



# just weight

How do I help someone struggling with obesity?

With nearly 40% of US adults considered obese, chances are you have a close friend or family member that is struggling with their weight. Obesity can lead to serious conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and certain types of cancer. Knowing how to help a loved one can help them reach their weight loss goals, whereas a lack of awareness can sabotage their success. Although some people can make changes to their lifestyle and conquer obesity on their own, many people need extra help.

**H**ere are some tips on how to play a positive role in your loved one's social support system to help encourage their success, keep them on track, and avoid impeding their progress.

**Be positive.** The most important thing you can do to help your loved one reach their weight loss goal, is to demonstrate that you believe in their ability to achieve their goal. If the dieter becomes discouraged, remind them of their other accomplishments and encourage them to move forward and not dwell on setbacks.

**Assure your loved one that you care about them no matter their size.** Let them know that you care about them and want to participate in their lives, no matter what the scale says.

**Actively participate in their program.** Make an effort to share in their efforts. Offer to go to the gym with them, or if possible, participate in their meal plan.

**Cheer them on, but don't coach.** Praise them for reaching their goals, and don't criticize them for not reaching them.

**Celebrate their losses.** Once your loved one has reached a goal, celebrate by spending time together engaged in fun, healthy activities, or treating them to a manicure, flowers, or sporting event.

**Don't judge.** If your loved one has a setback, offer encouragement and positive support to help them to stay motivated.

**Be supportive of all areas of their life.** Show interest in their life as a whole rather than only how their diet is going. Ask them how things are going at school, work, or at home.

**Understand their weight loss program.** Educate yourself to learn about your loved one's diet plan so you know how the plan works, and participate in support groups if possible. Allow them to take the time to participate in meetings and focus on their goals.

## DON'T SABOTAGE THEIR EFFORTS

- 1 **Don't tempt them.** Don't tempt your loved one by offering them "just a bite". This can lead them off track and can affect their dieting success in the long-term.
- 2 **You're not the "food police."** Don't reprimand your loved one for eating the "wrong" thing and don't comment on every food choice they make.
- 3 **Don't bombard them with information.** Unless they request it, don't try to play the role of expert by constantly providing them with dieting articles, healthy eating cookbooks, or fitness magazines.

Keep in mind that many people with obesity may also be depressed. Encourage your loved one to talk to their doctor and offer support if you are concerned about their mental health.



## ACTIONITEMS

If you have a loved one who is struggling with obesity, you can play a positive role by encouraging their success, letting them know that you care about them regardless of their size, and celebrating their progress.