

Slim Chances: Obesity in Perspective

Part 2 - Changing for Good: Your Road Map to a Healthier Weight

*Cantering freely,
joyously, and fearlessly
through an open field is an
ultimate goal that begins with
a plan and a first step, just
like one's roadmap to weight
loss and lifestyle change.*

by Anke Johnson

Photo by Nancy McCurdy, www.nancymccurdyphotography.com

In **part 1**, we talked about factors that affect your weight. We left off with some ideas to help you set yourself up for success and get your bearings so you can prepare your weight loss roadmap. In part 2, we present how you can create your personal roadmap, pointing out areas that are a **MUST** to pay attention to for weight management.

Ready, Set, Start!

Once we are ready to get started, how and where do we start? There are a few key elements needed to help make permanent weight loss changes.

Stages

There are 6 distinct stages of change that a person will go through when making a permanent change. They are: **precontemplation** (you're not ready for change), **contemplation** (your awareness is forming), **preparation** (making plans), **action** (moving forward), **maintenance** (balancing your new change) and **termination** (change is fully formed). All of these stages must be completed *in this order* for permanent change.

By moving through these 6 stages in order, you will achieve success by:

- Creating awareness around the problem or issue you're attempting to solve (contemplation).
- Taking your present "temperature", learning about your inner saboteur affectionately called your "Gremlin" and preparing for the journey ahead (preparation).
- Intimately getting to know your comfort zone, and how to step outside of your comfort zone to expand it and grow (someone once said "everything you ever wanted is just one step outside of your comfort zone"), taking inventory to plan your roadmap to success (action).
- Understanding and defining your purpose, and how to handle the blips in the screen as you move through your journey (maintenance).
- Ultimately recognizing the change has become permanent because it's no longer an issue, rather a positive lifestyle habit (termination).

Part of your roadmap preparation will be having a plan for the “what if” portion. “What if I fail?” “What if it’s hard?” Lapse is part of weight loss and any change you embark upon; however “relapse” does not need to be part of your process! There will be challenges as you take on your tasks such as wanting results too quickly, depending on others for motivation, and self-sabotage to name a few. Weight loss is an emotional and inward change, so other areas of your life will be affected. Getting out of your head will be the most challenging part of any weight loss program; the physical part will follow quite nicely once you’ve mastered your thoughts. Even better, the folks I coach understand that this is not a diet program. Rather, it is a lifestyle change that will give them the freedom to move through the rest of their life knowing that there is nothing that they can’t handle with the lifelong skills and tools they develop in this process.

Your Roadmap

To get to your end goal, you’ll have many smaller goals along the way, sort of like the stepping stones along a walkway. Your first goal, the first step, is to lay out the rest of your roadmap.

A lot of people lose focus if they eliminate this vital preparation stage by returning to the “old” way of doing things; they quickly take action with little preparation, inviting frustration, anxiety and failure. By planning each step of your roadmap in advance, with as much foresight as possible, you will ensure a solid foundation for change. You want your foundation for change to look like provolone cheese - smooth and solid - not Swiss cheese. A solid foundation is one on which you can build and depend.

Creating a roadmap is a unique process for each individual because end goals differ, as well as means to get there. Customize your roadmap so that it works for YOU. You can choose to use or adapt one that’s already been created from proven masters and teachers such as Parelli, Rashid or Zetl for example. If you do choose to create your own, here is a basic guideline that I use with all of my coaching clients.

- First, determine your end goal - what do you ultimately wish to achieve?
- Next, look at the tools, budget and timeline that you have. Be realistic here as many a great plan has been foiled by someone being unrealistic about one or all of these factors.
- Finally map out the landmarks and the small steps in between that it will take to get you to your ultimate goal.

For example, if you’d like to be able to canter through an open field with joy and not worry or fear, ask yourself first, “Where am I now?” Can you ride your horse at all? If not perhaps the first step is to build a trusting and comfortable

relationship with your horse. If you already have this and can ride, your roadmap may begin with getting your horse or you physically fit enough, or emotionally and mentally fit. It may include riding gaits beyond a walk or riding outside a ring. Break it all down into smaller, well-defined steps. Take into account the “full enchilada” as you think this through, keeping in mind that you’re looking to change your lifestyle - to support a healthier weight and a healthier you.

Wrinkles in the map

If you find you’re frustrated because you’re not progressing along your roadmap, ask yourself, “Is part of my foundation missing? Is it possible I’ve missed a step? Is a goal or step unclear or out of order? Is one of my steps a need to unload or discard something other than weight?” Signs that your foundation may have holes in it include procrastination, frustration, excuses, relapse, losing focus, and attaining your goals but not maintaining them to make a permanent change or new habit. You can compare this situation to someone you know who’s always had a goal to lose weight but has trouble keeping it off (often called a yo-yo dieter). The culprit here is often a foundation with holes in it. Go back the necessary steps, adjust the path ahead with appropriate stepping stones/goals, and move on. Being flexible and adaptable is a must, yet sticking to the ultimate goal is essential as well.

Change for Good

When we talk about changing your lifestyle for good and shedding some extra weight, there are two main components to think about: What you eat and how you move. Let’s start with what you eat.

Calories in

Because of the demands on our time, we often turn to the “buy it, nuke it, eat it” principle. These are mostly processed foods that have a high sodium content, many artificial ingredients, preservatives, chemical flavors and colors, and other unwanted and hidden ingredients. It’s important to look at the ingredient list - would you use these if preparing this food at home yourself?

Another consideration is, what are you displacing from your diet when you eat processed foods? What are you asking your body to deal with instead of *food*? The foods that we do want to be reaching for that will help support our life are the very foods that we avoid because we’re “too full” from our processed foods.

Fresh, live, naturally colorful foods are what will support our health now and into our twilight years. For example, look for seasonal, colorful produce in your grocery store, or better yet from your local and organic farmers. Eat these foods raw or lightly steam them to preserve all the natural digestive enzymes that you get only from these live foods.

Carbohydrates have gotten a bad rap. Carbs are like friends; pick the right ones and they'll support you forever! Carbohydrates that are highly processed (like white flour, white rice, pastas, pastries and breads) are highly processed foods and should be avoided. However complex carbohydrates are rich in fiber and nutrients, help to give you a feeling of fullness, and provide sustained energy for longer periods of time as well as stabilizing your blood sugar for reduced cravings. So by balancing your carbohydrates and making good choices, you're providing your body with genuine food - a vital resource it needs to give you the energetic, full life you're striving for! Good examples: potatoes, yams, vegetables, legumes, a wide variety of leafy greens, and whole grain products.

Good sources of complete protein are essential for every cell in our body. Protein will help support and build muscle as well, which is essential for a higher resting metabolic rate that will burn more calories while you're at rest. Legumes, dairy products, nuts and meats are all sources of protein, but choose wisely - know your source, and know your body's ability to utilize them.

The enzymes, proteins, carbohydrates, and more (including good fats) all work in concert with each other to fuel the body and keep it running efficiently. Anything not utilizable by the body affects that efficiency, and affects its ability to discard wastes, including extra weight.

One important thing to mention here is that starvation or a dramatic decrease in calories is NOT the answer. By doing this, you will engage the natural survival instinct in your body to conserve calories by taking everything that you eat and converting it to fat stores "just in case". Your body will start to scavenge the very important muscle tissue for immediate energy, leaving you with a lowered metabolism and the start to a very destructive yo-yo dieting roulette wheel.

Calories out

When it comes to movement, there are almost as many choices here as there are good things to eat! You'll never be short of fun ways to expend energy. You'll want to incorporate a few things into your routine to ensure a balanced exercise or movement program (for those of you who are averse to the word exercise) that include cardiovascular fitness, resistance and weight-bearing training, and functional fitness (which uses more than one muscle group at a time and gives you a whole body workout). Finding a partner or a coach in the earlier stages of starting your movement program can be critical and can certainly increase the level of fun that you'll have getting fit!

A big part of exercise or movement that's often ignored and is crucial to a permanent program is corrective and rehabilitative exercises before and after your routine, such as postural alignment, stretching properly, or foam rolling, to release toxins and free up tight fascia. Having body work such as restorative massage or gentle chiropractic work and

doing daily meditation are also essential for a healthy body. Think about everything we do for our horses - we should be doing similar things for ourselves!

Finally one of the most important things in a movement program is to stimulate your mind. Go outside; do things that you like; go hiking, change your routine at least once every 3 weeks to create "muscle confusion" so that your body needs to use new muscle groups and does not become complacent. By making sure that one of your markers for exercise is FUN, you'll be sure to stick with your movement program. Even if you're on a treadmill, walk backwards (carefully), walk sideways, skip, "canter" and do lead changes!

Make It Permanent

Your definition of "diet and exercise" should be a *new lifestyle*, not a short term fix, and for YOU, not for someone else - although your horse will appreciate it. It's important to understand your eating patterns (that emotional aspect we've been talking about), monitor your progress on a regular and consistent basis, and apply common sense to what you eat and how you move. Simple things like eating breakfast and having 4-6 small meals per day, cutting out the processed foods and moving on a daily basis will propel you and your more efficient body towards success!

Small, doable steps that are supported, accountability to give you that extra push, and rewards for each small goal achieved are just a few things that will help you achieve that lifestyle you've been seeking. The definition of a successful self changer is one who has been able to remain "changed" after 10 years of success, and who no longer feels compelled to go back to the destructive habits they had before they chose to change.

If you are new to a supportive diet or a good movement program, enlist the help of a professional until you get into the swing of things. This lifetime investment in yourself will pay you back 100 fold as you're cantering pain-free and with energy well into your twilight years with your equine partners! 🐾

About the author:

Anke Johnson began coaching others more than 20 years ago. She's a certified Professional Health and Life Coach, certified AFAA Fitness Trainer, certified Nutritional Consultant and



Reiki Master Practitioner. As a lifelong rider, Anke understands how the challenges of horsemanship and the challenges of life interweave. With Anke's help, equestrians and busy career people gain the self-knowledge, confidence and body awareness they need to get them closer to that perfect ride, in and out of the saddle. Learn more about her business, Natural Solutions by Anke LLC, at www.naturalsolutionsbyanke.com or 608-467-0008.