

Self-image and self-esteem are very closely connected. Your self-esteem – how much you value yourself and who you are – depends to a very large extent on your self-image – what you think about yourself, your talents, capabilities, intelligence, personality, etc.

Developing a Positive Self-Image

Like everything else you are striving to achieve, a positive self-image doesn't just happen overnight. And the way you look does indeed tie in with the way you feel about yourself. People who value themselves have spent a good part of their lives developing that strong positive self-image they carry around inside. They have already spent a substantial amount of time nurturing the greatest gift anyone can give to themselves, the gift of self-esteem.

However, it is never too late to begin. The first step in developing a positive self-image is analyzing the image you already have. Next, use self-affirmations to reinforce your positive qualities. With each affirmation that you repeat and begin to believe you are patting yourself on the back, acknowledging yourself as good or okay or even exceptional.

Believe in Yourself

Once you believe in yourself, others will too. What you believe about yourself will be reflected in the way you behave and in the message the rest of the world gets about you. The person you used to be – the person with self-effacing or negative self-image – is now becoming more confident, more outgoing, more self-assured.

As your self-confidence builds, your self-esteem also grows. And because you feel like you're worthwhile, others begin to treat you as worthy. You find yourself beginning to speak up for yourself and your needs.

Self-Esteem Brings About Success

There's another thing that accompanies a positive self-image and a sense of self-esteem – success. How can you be successful if you don't believe in yourself or that you are worthy of succeeding? When you believe in yourself and that qualities that you have to share, you feel empowered to share those qualities with others.

Gaining control over your eating patterns is a crucial element in achieving a positive self-image. When you control what you eat that control spills over into many other areas of your life. When you are out of control with your eating notice how other areas of your life are also out of control.

Help Yourself First

You have probably spent the better part of your life helping other people think positive thoughts about themselves – your children, your spouse, your relatives, your fiends. Probably all of your life you have put the most important person last, you! Now is the time to put yourself first and pat yourself on the back!

Fighting the Feelings of Hopelessness

“Sometimes I feel that I have been dealt a bad hand of cards.” “I am a failure when it comes to will power.” Sound Familiar? If you feel that external forces control your life, you eventually give in to feelings of hopelessness. Feelings of hopelessness in turn defeat any attempt at weight control. If you rely on your negative feelings you will never face up to your being overweight. If you can convince yourself that you will never be thin, you can convince yourself never to try. Go from negative affirmation to positive.

Put Yourself in Charge

Affirm ownership of your behavior. Your successes and failures are yours and yours alone. If you feel out of control, concentrate your energy on making proper choices. Even a seemingly small decision like choosing an orange over a piece of pie is an example of a positive choice. Choices are positive because they help to prove that you can change. And as you begin to make changes and feel comfortable with them, you will begin to value yourself as a decision maker. Think *“I am not on a diet, rather I am choosing to what I eat and do.”*

Create a Positive Outlook

Clarifying and defining your beliefs and then changing them for a more positive outlook is crucial to your success in the DECO Healthy Living Program.

To change any of your beliefs and attitudes you must first clarify them and understand how distorted beliefs have led to your weight problem. The following exercise is helpful in clarifying your beliefs.

| Beliefs and Attitudes Exercise | |
|---|--|
| List your beliefs about weight control: | Rephrase them to be positive statements: |
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The DECO Healthy Living Program is designed to promote a lifetime of success which requires a complete, healthful shift towards positive thinking, exercise and diet.

Foods from the bread group, which includes bread, cereal, rice and pasta, are good sources of complex carbohydrates and fiber. Many of these grain products are “enriched” which refers to a process where the B vitamins and iron are added to improve their nutritional value.

The main function of carbohydrates is to produce energy. There are two basic kinds of carbohydrates: simple (sugars) and complex (starch and fiber). Food products in the bread group naturally contain complex carbohydrates (pasta, rice, cereal). Although donuts, cakes, pies and cookies are made from flour, this does not mean they are nutritionally equivalent to bread. While these products do contain complex carbohydrates due to their flour content, they also contain appreciable amounts of sugar and fat. The DECO Healthy Living meal plan emphasizes the use of bread, cereal, rice and pasta versus dessert type items. Some starchy vegetables, including peas, corn and potatoes, are part of the bread group because they contain a significant amount of complex carbohydrates and calories.

Dietary guidelines stress the need for 25 grams of dietary fiber per day. Scientists believe that a diet high in fiber can lower the risk of heart disease and some types of cancer. Products made with whole grains such as, whole wheat, brown rice, oats and rye are excellent sources of fiber.

Grain products also contain some protein, although the protein does not contain all the essential amino acids as do the meat and milk groups. Grain products are often eaten in combination with other proteins to achieve a full set of amino acids.

Serving Sizes

- 1 ounce of ready to eat cereal; ½ cup cooked cereal, rice/pasta; 1 slice regular bread, 2 slices diet bread
- ½ cup starchy vegetables (corn, peas, potatoes, beans)

Practical Tips

Your choices in the bread group can help you meet your fiber intake goals. On the average, a slice of whole grain bread provides 1-2 grams of fiber per slice while enriched white bread provides negligible amounts of fiber. Whole bran cereals contain 10-13 grams of fiber per serving while regular oat or wheat based cereals provide 3-5 grams per serving.

Activity

It is best to choose cereals that are low in fat and sugar and high in fiber. However, many cereals on the market contain added fat and sugar. Let’s see how your cereals stack up. Go to your kitchen and pull your cereal boxes from the shelf. Read the label and pour a single serving into a bowl. In the chart below, record the following information for 1 serving.

| From the Nutrition Facts Panel | Cereal #1: | Cereal #2: | Aim For: |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| Serving Size | | | 1 ounce |
| Grams of Fiber per Serving | | | More than 3 grams |
| Grams of Fat per Serving | | | Less than 3 grams |
| Grams of Sugar per Serving | | | Less than 3 grams |

Any surprises? Read the labels carefully when choosing a new or different cereal.

Don't let the rain melt away your plans for exercise! If it's not raining too heavily, an umbrella and proper clothing can keep your outdoor plans alive. But, if it's "raining buckets", consider walking in the mall. In the morning hours, many malls open their doors before the stores do. You can walk in the main corridors as if it were an inside track.

There are many other exercise options available too. In fact, using a variety of different activities can keep your exercise sessions enjoyable and exciting. Using a variety of exercises in a fitness program is called "cross training". Here are some cross training ideas for both home and the health club.

Home

A variety of exercise videotapes are available which can be used at home to exercise. Some tapes provide stretching routines, while others include step aerobic programs. Bench aerobic programs consist of stepping on and off a specially made step. A variety of names are used to describe these programs including 'bench stepping', 'step training' or 'benching'. Local libraries and video stores often have supplies of these types of videos which can be borrowed. Also, home exercise programs are offered on several television stations.

Simple equipment and household items can also be used for exercise purposes. Heavy elastic bands can be used for strength training routines as can food containers and cans. Home exercise equipment (treadmill, stationary bike, skiing machines) are also rainy day alternatives that can introduce variety into your exercise program.

Health Club

Some health clubs have indoor tracks that can be used for walking or running. They also offer a variety of equipment for use during a rainy day. Examples of exercise machines found in health clubs include stationary bikes, treadmills, skiing, rowing, weight machines and stair climbing machines.

Some health clubs have indoor pools. Swimming is an excellent aerobic activity that is a great alternative for walking. Health clubs with pools often offer swimming lessons as well as water aerobics programs. These are fun ways to exercise and introduce variety into your exercise program.

Health clubs often offer other types of exercise programs, like jazzercise or learning to use weights. Investigate the exercise facilities close to you and see what they offer.

Activity

Increase your walking program to a 25 minute walk, 4 times per week. If you are already at this level, try a 30 minute walk, 4 times per week. On the days you don't plan to walk, do two stretching exercises and add one new way to increase your daily activity.

Be sure to take your heart rate before, during and after your walking routine. Continue to try to achieve a heart rate between the two numbers you calculated on the earlier worksheet.