

## Three Reasons You Don't Want to be the Biggest Loser

*"At what point will society begin to doubt the wisdom of dieting rather than the fortitude of dieters?" -Dr. Michelle May*

Well, the NBC show, *The Biggest Loser*, kicked off its 12th season last night and those of you who are fans have probably picked your favorites. I tune into the show a few times during the season, not because I'm a fan, but because clients ask me about it.

I can't help but be moved by the stories of the contestants and how badly they want to be at a "normal" weight and live a "normal" life. And, maybe that's why I have such a hard time with the show's concept - because I care about those contestants and everyone who struggles with their weight. I just wish this "reality show" would portray losing weight more realistically, coaching the contestants in their own homes to change their lifestyles gradually over a year or more and explaining that being obese often has little to do with food (ABC is making a good attempt with their *Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition*).

But, of course, that wouldn't be nearly as interesting to the viewers or as profitable to NBC. I and the network know that people want to be thin NOW! They want to lose 10 pounds in a week. Our society operates at breakneck speed and no one wants to slow down for process - they want the magic pill. Weight loss and getting fit can't be a goal with an ending - it must be a daily process - like taking a shower or brushing your teeth or doing your laundry. They become habits and the habits become the goal - you may not want to do them all the time, but the payoff is worth it.

But, as it is, I believe the show does a great disservice to the contestants, to those who watch the show and frankly to those fitness and wellness professionals out here working to help clients embrace a healthy lifestyle!

So, this may not be a popular stance, but here are three reasons why you don't want to be the biggest loser.

1. Research shows that vigorous exercise paired with severe calorie restriction will actually slow down weight loss. The safe rate of weight loss is about one pound a week for women and two pounds a week for men. One pound of fat = 3500 calories, which means that to lose one pound, a woman must have a daily "calorie deficit" of 500 calories. The easiest way to do this is to decrease your caloric intake by 250 calories and increase your caloric expenditure by 250 calories.

I'm not a proponent of counting calories, so this example is really just to give you a picture of what I'm talking about. For me, my 45-minute jog burns about 300 calories, so if you add a brisk 30-60 minute walk daily (200-400 calories) and cut out the two cans of Coke per day you're drinking (150 calories each = 300 calories), you will have created a "calorie deficit" of approximately 500 calories. We're not talking about

deprivation here - just a couple of small tweaks. And, by the way, losing one pound of fat in a week is a HUGE accomplishment!

2. And, how about that vigorous exercise that is shown on the show? The contestants exercise for HOURS per day. The biggest complaint my clients have is that they can't find time to exercise and take care of themselves. Okay, the nuts and bolts of exercise: The American College of Sports Medicine recommendations for physical activity for health are 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise five times per week. For a higher level of fitness or weight loss, the recommendations double to 60 minutes of moderate intensity exercise five times per week. An example of moderate intensity exercise is brisk walking. So, you CAN make a difference in your health and your weight with a "doable" amount of physical activity.

3. It's not about the food, anyway! Sure, if a woman has 10, 20, or even 30 pounds that has crept on over the years, what I call the "caregiver padding," it's probably about the fact that she has put herself on the back burner while raising kids or building a career. She's not getting enough physical activity and is not paying enough attention to what she's eating and how much. Once she moves herself to the front burner and tweaks her lifestyle and those pounds will drop off at a safe rate and she will feel SO much better about herself and probably keep the weight off .

However, when a woman has 50, 75 or 100 pounds to lose, has yo-yo dieted for years and can't keep the weight off, it's about something else. And, that something else is that she is using food as a substitute for dealing with something in her life that she's unhappy about. So, once she begins to deal with what's eating her (pun intended), she'll be less likely to use food as a coping mechanism.

So, what do you do if you want to be more in charge of your weight? Next, time, I'll be writing about Mindful or Intuitive Eating – a way of approaching food that will help you achieve not only lasting weight loss, but will address WHY you're eating and help you learn to Eat What You Love and Love What You Eat!

Please leave your comments, questions and ideas below. And, remember, "It is never too late to be what you might have been." -George Eliot

Lisa :-)

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