



A Mind-Body Approach To Weight Loss

by Patricia Bisch, MA, MFT

Changing how you think about food and eating can have a dramatic effect on your body's metabolism. Numerous studies have shown that focused attention--such as prayer, meditation, and visualization--can produce a significant and measurable effect on the immune system, blood pressure, brainwave patterns, the production of neurochemicals, and many other processes in the body. Only recently, however, have mind-body tools and practices been applied to metabolism and weight loss. This is an exciting breakthrough for everyone who has tried diet and exercise programs, but has failed to lose weight.

Like any discipline, changing negative thoughts about food into positive ones--and being able to hold these new beliefs long enough to produce a physical change in your body--takes practice. Here are some ways to start chasing away sabotaging thoughts and emotions that prevent your body from returning to its perfect proportion.

Take a quantum view of your body. Start by revising the way you view your body. Do you feel heavy, dense, and solid? Most people who struggle with weight feel this way. In the world of physics, that's the Newtonian view of your body--as dense mass. But quantum physicists now know that people are made up of moving, fluctuating energy. In fact, if you could zoom in with a lens powerful enough, you would see that your body comprises countless molecules moving around in empty space. Every part of you is constantly flowing and changing at the molecular level. *Try this:* Close your eyes and feel your body as energy; imagine yourself filled with spaces through which light and air can easily move. See how much lighter you instantly feel.

Take a neutral view of food. You can use a similar mind-body approach with food. The scientific definition of calories is heat units of energy. All food--whether it's a carrot stick or a cookie--is nothing more than heat units of energy. Yet we have negative judgments about food: "That cookie is going straight to my thighs," or "I just have to *think* about ice cream and I gain weight!" Sound familiar? When you do this before you eat, you are already telling your brain this food is bad. Science has proven that thoughts influence the body's cellular activity. If you deeply believe food will make you fat, this belief solidifies in the body, creating an energetic block that seems to slow down your metabolism. In effect, your negative thoughts make you fatter. *Try this:* Think of food as heat units of energy. Since your body cannot store heat, your body will simply take in what it needs and freely release the rest.

Trust your body's ability to lose weight. When you scrape your knee, you don't even think about how you're going to fix it. That's because your body already knows how to repair wounds; sure enough, in a few days, there is no sign of the scrape. We take our body's healing ability for granted and simply trust it to heal cuts and wounds. Similarly, your body has a perfect size to which it naturally wants to return. Your body possesses the ability to "heal" itself of extra weight. It already knows how to use what it needs and eliminate what it doesn't need. All you have to do is support your body and it will do the rest by itself. Do you think of your body as your enemy? *Try this:* Instead of fighting against your body and being angry at that extra fat, reframe your point of view. Think of your body as your ally in the battle against weight. Trust your body--really believe in its ability to return to its healthiest state, just like it heals a cut, and it will.

Think like a thin person. A study done on people at their desired weight found they all had one thought in common. They all believed they could eat whatever and whenever they wanted without gaining weight.

This one seemingly small thought is part of the formula that keeps slender people at their ideal weight. Try this: Remember a time when you ate whatever you wanted and didn't gain a pound. It might have been when you were a child, or on a great vacation, or in love. When you can return to this same place in your mind--and remain there--your body will begin to shed pounds effortlessly.

One key to retraining your thoughts and emotions using the mind-body approach is to hold your new positive thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, and flick off the negative, counterproductive ones before they have a chance to stick--much as you would brush off a spark from a campfire before it burns you. With practice, you can become a healthier size, feel great about eating, and never again worry about dieting.

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