



Say NO to WEIGHT-LOSS SABOTEURS

Losing weight may be one of the greatest things to happen to you, but what if your friends or family don't share your enthusiasm? Here's how to cope with weight-loss saboteurs.

When Milly*, now 23, met Joel, she was 82kg thanks to a university diet of greasy food and beer. "Joel made me feel beautiful and special like no one ever had," she says. Things went swimmingly for their first year together, but when Milly started developing a few health issues she knew it was time to get healthy.

Joel started off supportive, but when Milly's workout schedule got in the way of dates, or she'd order a salad at dinner, he'd get upset. "One day he told me that I'd lost enough weight and that I had to stop because he fell in love with 'curvy Milly'.

"I told him that his approval wasn't my goal. My goal was to feel energised and confident and not feel out of breath after walking for 10 minutes," she says.

Over the following months Joel started worrying other guys would hit on Milly and he became

convinced she was cheating on him. "He had no reason to be jealous and finally I got the nerve to break it off. It was the hardest thing I've ever had to do," says Milly.

We naturally expect our loved ones to celebrate our successes, but unfortunately Milly's situation isn't unusual. "A lot of friends and family are really supportive, but it's also not uncommon for people's friends and family to be unsupportive of their progress," explains Glenn Mackintosh, a weight management psychologist. "In some cases it will be obvious with partners saying things like 'You're no fun when you're not eating or drinking with me'. But in other cases it might be smaller sabotaging actions, such as offering food that's not good for their goals," says Mackintosh.

Making big changes can be challenging enough without the important people in your life holding you back, so here are some ways to deal with problem partners and friends. ➤

57%

US research found that having an obese friend could up your chances of obesity by 57 per cent. The message? Encourage each other to eat well and get fit.

WHAT ABOUT SELF SABOTAGE?

Do you stay focused for a while only to lose motivation ... again and again? The key is not depriving yourself. "Eat the foods you like, but in small quantities," says Dr. Sharon Marks, a physician specialising in nutrition. "If you say foods are bad, then you'll start to crave them and overeat them because they're forbidden."



SITUATION

Our relationship revolves around food

If indulgent dinners and movie nights with chocolate were the hallmarks of your friendship or relationship, your loved one might seem put out by your new healthy lifestyle. "Sometimes changing behavioural routines can be challenging for friends and family," says Mackintosh. "If you and your partner have a couple of glasses of wine with a meal each night, they can feel a bit upset if you don't want to participate."

SOLUTION

Show them a new flavour of fun

Instead of ignoring your friends or sulking through a catch-up that isn't in line with your priorities, Mackintosh suggests finding new ways to spend time together. Whether it's signing up for a charity walk or having a cook-off to see who can make the healthiest muffins, it's up to you to show your friends and family that being healthy isn't a burden. And whatever you do, avoid preaching about your new healthy lifestyle. "If you're telling everyone they're drinking too much and acting like you're better, that's not going to endear you to anyone," explains Meredith Fuller, psychologist and author of *Working with Mean Girls*. "But if you're still having fun, people won't really focus on the drinks you did or didn't have."

SITUATION

My friends like me large

Sophia, 32, was shocked by two of her friends' reactions to her Weight Watchers results. Instead of celebrating her new-found confidence with her, they subtly sabotaged her efforts. "Even though I'm engaged, they'd try to get me to talk to guys who were showing me attention when we were out," says Sophia. "One time I was talking to a guy and he texted me the next day because they'd given him my number. It was very strange." They also put pressure on her to drink high **ProPoints** value cocktails and get kebabs on the way home from the pub. It was only when Sophia's partner and another friend pointed out their toxic behaviour that she realised they weren't good company and she then distanced herself from them.

SOLUTION

Communication is key

If someone is being a saboteur, Mackintosh suggests stepping away from the relationship – even if it's for the short term. "The more time you spend with supportive people, the better," he says. But if the friendship is worth keeping, then open communication is crucial. "Raise what you're noticing, but

rather than attacking and embarrassing them, give them the opportunity to share their feelings without feeling judged," he says.

You can do that by clearly explaining your motivations. Instead of being vague and saying, 'I want to lose weight', tell them how you want to feel comfortable in a swimsuit at the beach, or that you want to be able to walk into a room and feel confident to talk to people. "We all like to be part of something positive, so if they can understand what's going on, it can help change their attitude and how supportive they are," says Mackintosh.

PATCH IT UP

If talking with your friend or partner isn't working, it's worth engaging a third party, or suggesting they talk with someone. "Encourage them to get their own support, whether it's a friend or counsellor, to help them deal with the transition," says Mackintosh. Try these suggestions, too.

- Find a psychologist at psychology.org.au/findapsychologist
- Bring up your concerns with your Weight Watchers Leader at a meeting
- Ask other people about their experiences on the Weight Watchers forums or the Weight Watchers Facebook page.

SITUATION

My partner is jealous

You might think your partner would be thrilled at the idea of having a slim, confident person on their arm, but weight loss can spark insecurity in some people. "They fear that your lifestyle is changing and maybe you won't find them attractive anymore," explains Fuller.

SOLUTION

Share the journey

While it can be tempting to roll your eyes and tell them to stop being ridiculous, Fuller warns against it. "The worst thing you can do is act as though you want them to just get over it, because often they don't know how," she says. Instead of always running off doing new activities, try to involve your partner. "Why not try something new so you're both having fun together," says Fuller. "Remind them that you couldn't have done what you've done without their support, so you're involving them in the whole process." ■

TIME TO CALL IT QUILTS?

If you feel you've tried everything to work it out with your partner or friends and have had no luck, Mackintosh says it might be time to sever ties. "If one partner taking care of themselves doesn't work for the relationship, then you have to question the health of that relationship," he says.