rid of all cups plates and bowls that hold more than a serving. If the china you are using holds more than a serving you will inevitably take more than a serving.
   
   i. Bowls – should hold no more than one cup.
   ii. Cups/glasses should hold no more than 8 ounces.
   iii. Plates should be no more than 8 inches in diameter.

d. Eat slowly and use small utensils. Get rid of dinner forks and soup spoons. Eat only with lunch forks and teaspoons. This will make each bite smaller and slow you down (hopefully so that you can eat no more than a healthy meal in 30 minutes.)

e. We all act automatically without thinking so –
   
   i. Serve food in the kitchen. Do not put the serving dish on the dinner table. If the serving dish is within arm’s reach you will reach out and fill your plate without thinking or even knowing you are doing it! Make that impossible and leave the serving dish in the kitchen.
   ii. Even better – after you serve, put the remaining food in storage containers and in the refrigerator. This way if you think you are still hungry after a serving you will have to get up, go to the fridge, take out the food, heat it up and serve it again. By then you will most likely have discovered that you are full and you won’t want the food anymore.

f. Dessert - Before you eat dessert drink a lot of water. Often a “sweet tooth” is really just thirst. A tall glass of water can cure a sweet tooth. If you still want dessert, portions are even more important. Have a little sweet – but just a little. Remember dessert is supposed to be a treat. (If the first bite is not delicious, what is the point? Do not eat the rest.)

g. Do not allow yourself to become very hungry between meals.
   
   i. If you eat 3 meals a day you will go 6-8 hours between meals. That is enough time to become so hungry that you will make decisions about your next meal based on the hunger of the moment rather than on well thought out choices.
   ii. Instead eat 6 small healthy meals/day.

h. Diet sodas - People who drink diet soda gain more weight than people who do not drink diet soda. Diet soda is sweet so when it hits your tongue your taste buds are tricked into telling your body that it is about to receive a load of sugar. In response your body puts out a hormone (insulin) that drives sugar out of your blood into your cells. This is supposed to prevent a rapid increase in your blood sugar. With diet soda there actually is no new sugar entering your system so all of that insulin works to put the sugar that is already in your blood into your cells. This means that your blood sugar drops instead of holding steady. When your blood sugar drops you get hungry and eat. So your diet soda made you eat more!
   
   i. Remember – When you feel thirsty, there is only one thing your body actually needs or wants – that is water.