

Don't Get Defeated

HOW TO OVERCOME
FRUSTRATIONS &
CHALLENGES
IN YOUR WEIGHT
LOSS JOURNEY

MAYBE IT WAS THE DAY you realized that your favorite pair of jeans had grown a bit snug. Or a sideways glance in the mirror revealed a little bit more width in the tummy area. It may have even been that big red circle on the calendar marking your sister's wedding next month. Whatever it was, it got you off the couch and into the gym, and gave you the strength to "Just Say No" to the Monday morning bagel and donut buffet at the office.

BUT THAT WAS THEN, AND THIS IS NOW. Now it seems that mixed fresh fruit cups with low-fat yogurt aren't quite as appealing as a bowl of Ben and Jerry's. And skipping the gym last week? Well, you were tired.

Like it or not, you've fallen victim to some of the frustrations that often come with jumping on the health and fitness bandwagon – the classic bumps in the road that can hinder and sometimes completely destroy your efforts to get fit. But there are ways to circumnavigate these frustrations that can get you back on track before you know it!



Frustration No. 1: "I Just Can't Do It."

After a few too many weeks of slow to non-existent weight loss, your initial battle cry of "Yes, We Can," may have morphed into a sobering whimper that more closely resembles, "I Give Up." But this particular frustration requires a little bit of mental strengthening in order to overcome its potentially devastating impact.

How to Fight It: **DEVELOP PATIENCE**

"I've never trained or worked with someone who's lost over 100 pounds who didn't have a week where they gained a few pounds," says certified personal trainer DannyJ of TheSweatyBetties.com. "It happens." The key, DannyJ says, is to be patient with the weight-loss process and think of it as a long-term stock market investment (not day trading). "There may be some dips and losses from time to time, but in the long-term, keeping your money in the stock market is bound to earn you more."

Frustration No. 2: Lose it. Gain it Right Back

Perhaps the only thing worse than gaining the weight in the first place is losing it and then gaining it all back. So, if you're trying to get lean and healthy for the second, third or even fourth time, feelings of frustration may set in before you even get started.

How to Fight It: **SLOW DOWN**

Chris Cianciulli, exercise specialist at the American College of Sports Medicine, believes that when people charge full-force into a strict diet and exercise regimen, they often become "boomerangs." "They go from being sedentary and never worrying about what they eat to exercising six to seven days a week," says Cianciulli. "The pounds come off, but after a couple of weeks, the workouts become less frequent. Like a boomerang, the former habits come back and the old body returns."

Cianciulli instead recommends taking a slower-paced approach to fitness. When it comes to exercise, for example, try setting up a realistic schedule that you can stick to for about two months. You can then reevaluate your progress and modify your workout schedule accordingly, which may mean adding more time to your workout sessions or cutting back.

Frustration No. 3: Weight Plateaus

In the beginning the weight just melted off, but then the cylinders just seemed to stop firing. Your weight loss has slowed considerably and sometimes you even gain weight! Yep, you've hit the dreaded weight-loss plateau. And when the scale's not budging, it can be very tempting to just give up.

According to Sara Haley, ACE-certified trainer and instructor and Reebok Global Master Trainer, there are many possible causes for weight-loss plateaus. These can range from a slower metabolism brought on by the loss of muscle to simply backsliding into poor eating habits.

How to Fight It: **REASSESS THE SITUATION**

"If you are experiencing a weight-loss plateau, you first need to identify the problem or see what's missing from your new health regimen," says Haley. "If you haven't been weight-training, definitely add it in as it will help increase lean body mass." Haley also recommends changing up the intensity, duration, frequency or type of exercise you do to keep your body from adapting to your exercise routine.

"Changing up routines and styles of exercise is really what works for me," says Don Dona, who lost 108 pounds to become Max Muscle Sports Nutrition's 2011 MaxForm Life Challenge Champion. Dona's workout program included a mix of DVD workouts with weightlifting and cardio. "If you like to challenge yourself, it's hard to get bored with so many different ways and styles of exercise that are available for us today."

Weight-loss plateaus can also occur if you're exercising too much or not taking in enough calories. "Your body can actually respond by decreasing the amount of calories you burn during the rest of the day," continues Haley. In this case, the best way to get back on track is to ease up on your strict diet and exercise plan or unwind with a gentle yoga class.

"CONTINUE TO STICK WITH A PROGRAM, AS THE RESULTS THAT YOU DESIRE WILL OCCUR IN TIME."

Frustration No. 4: Bored Beyond Belief

If you consume one more plate of grilled chicken you'll scream. And yes, you've already tried experimenting with new healthy, flavorful foods. But sometimes you just can't beat the occasional healthy-living blahs.

How to Fight It: **CHEAT! BUT WITH CAUTION**

"Having a 'cheat meal' or a treat waiting for you at the end of the week may help you stick to your healthy diet," says Rania Batayneh, MPH Nutritionist and America's Eating Strategist. "Looking forward to something, whether it's a slice of chocolate cake or a warm bowl of macaroni and cheese, could help your resolve during the rest of the week." Just remember that a cheat is just that: a cheat! It's a temporary burst of gratification that makes life all the more indulgent, not an excuse to drop your healthy living strategy cold turkey.

Frustration No. 5: My Trouble Zones are Still Troubling

Even though your shape is shrinking, there may be a trouble zone or two that doesn't seem quite ready to get with the program. "In most men (and some women) the abdominal region is often the most difficult area to trim, while the hips, buttocks and thighs tend to be a common trouble spot for most women (and some men)," says Jessica Matthews, an exercise physiologist for the American Council on Exercise.

How to Fight It: **FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE**

The best way to avoid getting frustrated by those trouble zones is to focus not only on the positive physical changes that you've already made, but on the positive changes that aren't reflected in the mirror. "Many of the psychological and emotional benefits of physical activity, such as improved mood, improved quality of sleep, increased concentration, decreased stress, etc., begin to occur almost immediately," continues Matthews. "...continue to stick with a program, as the results that you desire will occur in time." **MS&F**