

Psychologists have found that the human capacity for imagery and imagination is a potent tool that anyone can use to make improvements in their lives.

Imagery to Prepare for Difficult Situations

Using your imagination, you can use visualization techniques to help take charge of your eating habits. You can use your imagination to mentally rehearse difficult dieting situations and devise creative solutions to the problems presented. It's a kind of daydreaming with a purpose.

For example, perhaps you have a close friend who has not been tremendously supportive of your diet. Whenever you visit her, she always has something warm and sweet coming out of the oven just as you arrive. Try using imagery to help you deal with the situation before you visit her. See yourself refusing the cake in a way that reaffirms your self-esteem and your commitment to your diet without hurting her feelings. By practicing beforehand, you will be able to fortify yourself with diet sustaining thoughts, bits of conversation and behavioral options to see you through all kinds of trying moments.

Imagery to Remove Temptation

Imagery is also a tool you can use on the spot to help you combat the desire to eat the foods in front of you. One way to do this is to change the image of a food that you have encountered into something inedible.

Suppose you are at a party and the hostess has placed a bowl of tempting, colorful M&M's in front of you. You're in the middle of a conversation with another guest, so you can't simply walk away to put them out of reach. Imagine that the candies are actually the plastic pieces of a child's game or brightly painted beads. Concentrate on the inedible image, thinking how unpleasant it would be to bite into a little chunk of plastic or wood. See what other images you can use to render other foods inedible.

Imagery as Your Reward or Your Escape

Imagery is an especially powerful tool for self-reward when paired with relaxation, and relaxation is, in itself, a good way to rid yourself of some of the many stresses that pile up on you throughout the day and make you want to eat. Relaxation can be as straightforward as breathing deeply and clearing your mind of anxiety producing thoughts for a few moments.

Try visualizing yourself in very pleasant and calming surroundings – perhaps lying on a beach, soaking up the warmth of the sun on a clear blue day, or lounging in the shade of a tree, listening to a stream trickle by. Imagine the scene in its every detail, the feeling of the sun and the breeze on your skin, the sounds of insects or birds chirping, the smell of the sea or the grass. This place can be one that you have actually visited or one that you have simply made up. Arrange the details of it so that it suits you to a T, it is to be your favorite place and nobody else's.

Dietary fat helps our body absorb vitamins A, D, R, and K and provides essential fats our body can't manufacture. But, we don't need much fat to meet these needs; as little as 3-5 teaspoons a day, depending on the sources, provide all the essential fat we need. You can get this needed fat by consuming foods which contain fat naturally (such as meat, milk and breads) and through the fat you add to your diet (such as margarine, oil and salad dressings). Since fat is a concentrated source of calories, restricting the amount of fat you add to your diet can be the single most important activity for reducing your caloric intake.

Fats are often described as saturated, monounsaturated or polyunsaturated and trans fats. The type of fat you eat can influence your blood cholesterol levels and your risk for heart disease and stroke. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats help lower blood cholesterol levels and can be beneficial when consumed in moderation. Monounsaturated fats also reduce the "bad" (LDL) cholesterol but leave the "good" (HDL) cholesterol alone. Although saturated fat is the main culprit in raising "bad" (LDL) blood cholesterol, trans fats and dietary cholesterol also can contribute significantly. Of the fat you do eat, try more poly and monounsaturated fat (such as canola oil, olive oil and fish) and less saturated fats (such as butter, animal fats and processed foods made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils such as vegetable shortening and some margarines).

Serving Sizes

- 1 teaspoon of margarine, mayo or butter
- 1 tablespoon of diet margarine or mayo
- 1 tablespoon of salad dressing
- 2 tablespoons of reduced-fat salad dressing

Practical Tips

- Use non stick cooking spray rather than oil or shortening
- Use a rack for roasting so meat won't sit in the fat drippings
- When making soup or gravy, skim off the fat first by chilling the soup or gravy base. When chilled the fat will harden and can be lifted off easily.
- Use wine or fruit juice to baste meat instead of drippings
- Steam or poach foods rather than frying them
- Switch to reduced fat or fat free versions of your favorite dressings
- Reduce butter and other animal fats to reduce your cholesterol consumption

Activity

A specific goal of the Dietary Guidelines is to keep your fat content to less than 20-30% of your calories from fat. A simple approach to monitoring your success towards achieving this goal is through "fat gram counting." Review the nutrition fact panels for all the foods you are eating and take note of the fat content (in grams) on the chart below. Make sure you keep your fat intake below the recommended level.

Breakfast	Fat (gm)	Lunch	Fat (gm)	Dinner	Fat (gm)	Nutritional Products	Fat (gm)
Subtotal		Subtotal		Subtotal		Subtotal	
Total of All 4 Columns							

As you know, walking is a great way to ‘travel’ and exercise too! Here’s a way to add variety to your walking program. Using the chart below, select and schedule 4 times during the week when you can walk for 40 minutes.

Program #1	
Warm Up	Stretch and march in place for 5 minutes
Regular Walk	Walk at an aerobic pace for 10 minutes
Power Walk	Walk 2 minutes like a race walker, stand tall and swing your arms vigorously
Station #1	Stop & face curb, step up on curb with right foot, then left foot. Repeat 10 times
Power Walk	Walk 2 minutes like a race walker, stand tall and swing your arms vigorously
Regular Walk	Walk at an aerobic pace for 10 minutes
Cool Down	Walk at a comfortable pace for 5 minutes. Stretch

Program #2 – Do Program #1 and add on the following	
Station #2	March in place 10 times, extend arms in front, left right knee as high as you can , touch left hand. Alternate knee lifts. Repeat 5 times. March in place for 10 minutes
Power Walk	Walk 2 minutes like a race walker, stand tall and swing your arms vigorously
Regular Walk	Walk at an aerobic pace for 10 minutes
Cool Down	Walk at a comfortable pace for 5 minutes. Stretch

There are other things you can do to ‘spice up’ your walking routines. Consider walking in a nearby park or mall. Find a walking partner or get a family member to join you. Also, use your walk as a time to explore and discover your community.

At this time, you are probably walking for 40 minutes, 4 times per week. To add variety to your program, try the programs noted above. Use Program #1 for your first 40 minute walk and Program #2 for your remaining walks. Remember to warm up and cool down. On the days you don’t plan to walk, do stretching and strengthening exercises. And do as many ‘sit down’ activities as possible.

Continue to monitor your heart rate. Adjust your activity as needed– walk faster to increase your heart rate, and slow down if you heart rate is too high.