



Personal Accountability.

We can't say this enough, so here we go again: Embracing healthy lifestyle habits is essential to reaching your weight loss goals. The fact is, most people know that when they make their decision to have weight-loss surgery. They understand that weight loss doesn't begin and end with the surgery, and they have all the best intentions to maintain a lifetime of healthy habits. However, like all things worthwhile, this is easier said than done. And too often we allow the routine of everyday life throw us off track. Take your pick – There's children and other family obligations, work pressures, projects around the home, holidays – each doing its own part to derail our healthy habits. It happens to all of us at one time or another. And each of us is personally accountable for getting ourselves back on track.

A major step in recognizing and accepting that accountability is resisting the all too human tendencies to rationalize (*I've been through a lot, I deserve to indulge a little*), or shift the blame (*My family is too demanding*), or make excuses (*I'm too busy*), or procrastinate (*Starting tomorrow, no more candy*). Once we're in the frame of mind to be personally accountable, we can stifle these tendencies before they take root in our minds. This will free us to focus on the positive action needed to get ourselves back on track.

For instance, we want to always remember that weight-loss is goal-oriented. And when circumstances change, it's perfectly okay to change your plan of action to achieve those goals. You can even adjust the goals themselves. It helps to write them down, along with what you need to do to reach them. Set goals in ways that progress can be measured. For instance, "I am going to walk more" is too general. On the other hand, "I am going to walk a mile" (Or maybe a specific step count if you have a pedometer) gives you something to measure your progress by.

You want to have several measurable goals on your list. They can involve eating, exercise, thinking patterns, anything that relates to your health. Review the list at least once a day. This will help you keep it top of mind.

Keep a log on your progress. Did you make your numbers? How are you feeling compared to when you started? Can you improve your goals, or add new ones?

Being accountable doesn't mean you have to be perfect. There will be setbacks. The occasional poor food choice, something unexpected that interferes with your daily walk (like rain), or any number of other distractions can come into play. Don't let it stress you. You'll find that these little blips in your program will have

very little effect on your progress if you simply pick it up the next day where you left off.

Enlist an “accountability partner”

Success loves company. When someone is there to root for you, and support you, it takes away the feeling of isolation that personal accountability sometimes can create. Enlist the help of someone to keep you focused on your weight loss goals. This could be a person from your Barix support group, a co-worker, a family member, or anyone else you trust. Just make sure it’s someone who isn’t envious of your weight loss success or generally negative. Such a person could be counter-productive even without trying to be. Generally, anyone positive, trustworthy, and genuinely concerned for your personal welfare fits the bill. It’s also important that this person be readily available and easy to contact.

Write a contract with yourself

This may seem a little frivolous at first, but it works. A written contract with yourself serves as a visible reminder of your accountability for your health. It may look something like this:

I,----- , agree to take the following steps to improve my accountability for developing healthy lifestyle habits and maintaining a healthy weight.

1. I will find positive ways to comfort myself without using food. This may include walking, a bubble bath, a phone call to my friend (Lisa), reading, or whatever beneficial activity I feel like doing at the time.
2. I will take the time, and put forth the effort to walk 9000 steps every day. In the case of a reasonable conflict in my schedule (and it had better be reasonable!), I will pick up on my exercise program the next day without fail.
3. I will make wise food and beverage choices every day. I will meet all my daily protein requirements, and employ only my healthy new eating habits.
4. I will ask my accountability partner for any help I need regarding these goals.

Signed ----- Date -----

Charting your accountability

Creating a chart like the one below will also help you to get a snapshot glance at your progress and help you spot any trends that need to be addressed.

My Accountability Plan

Healthy Habits Goals	Action Plan	Monitoring Tool	Accepting Responsibility	Accountability
Sample: Walk 9,000 steps a day-average (63,000 steps a week)	Go for a 3 mile walk each day	Pedometer Food and activity log	Time will be biggest excuse: I will make walking a priority. If I am not able to walk 3 miles one day, I will go for a 6 mile walk the next day.	My friend Maryellen has agreed to be my Accountability partner. She is also working to increase her fitness through a walking program.

And as a final note, remember that accountability doesn't have to be a burden. In fact, believe it or not it can be fun. You'll get to know yourself better. You'll enjoy more social interaction. And you'll receive a full share of positive reinforcement, including the best kind of reinforcement there is – the kind that comes from feeling better every day!

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