

Kick the last 5 kilos

Hit a bump in the fat-burn road? Jumpstart your motivation, navigate surprising obstacles and get moving again with strategies from leading experts

By Alex Davies



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Whether you're at the tail end of a long weight-loss journey, or just want to drop a jeans size, a small number of kilos can be harder to shake than seagulls around fries. "If you've been doing the same thing day in, day out for months, your body can just stop responding," says celebrity trainer Tegan Haining. "Or if a few kilos is all you have to lose, you may need to look at outside-the-norm factors like sleep and hormones." Dietitian Chloe McLeod adds that at this stage, "it's often just small [lifestyle] adjustments needed, so it can feel difficult because it's harder to identify them."

Also on the list of potential obstacles? A motivation nosedive when you're busy, stressed or have hit a plateau. Or perhaps you've seen results from your efforts, enjoyed the feedback but then relaxed a bit too much. Whatever's going on, "consistency in healthy choices day to day is going to get the best results long term," says McLeod.

As enthusiastic all-staff emails often proclaim, teamwork makes the dream work. That's why we've enlisted an expert support squad to get you back on track. Here's how they help clients shift those last few stubborn kilos – and stay healthy and happy for life.



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Walking more than this many steps daily is linked with greater weight-loss success. Lace up, buddy.

Source: *Translational Journal of the American College of Sports Medicine*

The top trainer

PT Tegan Haining has worked with Jessica Gomes, Natalie Imbruglia and David Beckham. She's also the author of fitness and diet plan *The 7 Day Quickie*

Decode your hormones

"Cortisol is our stress hormone and, when it's elevated, we can hold fat more around our abdominal region, belly button and side profile. When you [address] stress, those extra five kilos might suddenly fall away. Our bodies let go of water weight we're holding onto, we might not be comfort eating as much, we're sleeping better. Learning to manage your stress levels is important – even just take a moment in your day for three deep calming breaths."

Rock resistance

"Cardio burns fat, but only while you're doing that exercise. However, if you add resistance with body weight or weights, you carry on burning fat *after* you leave the gym. Why? Your body has to work to rebuild the muscle you've just broken down. That's when your metabolism fires up because you need to convert energy to fuel those muscles. It's not about trying to lift as much weight as you possibly can – I'll do, say, 60–70 per cent of the most I could do. Do 10–12 reps of an exercise and then move on."

... And rest!

"People try to do everything very fast in the gym, but I'm always trying to get my clients to slow down. You might do a circuit-style training session with resistance and weights, but don't be afraid of your rest period – that's where the magic happens! You could give yourself 30-second rests between exercises. It feels like a long time, but by the 20th set, you're going to be loving those 30 secs. That's when you're

getting a flood of oxygen back into your muscles and regaining strength, so you get the most out of every single working set."

Turn the lights out

"How you wake up really dictates your day. If you're feeling irritable and angry, you're probably going to take that attitude into your day. Your growth hormones are also released at night-time while you're sleeping – they're the ones responsible for building lean muscle and helping you burn fat – so not getting adequate sleep really does mean that a lot of people struggle to lose that extra layer. Going to bed at 1am? Try 10pm, bringing it earlier by increments of 15 minutes."

Ditch bathroom scales

"If you're gaining muscle and losing fat, you can still weigh the same amount. But people get so discouraged by a number on the scales – and that's a great way to have a croissant for breakfast instead of eggs and protein, because you think your efforts aren't working. There are more accurate ways to track progress, like using a measuring tape, photos or finding a pair of jeans you can't fit into, then seeing where you're at after three months of training."

Always do the maths

"Look at the accumulative effect of your day-to-day patterns. Clients will say, 'I only have two glasses of wine in the evening', but that's still 14 glasses of wine a week. And if you're struggling to lose the extra layer, could that be a contributing factor? If you cut back to one or two days a week, you're getting rid of 10–12 units. That's a lot! These are the little things that make a difference to one or two kilos of weight in the body."

Switch your mindset

"During busy times, it's better to exercise two or three days a week and be satisfied, rather than putting pressure on yourself to work out every day, and then feeling like a failure if you don't do that. You might not be reaching new goals, but you're going to stay on course."

The nutrition pro

Chloe McLeod is an accredited practising dietitian and sports dietitian with a focus on gut health

Do a total reset

"Food diaries can be incredibly useful, as writing everything down means you become more aware of everything [you eat]. Also, if your motivation's flagging, come back to your goal. Even create an external reminder, like changing your phone background to the place you're going on holiday in a few months."

Eat pizza (yes, really!)

"If there's been too much restriction or deprivation, you feel like you're missing out on things – a glass of wine or pizza – and after a while, you don't want to [miss out] anymore. I often talk to clients about still including some of those extra things throughout the weight-loss process, because it makes it much easier to maintain the changes they've been making. And it can be easier to say 'no', because you'll know you'll have those treats at a point when you really want them."

Don't forget weekends

"One of my clients [who'd hit a weight-loss plateau] was killing it with her food between Monday and Friday. But then, come Saturday, she'd have cake with her husband after the gym, then lunch with friends and usually half a bottle of wine in the evening. So her overall kilojoule intake for the day doesn't compare to the rest of the week. It's about looking where you can make small changes. She didn't want to *not* have the cake, which is totally fine, so we looked at how we could make lunch lighter, or not include some of the other snacks in the day."

Nix cravings with carbs

"If you're craving carbohydrates, often it's because there haven't been enough healthier carbs at other times of the day. Say, lunch is a tuna salad – a really healthy

lunch, but a lot of the time because there are no carbohydrates there, you'll end up being a bit hungry or looking for those carbs later on in the afternoon. Incorporating a small portion of the right carbs at lunch (like chickpeas, quinoa or sweet potato) can help manage that afternoon craving. Same with dinner and craving sweets afterwards."

Spot hidden kJs

"Things like cordial (whether it's sugar-containing or one with artificial sweetener) can add kilojoules or increase that taste for something sweet later in the day. A lot of smoothies and yoghurts can be quite high in kilojoules, so be mindful of those. And if you like a milky coffee, maybe have one a day rather than two, or a piccolo instead of a large."

Portion distortion

"If you're overeating it's hard to lose weight – but also if you're undereating. I'm talking to more and more people about eating *enough* rather than cutting back. Your body needs enough food to function each day, and in some cases, eating too little can slow weight loss as your body tries to conserve fuel. Look at portions, timing and activity – if you're getting up, walking your dog, going to a spin class and are pretty active, you'll have different energy requirements from somebody who gets up, goes to work, does a yoga class and that's about it."

Love power foods

"Legumes are one of the best food groups for weight loss. They're rich in fibre, are low GI and really good for your gut health because of the prebiotic fibres they contain. Also focus on good-quality protein and eating at least five serves of vegies each day. Keep well hydrated, too."

The mind expert

Glenn Mackintosh is a leading psychologist and the founder of Weight Management Psychology in Brisbane

Be honest with yourself

"First off, ask if you're taking care of yourself. Are you eating nutritiously – not perfectly – and moving your body regularly and getting enough sleep? If so, your body's going to find its natural weight. When people are trying to lose those last five or 10 kilos, sometimes what they're actually doing is fighting against their body. If you've spent five years trying to get there, it might be that what you actually want is not to lose five kilos but to improve your body image. That comes from embracing the body you have now from a place of love and acceptance."

Eat more mindfully

"People who manage their weight best in the long term are intuitive eaters. They ask what their body

is telling them – if it's hungry, it's saying I need to eat nutritious foods. When it starts to get full, that's a natural sign to stop. How is a food going to affect them? Not is it 'good' or 'bad', but will it make them feel satisfied and energised, or sluggish and tired? Intuitive eaters don't have avoided foods; they just listen to their bodies. Be present, pause and ask, 'Is this food a good choice for me?'"

Get your mojo back

"Hypnotherapy is fantastic for motivation. It's not someone controlling your mind; it's a process you go through with a qualified hypnotherapist that allows your mind to open to new ideas that are right for you on deeper levels. It's very relaxing. Try a light self-hypnotic process at home – close your eyes, take a few deep breaths and imagine how you want the day to go. For example, you imagine yourself feeling stressed and tired at work, but then going for an afternoon walk and feeling good. In a relaxed state, you're suggesting to yourself that you'll actually do that."

Expand the picture

"For most people, their 'why' or the reason they're making changes is weight loss, and that's not always helpful long term. As soon as you get [to your goal], you often lose motivation. Your 'why' can be important, but try zooming out from the number on the scales and looking at *all* of the 'whys' – the multiple reasons it's wonderful to take great care of yourself, like health and how it makes you feel."

Tune into emosh eating

"Part of intuitive eating is noticing all of the other reasons we eat, whether it's just because a food is there or you're emotional. Acknowledge that emotional eating won't make you feel better and use it as a signal – 'I'm having a food craving, I'm not hungry; let's look at what's behind that craving.' Not sure what you're feeling? Just start writing whatever comes into your mind. After a page or two, you'll get to the issue." **WH**

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Ditch the 'D' word: taking a two-week break in the middle of a diet actually helped a study group shed more kilos than continuous dieters – and maintain it better in the long run.

Source: University of Tasmania

Tap away cravings

Yep, we said tap – as in the thing you impatiently do to your watch when your mate's running late. But stay with us: this is a legit technique Mackintosh uses to help people curb food hankerings. The gist? When you have a craving, tapping on certain acupressure points on your face and body sends a calming message to your brain, which helps you think more clearly and make better choices. "When you do it, you can feel the craving just clear away," explains Mackintosh. Science is on side: a Bond University team scanned the brains of study participants before and after four weeks of DIY tapping therapy. They saw that the brain area that activates hunger and cravings settled down after the month of peeps getting their tap on. Check out the researchers' online program at weightmanagementpsychology.com.au.