

# Healthy Weights

## Week #4: Sleep/Stress-Weight Connection & The Lifestyle Approach

### Stress & Weight:

- Stress can affect what we eat, when we eat, why we eat and how we eat.

### Reasons We Eat:

- Social, Situational, Physiological, Emotional
- These factors can distract us from true feelings of hunger

### Strategies for Dealing with External Influences of Eating:

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### Sleep & Weight

- Adrenaline
- Other Hormones
- Irritability
- Lack of sleep has been proven to increase food consumption

**The Lifestyle Approach:** Shift your focus from weight to a positive lifestyle approach:

Dieting to Healthy Eating
Exercise to Active Living
Unhappy Self to Positive Self/Body Image
Stress to Self Reflection

### Notes:

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### Be Yourself:

- Being unique is a good thing – enjoy!
- Accept yourself
- Forgive yourself
- Focus on the positive
- Celebrate being yourself
- Tune-out excess media/societal expectations
- Be nice to yourself
- Take time out for yourself
- Reward yourself (not with food)
- Relax

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## JUST BREATHE

"Deep breathing exercises are the most powerful and effective form of stress management."  
~ Dean Ornish, M.D., author of "Reversing Heart Disease."

When your cells are bathed in abundant oxygen, you're free to relax and experience an abundant life. Chances are, your cells are starving. Almost 80% of the population restricts their breathing, especially when they need oxygen most! This unnatural, learned reaction to stress leads to more stress as it depletes your energy and limits health and vitality. It can be reversed.

However, the reason effective breathing is so critical for stress management goes beyond simple oxygen metabolism. The Autonomic Nervous System is dramatically affected by breathing patterns. When breathing is shallow, fast and restricted, it triggers the sympathetic branch of the nervous system. This is the "fight or flight" response to a perceived threat or danger. If you are always feeling stressed out, chances are you are "stuck" in this mode. Soon the chronic chemical and electrical imbalance leads to disease.

When breathing is deep, slow and full, the parasympathetic branch of the nervous system gets turned on, allowing calm, sensory awareness, digestion, good feelings, and healing. Since the Autonomic Nervous System is responsible for regulating the body's internal environment, and since it responds to changes in breathing, you have the ability to regulate your own internal environment by taking responsibility for your breathing. Further, you can either manage your breathing or master it!

Here is a breathing exercise you can try to get you started.

### **The Connected Wave Breath**

Sit or lay down in a comfortable and quiet place. Place your right hand on the abdomen, just below your belly-button. Put your left hand on the center of your chest. Breathing in and out through either the nose or the mouth, inhale gently to the count of six. As you begin the inhale, notice your right hand moving upward as the belly rises with the movement of the diaphragm. (If this does not happen, consciously push the belly against your hand to begin awakening the diaphragm muscle.)

Once the belly feels "full" (without straining), feel the breath rising into the chest, and your left hand moves upward as you relax your ribcage. Without pausing, once the inhale is full (again, without straining), just let it go in a relaxing sigh - to the count of two. When the relaxed exhale is complete, immediately begin the inhale again. Repeat for twenty breaths, allowing yourself to relax a little more with each exhale. It may help to repeat inwardly to yourself, "I am" as you inhale, and "relaxed" as you exhale.

If you lose count of your breaths, simply begin again until you reach twenty without interruption. See how you feel.

Breathing is the body's number one method for clearing out waste. Up to 70% of toxins can be eliminated with healthy breathing. Breathing eliminates toxins caused by emotional and physical stress.

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## Top 10 Stress, Sleep, Lifestyle Management Strategies for a Healthy Weight

Do it	Will Try it	Strategy	Notes
		1.	
		2.	
		3.	
		4.	
		5.	
		6.	
		7.	
		8.	
		9.	
		10.	

What is one thing you're not currently doing, that you're willing to try this week?

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