

Skinny Secrets - How the Slim Stay Trim.

There's no shortage of diet books on sale. In fact we all know someone, if not it's ourselves, who are on a diet. That's all well and good but how many diets actually work? Yes you might lose weight but what happens when the diet ends?

In terms of achievement we think the real success stories are those people who not only lose weight but who keep it off long term. If we can emulate those people we're on to a winner.

Dr James Hill, psychologist and authority on weight loss, oversees the US National Weight Control Registry which collects data on people who have lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for a year.

“If you look at how they lost weight, there's no commonality at all,” Hill says. But “if you look at how they kept it off, there's a lot of commonality.”

The NWCR currently tracks about 5,000 successful weight maintainers. Here's what they've found.

According to Dr Hill, successful maintenance plans share these features:

1. Exercise daily

“Activity becomes the driver; food restriction doesn't do it,” says Hill. “The idea that for the rest of your life you're going to be hungry all the time – that's just silly.”

Successful maintainers average about 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Many do up to 90 minutes a day. As Hill states, people “get to the point with physical activity where they don't say they love it, but they say ‘it's part of my life’.”

2. Control calorie, fat and sugar intake

Successful maintainers keep their diet relatively controlled. The simple knowledge of how much fat, carbohydrate, and protein they're eating, as well as appropriate portion sizing, helps them control their weight permanently.

3. Eat breakfast

If you're maintaining a healthy weight, you do this! Everyone reading this should know the importance of breakfast. But many people don't.

So spread the word. Nearly every individual successful in long-term weight loss maintenance eats breakfast every single day.

4. Weigh in

Although weighing in has become taboo, according to Dr Hill's research (as well as research from Brown University), weighing in regularly helps improve weight loss and weight loss maintenance in research participants.

Again, it comes down to awareness. If you know how many calories you're consuming, and you know how much you weigh any given week, you can adjust your intake or exercise programme as you require.

If you don't have this information, you're expecting to lose weight (or maintain your loss) on a wing and a prayer.

5. Long Term Commitment

If you're hoping to diet down to your ideal weight, then stop working on it, you're in for a surprise. Just like you don't brush your teeth once and then forget about it, research shows that staying at a healthy weight requires regular effort, exercise, and a long-term focus.

And here's one more finding from the NWCR: 62% of successful weight maintainers watch less than 10 hours of TV per week. Turn off the TV, eat breakfast, and haul out those bathroom scales!

Jon and Claire Wray own Equilibrium Health Studios in Leeds. For more info log onto www.equilibriumhealth.co.uk