

## 0 Habits of Successful Bariatric Patients

### 10 Habits of Successful Bariatric

I've had the privilege of working with weight-loss surgery patients for the past six years seven years (at the time of this post). During this time, I've learned what habits my most successful patients change in their life, and stick to long-term. I try not to "get on my soap box" too often when I'm counseling pre-op patients, but at the same time...I want them to succeed so I love sharing with them what habits they should focus on to get the most out of their surgery.

#### 1. They make changes before they have surgery.

Without a doubt my most successful patients DON'T put off their changes until surgery makes them change. They start the second they walk out the door of their first visit to clean out the house, quit the soda and sweet tea, and cook more at home instead of eating out. They know these things will be tough, so they jump on it right away. Learn more about an effective Pre-Surgery diet plan.

#### 2. They have a strong support system.

In all my visits I ask my patients "who is your biggest cheerleader going through this journey?" When they say "myself" I don't disagree, but I strongly encourage them to think of who they could reach out to for cheerleading and accountability. We weren't meant to do this alone. Whether it's a friend, neighbor, family member or someone at support group I am a firm believe that having a great support system can make all the difference. When your family is not on board, make sure you have someone outside of the family cheering you on.

#### 3. They get to support groups.

Seriously. Not just because the doctor said "you have to go to at least one" but instead they make it a priority to take the time to get to a group. It's like "church" for your "post-op soul" (just go with it). You walk away feeling refreshed, encouraged, motivated and (see above) like you aren't doing this alone. If getting to an in person support group just isn't feasible, consider finding a closed Facebook group by searching the month and year you had surgery on Facebook. These specific groups can be a better fit than the REALLY large groups. If not the same date, try the same area you're in. Another great online resource for support – Obesity Help!

#### 4. They plan out their meals and have a grocery shopping "routine"

I'm the dietitian so I just have to go here. I hate the word "fail" but the old saying "failure to plan is planning to fail" is painfully true when it comes to any weight loss plan. You want to see serious results?? You have to make changes. Flying by the seat of your pants can only take you so far. Set a day to make your meal plan, set a day to get to the store. I plan my meals and write my list on Thursday. But I don't like to do it all in one day or I get annoyed with it. So I do my actual shopping and putting the food away on Fridays. Then we're set for the weekend and the following work week. It works for me.

What will work for you? Prefer to use a pre-written meal plan? Browse the Food Coach Me meal plans here.

5. They keep their post-op appointments.

Just like support groups, they also faithfully keep their post-op follow ups. Whether that's with their surgeon, their dietitian, their exercise physiologist, successful patients never assume they've got it all figured out on their own. Not to toot my own horn or anything, but I do this everyday. I meet patients in all situations and stages in the process. If I didn't have something to tell everyone who came in my office, I wouldn't love what I do...I'd be BORED with what I do. Get what I'm saying? Good providers are worth keeping in touch with.

6. They try new recipes and keep variety in their diet.

Oh yeah! Food fatigue and boredom makes this way of life turn to drudgery. It's MORE than okay to still enjoy food and have fun with it! Instead of having an unhealthy relationship with food (thinking of it too often, eating it for comfort, etc) having a healthy relationship doesn't mean hating it or eating because you have to...it means making a healthy meal with different flavors that are enjoyable! You'll much more likely to enjoy your post-op lifestyle if you keep your foods exciting at meal times. (Hence all the recipes and meal plans on this site!) Find out WHAT you can eat after surgery for your best success as a FoodCoachMe Premier Access Member!

7. They don't dwell on what they can't have (or feel sorry for themselves)

Attitude is everything. Seriously....it changes everything. When you are first making major changes in your food choices, it's okay to go through normal and healthy "mourning" of saying goodbye to things. While I'm not giving permission to do a "farewell tour," I'm instead I'm saying Yes, it's okay to say "that's going to be hard to say goodbye too..." as long as you follow it up with "but it's worth it." The better you feel, the less you will miss these things. Will starches and sweets always sound good? Sure! But enjoying a brownie for 5 minutes isn't worth a lifetime of health and weight control.

8. They keep a consistent sleep schedule.

I urge patients not to underestimate how significant a good sleep schedule can impact weight loss. Sleeping little and/or going to bed at odd hours each night increases cortisol, or the stress hormone, in your body. This makes your body slow down weight-loss and increases appetite, usually for starchy foods. A well rested body is not under stress and can still with a healthy lifestyle because it's being cared for! (Hint: great to way to increase sleep AND decrease cortisol? Exercise!)

9. They find alternative sources of enjoyment other than food.

What hobbies have you always enjoyed that you've gotten away from? Writing? Furniture restoration? Gardening? Scrapbooking? Or what about socially? What friends would you like to reconnect with or what trips, even small day or evening trips would you like to make time for? There are so many things to enjoy that have nothing to do with food. Sit down and brainstorm how you'd like to spend your time? Most people don't say "I'd like to spend my time eating" because we all know it doesn't last. Getting out of the house or working on a new product is long-lasting enjoyment. Take photos of your hike outside of town. Start a blog about your furniture projects. Rekindle your enjoyment for life!

10. They make “long-term” changes the focus of their journey.

Whether patients mean to or not, it's too often I see patients make changes for a short amount of time. It could be influences from family or friends, or it could be old habits snuck in. I see patients at 3 months post-op in my office. When they report they have “a little of this” or a “a little of that” I do admit I have to lay in on pretty thick that it's FAR too early to let go of the changes they needed to make before and right after surgery. This is a marathon, not a sprint. Surgery is a wonderful tool, but don't let the “honeymoon period” lie to you. Quality food is always the answer. Always!