

Even if you are highly motivated in your weight loss efforts, chances are that you will at some point experience a setback. Lapses are a part of life. Holidays, vacation time, and stress can all trigger us to fall back into old habits. And while brief lapses in your program will not significantly affect your long term success, learning how to effectively cope with lapses is an important part of maintaining change.

Preventing A Lapse

- **Recognize high risk situations.** What problems or challenges lie ahead? How will you prepare for them?
- **Build your skills.** Remember that eating is often a coping mechanism for other issues, such as boredom, stress, anger, or depression. Finding alternate ways to address these emotions is critical to your success!
- **Manage stress.** Stress is a surefire way to head back into old eating habits. Remember that “stressed” spelled backwards is “desserts”!
- **Visualize your desired plan of action.** Envision the steps you will take to meet your goals.
- **Identify role models.** Who embodies your vision of health? What makes them successful?
- **Avoid triggers.** What triggers a health-related lapse? How can you take steps to minimize them? Adjust the environment to suit your needs.

Consider This...

Willpower? Get over it!

The notion of “willpower” often has negative connotations. Saying, “I have no willpower” and using it as a reason for failure overlooks the underlying reasons why you were unable to successfully make changes. The secret to success is “**skillpower**”—developing the skills you need to manage difficult situations.

Avoiding A Relapse

- **Take positive actions to recover.** Set a new goal for yourself, plan a healthy meal, or enjoy a longer workout. Take positive steps to get back on track.
- **Review past achievements.** Remind yourself of positive changes, weight loss, or health improvements.
- **Learn from your failures.** Identify exactly what caused you to lapse. How can you learn from your mistakes, and what can you do differently?
- **Seek support.** Enlist the help of friends, family or support group members to encourage you to stick to your goals.
- **Get comfortable with “gray.”** Healthy eating is not as black and white as many of us believe. If you have a relapse, do not succumb to the all-too-common, “What’s the use? It’s pointless!” mentality.

