

The 10 Commandments of Weight Loss and Maintenance

By Herbert A. Insel, M.D., F.A.C.C.

Weight Loss! It's the easiest and hardest thing to do. It's easy, because if you consistently eat fewer calories than you burn off you will lose weight. It's hard, because who wants to eat less or has time to exercise more. With this in mind, I am going to share with you some helpful guidelines I refer to as the Ten Commandments of Weight Loss and Maintenance!

1. Thou Shall Not Drink Any Liquids Containing Calories

Liquids do not fill you up, yet they can be calorically quite "expensive" Yes, this includes alcohol. You may have to choose which is more important to you as you only have so many calories in your "bank" to spend each day. The only exception might be unsweetened almond or soymilk. These have fewer calories than skim or non-fat milk and much less sugars. Equally important is that they contain healthy fats (mono and poly unsaturated), which are beneficial for good health.

2. Thou Shall Eat Your Fruits and Vegetables!

Similar concept. Satiety is key. Foods with large water content tend to not only have fewer calories but to also give you a better sense of feeling full. These fiber-filled and nutrient rich foods are important to include in each meal.

3. Thou Shall Only Eat Foods That Require Utensils!

Obviously, there are some exceptions such as eating a piece of fruit. But the idea is to avoid calorically "expensive" and nutritionally deficient "finger" foods such as chips, cookies, candies etc. Such foods can be eaten in unknowingly large quantities in a short period and won't fill you up.

4. Thou Shall Observe: Out of Sight: Will be out of Mouth; In Sight: Will Probably be in Mouth!

You need to safeguard yourself from the many moments of weakness you undoubtedly will have. Do not keep at home, and in reach those calorically "expensive" snacks. Keep healthier alternatives around.

5. Thou Shall Learn to Live Without Bread!

We all know it. If we ate the same amount of food each day but just eliminated the bread, we might be at our ideal weight! When eating out, by the time the main dish is served you might have eaten a day's worth of calories by consuming the bread they give. It might be more expensive (monetarily!) but it would be preferable to order two appetizers rather than to have the bread.

6. Thou Shall Exercise!

Routine exercise, by promoting an abundant of beneficial reactions in the body, is one of the most important things you can do to maintain good health. The benefits extend far beyond helping one maintain a good body weight. Exercise does help you burn off calories. However, the best exercise to help you lose weight is walking. That is, walking away from food! No matter how much you exercise you still have to watch your calorie intake.

7. Thou Shall Share Your Desserts!

I cannot sentence you to a lifetime without cheesecake! But here's the rule. Have it on occasion and in moderation. When you go out with friends order the most "decadent" dessert on the menu and plenty of forks to go around. Have a few bites with your coffee or tea. I don't want you to feel deprived. Reward yourself on occasion for your consistent good eating behavior. But remember: moderation is key!

8. Thou Shall Sleep at Nights and Not Eat at Nights!

Others have said it: "Eat your breakfast by yourself, share your lunch with a friend and give your dinner away to your worst enemy." The message is clear. The earlier in the day you have your calories the more likely you will be able to burn them off. Not eating all day and stuffing it all in at nights is not the best strategy. Yes, it's total calories that count. But having them all at night just doesn't seem to work out.

9. Thou Shall Not Focus on What to Eat to "Make you" Lose Weight, But Rather What Not to Eat!

We read about it all the time. Eat this food or take this vitamin or supplement. It will burn off your fat! It will make you lose weight! Nonsense. There is no magic food, vitamin or supplement that can do that. Save your money. As noted, it's calories in and calories out. Eat healthy foods. Watch your portions. Incorporate exercise into your daily routine. That's the only way it's done.

10. Thou Shall Always Use Common Sense

This commandment incorporates all of the previous nine commandments and is meant to include all others that may not have been listed. I don't think I have reinvented the wheel in my prior remarks but merely stated the obvious. Common sense should always dictate what your best approach should be. We all know that a portion of steamed broccoli would serve us better than a bag of M&M's. Having common sense is good. Using it (and using it commonly!) is the answer!

I hope you enjoyed my Ten Commandments of Weight Loss and Maintenance. Hopefully, it will help you achieve and maintain your ideal weight. Eat healthy. Eat tasty. Live healthy. Live happy!

Herbert A Insel, MD FACC