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## Chapter 1: My Background and Education

When I was twelve or thirteen years old, I was overweight. My nickname was “snowman” because I was round and white. I had low self-confidence and self-esteem.

It got to the point where my mom told me that I had to either stop eating cheeseburgers or start working out. I chose to workout. Luckily, she had a friend who was a personal trainer who came over and taught me basic weight-training exercises (my parents had a home gym). I wasn't very dedicated to it, and I didn't do it very often, but that was my introduction to fitness.

I wasn't one of the “cool kids” in high school. I got good grades and was nerdy and so I got made fun of a lot. I tried to play football for a couple of years to try and fit in, but I never got to actually play in the games. I did some weight training and cardio with the team but nothing serious.

It wasn't until my sophomore year that I got serious about lifting. I was on a skiing trip with my family when I caught an edge on my snowboard and tore my ACL. As I lay in that hotel room while my family was out on the slopes, something clicked: I did not want to be the overweight kid anymore. When I got back home, I hobbled into the gym with a cast on my leg and started weight training harder than I ever had. All I could do was upper body, so I saw physical changes fairly quickly. Once my ACL had healed, I began to train legs and add cardio. By the time I was a senior in high school, I decided I wanted to enter a bodybuilding competition. Everyone thought I was crazy.

My mom's friend who initially taught me basic exercises knew of a guy who she said could help me prepare for the bodybuilding show. He was key in building the foundation of knowledge that would change my life forever. He had me do a low-carb diet and taught me all about weight training and cardio. I was excited by the results I saw, and they motivated me to work hard so I could step on that stage with confidence.

I skipped my senior prom to compete in my first bodybuilding show and I took second place at only seventeen years old. The local newspaper featured me on the front page. I've been hooked ever since. All together I have competed in five shows, winning first place multiple times. Between competing in shows, working with a few different coaches, and meeting other bodybuilders, I've been able to learn more and more about what works and what doesn't.

It wasn't long before I decided to become a personal trainer myself. I received my personal training certification with the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) and worked as a trainer at both 24hr Fitness and Gold's Gym. I also began to study nutrition in

college. I was majoring in dietetics at BYU. I studied nutrition for three years there before changing career paths to become a firefighter/paramedic, which is my profession now.

During my studies, I began to “coach” my friends who wanted to diet and lose weight. I was able to apply my knowledge from my bodybuilding competitions as well as my three years of nutritional studies in college to help them achieve their goals. After seeing the results I could offer them, my friends told more and more people about me until I had a steady flow of clients all from word of mouth.

Eventually, diet coaching became a part-time job for me. I would sit down with my clients for an hour every week and go over their results. We would make alterations to their plan and work together to reach their goals. I have a big folder at home full of their success stories.

Exercise and Nutrition has always been a passion of mine. The purpose of this book is to *teach* you the most successful way to diet and lose weight, based on my personal experiences and the experiences of all my clients. I want to teach you what I know. This isn't “another diet”. This is a lifestyle change for the better. This will change the way you view dieting. It will change the way you look at food. This will change your life.

## Chapter 2: Goal Setting

The first step on your fitness journey is to set clear goals. To do so, ask yourself questions like *Why am I dieting? What exactly is my goal here?* Having a clear picture of where you want to be gives your fitness journey a purpose and destination.

When setting a goal, it's important to follow the following steps:

1. **Be specific.** What are you really trying to accomplish? “Look better” and “lose weight” are NOT very specific goals. The more specific you are, the better you can plan to achieve that goal.
2. **Make your goal measurable.** You need to be able to quantify and measure your goal. “Feeling better” or “looking better” are not measurable; they are subjective goals. Losing ten pounds or losing three inches on your waist—those are measurable goals because you can track them with numbers.
3. **Be realistic.** Don't set a goal that is so far out of reach that you'll get discouraged and give up. When I was competing in bodybuilding shows, I used to want to be the most muscular and ripped guy out there. But no matter how hard I pushed myself, I learned that there is always someone out there who is better. My goal was not realistic. No matter how hard you work, if you weigh 300 pounds, it's not realistic to want to lose 150 pounds in three months.
4. **Make a timeline.** Set a date for when you're going to achieve your goal. I've found that when you have a deadline or certain date you're shooting for, you're more likely to stick to your exercise and diet plan when it gets tough.

Now that you've got the steps, make a specific, measurable, realistic goal and set a timeline for yourself. Write it down. *A goal not written down is just a wish.*

### Take “before” and “after” Progress Pictures

I know this can be hard to do, especially if you feel like you're out of shape. This can be very frightening and embarrassing for a lot of people. But I can't stress the importance of this enough.

We see ourselves multiple times per day in the mirror. We're constantly checking our appearance. When you're dieting, you're probably going to be checking more often. You want to see the results.

The fact is, you aren't going to notice when you lose 1/8” on your waist. You aren't going to see a 2lb loss in the mirror. But if you take before and after pictures, you will be able to see the progress you've made more visibly. It's very gratifying to visually see the progress you've made. This was a requirement for my clients when they started working with me because it is so valuable and encouraging.

Take a picture from the front, from the side, and from the back—preferably in your underwear or swimsuit. Then save these pictures somewhere you will be able to find them again. Like I said, I

know this can be embarrassing and frightening, but after you've put in a few months of hard work and retake the pictures, you'll be shocked, excited, and proud of the progress you've made.

## Chapter 3: Calories

Low Carb, Keto, Mediterranean Diet, Caveman Diet, Low Fat, Intermittent Fasting, Paleo, etc. The list goes on and on! How are you supposed to figure out which one is best and which one works?

I'm going to share with you what I think is the best diet and why. The definition of "diet" is "the kinds of food a person eats". So technically we're all on a diet of some sort, whether it's structured or not.

When I was competing in bodybuilding shows, I worked with several different coaches. They all had a slightly different approach when it came to dieting. Therefore, I've had the opportunity to try out multiple diets.

What I'm going to suggest is going to sound a little crazy. And this is where I'm quite a bit different than other "diet coaches" or "dieters".

*It doesn't matter which diet you do.*

What matters is **CALORIES**. Calories are King when it comes to dieting.

### **What are Calories?**

A calorie is actually a unit of measure. It's used to measure energy. More specifically, it's the amount of energy it takes to raise the temperature of 1g water by one degree Celsius.

Why they decided to use calories to measure the amount of energy in food, I'm not sure. But that's what it means. **Calories=Energy.**

Calories come from 4 things: carbohydrates, proteins, fats, and alcohol. Water, vitamins and minerals do not have calories.

Carbohydrates = 4 calories per 1 gram

Proteins = 4 calories per 1 gram

Fats = 9 calories per 1 gram

Alcohol = 7 calories per 1 gram

*Note:* Carbohydrates and proteins both have four calories per gram, while fats have more than double the calories per gram (9). This will be important to remember later down the line when you start to develop your own diet plan.

When we eat and drink, we put calories (energy) into our body. The key to weight loss is putting in the right amount of calories.

## Calories In vs. Calories Out

Our largest usage of calories comes from what's called your "*Basal Metabolic Rate*" (BMR). This is the amount of calories that your body needs and uses daily to maintain its normal function. About 70% of your daily calorie usage comes from this.

The other 30% or so comes from daily exercise, whether that's structured exercise or walking from the house to your car, going up the stairs at work, etc.

When we're trying to lose weight, we need to be in a negative calorie balance. This is called a "*Caloric Deficit*". For example: if your body needs 2,000 calories to perform daily, and you eat 1,800 calories, you're in a Negative Calorie Balance of 200 calories.

$$2,000 \text{ calorie need} - 1,800 \text{ calorie intake from food} = 200 \text{ calories needed}$$

This will cause weight loss. Period. Your body needs 200 calories that you did not give it. It has to have that energy. What does it do? It uses your fat stores. Those 200 calories that your body needs will come from the calories stored on your body as fat.

The opposite happens when you're in a "*Caloric Surplus*", meaning, you eat more calories than your body needs. For example, if you need 2,000 calories to perform daily and you eat 2,200 calories, your body will store that extra 200 calories that it did not need or use in the form of fat.

In general, 3,500 calories = 1 pound of fat.

## Chapter 4: “Macros”- Proteins, Carbohydrates, and Fats

Now that we understand what calories are and where they come from, let’s dive a little deeper into the three macronutrients frequently referred to as “macros”: Proteins, Carbohydrates, and Fats.

Some people follow a diet called “If It Fits Your Macros” (IIFYM). Basically, it’s a diet that people believe will yield better results if they eat a certain ratio of proteins/carbs/fats. For example, a 40/20/40 diet is where 40% of your calories come from protein, 20% from carbs, and 40% from fat. I do not personally believe in this dieting method, *but if it puts you in a caloric deficit, it will work.*

The purpose of this chapter is to increase your understanding and knowledge of the macro nutrients themselves.

### Proteins

Proteins are chains of amino acids. There are “complete” and “incomplete” proteins. Complete proteins have all 9 essential amino acids. Incomplete proteins are missing 1 or more amino acids. Proteins take longer for your body to digest than other nutrients, such as carbohydrates.

Complete proteins come from animal-based products such as eggs, meat, chicken, fish, milk and dairy. Incomplete proteins come from other sources such as peanuts, legumes (beans) and grains. Incomplete proteins need to be paired together to form complete proteins. For example, brown rice and beans are both incomplete proteins. Paired together, they form complete proteins because they have all 9 amino acids.

Proteins are used for muscle tissue repair and growth. That’s the way I suggest looking at protein. You will NOT get “bulky” just because you eat protein. I’ve had a few female clients who have worried that if they drink protein shakes, they will bulk up and get massive muscles. This is not true at all. It takes YEARS of pushing heavy weights and eating in a caloric surplus to gain substantial muscle size. What you *do* need, no matter your goal, is enough protein so that your muscle tissues can repair and grow as you exercise them.

I’m going to give a soft recommendation for the amount of protein you should eat. According to the National Strength and Conditioning Association, for muscle gain, you need to eat 1.5 grams of protein per kilogram of bodyweight. 1 kilogram is equal to 2.2 pounds. So, if you weigh 180 pounds, you first need to figure out how many Kg you weigh:

$180\text{lbs}/2.2 = 81.8\text{Kg}$ . Let’s say 80Kg to make this easy.

Now we’ll take your weight in kilograms and multiply by 1.5 grams of protein:

$80\text{Kg} \times 1.5\text{g protein} = 120\text{g protein}$

This is the formula I use for my clients when suggesting how much protein they should eat per day. This number is the *minimum* that I recommend. Remember, eating more protein won't necessarily make you "bulky" or bigger, unless you're eating in a caloric surplus.

## **Carbohydrates**

Carbohydrates are your body's first energy source. Your body runs well on carbs. Carbohydrates are converted into glycogen which is stored in muscle tissue and the liver. Think of carbs as energy that can be stored in the muscle and liver. Carbs are NOT the enemy. (See Chapter Eight on The Keto Diet for more info about this).

Carbohydrates come from starchy foods, grains and sugars. High-carb foods include bread, pasta, rice, oats, potatoes, sweets, fruits and vegetables (that's right-vegetables have carbs).

Some people categorize carbs into two different groups: good carbs and bad carbs. I'll say right off that I do not agree with that categorization. What they usually mean is that a bad carb is white, such as white bread, white pasta or white rice, while a good carb is brown, such as whole wheat bread, whole grain pasta or brown rice.

There are a couple of reasons they do/think this. First off, there is more fiber in whole grains. A lot of the time, fiber is removed from the grain and in general, those products are white. The second reason people look at carbs as good or bad is because of the glycemic index or the fear of "insulin spiking." Both fiber and the glycemic index are explained below.

### **Fiber:**

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate that your body can't break down and digest. Usually, carbs are broken down into glucose and stored as glycogen in the muscle tissue and liver. Fiber does not go through this process. It passes through your body undigested. It forms a "bulky" material (like a gel) that passes slowly through your digestive tract. Fiber can be very helpful when dieting for this reason. That bulky gel material slows everything down, such as the food that you eat. This means that you'll feel fuller for a longer period of time.

Fiber is also extremely beneficial for digestive health. If you're feeling constipated, add some fiber. It will help you go to the bathroom and be more "regular".

I always suggest that my clients use fiber to their advantage. If your diet is high in fiber, you're going to feel fuller for a longer period of time. One can easily see how this would help them when they're eating in a caloric deficit. Use fiber to your advantage!

### **Glycemic Index:**

This might be a little bit scientific, but I'll do my best to explain plainly. The Glycemic Index represents the rise in blood sugar based on the food someone eats. A food is given a number from 0-100, with sugar being 100. When we eat food (in particular, carbs), our blood sugar rises. When our blood sugar

rises, we produce insulin. Insulin is a hormone that pushes nutrients into cells. The fear with spiking your insulin is that you will push nutrients into fat cells, therefore storing more fat.

White carbs tend to have a higher glycemic index, meaning they will raise your blood sugar more than other carb sources, such as whole grain pasta or oatmeal. But I want you to understand something that a lot of people miss: the glycemic index does not take into account other foods eaten with the food/carb they rate from 0-100.

For example, if you eat a peanut butter sandwich on white bread, you might think “That’s going to spike my insulin a lot because of the white bread”. The glycemic index does not take into account the peanut butter that you’re eating with the white bread. Peanut butter is high in protein and fat. Both protein and fat take longer to digest than carbohydrates do. This is going to slow down the digestion process, and the insulin secreted by your body is going to be much less and slower than if you were to eat the white bread all by itself.

Once when I was dieting for a bodybuilding show, my coworker saw me eating a peanut butter and jelly on white bread. He thought I was crazy. He said there is no way that I’m going to lose weight by eating that. Little did he know I was eating a PB+J on white bread every day. He told me I was spiking my insulin and that it was going to be stored as fat. He was wrong. He didn’t understand that the peanut butter in my sandwich was slowing everything down. Not only that, but I was eating in a caloric deficit. Once again: if you eat less than your body needs, you’re going to lose weight!

My point is, I do not think that it is appropriate to “fear” the white carbohydrates. Most people do not sit down and eat plain white pasta or white bread by itself. Most people combine foods together, in turn slowing down the digestion process, and slowing down the dreaded “insulin spike”.

It’s also very important to understand that the glycemic index does not predict your individual response to a certain food, because everyone responds differently. The glycemic index is very general. Not only that, but the glycemic index of a food can change solely based on the way that you cook it! (For example, baking a potato, microwaving a potato, or boiling a potato all change the glycemic index of that potato.)

I recommend that a high percentage of your calories come from carbohydrates. A soft recommendation would be 40-50% of your daily calories. Some people claim that they don’t feel very well when they eat a lot of carbs. Some people say they feel bloated or sluggish. If that’s you, then adjust your diet accordingly.

I look at carbohydrates as the best fuel source for your body to perform work. More energy means you can do more work (like cardio and weight training), which means more calories burned, which means greater fat loss. That’s why I’m a fan of higher carb diets. Plus, carbs taste awesome! They release the feel-good hormone serotonin when we eat them!

If you still aren’t convinced that carbs are “ok” to eat, go read my chapter on the Keto Diet. Then you can make your own decision on how you would like to design your own diet plan.

## Fats

Fats are the most calorie-dense nutrient of the 3. Don't let this scare you—fats are great when you're dieting.

Fats are necessary. You cannot cut out fat from your diet, or you will suffer health consequences. Fats are needed for vitamin and mineral absorption, as well as hormone regulation.

There is a lot of debate on “good fat” vs. “bad fat” these days. I'm not going to go into great detail on this argument, as there are studies that show benefits or consequences for both types. But I will say that in general, saturated fats are considered “bad” for your heart-health, while “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated” are considered heart-healthy.

Fats come from various foods such as avocado, oil, butter, meat, eggs and nuts.

Fats take a long time to digest. They help slow down the digestion process. Use this to your advantage while dieting, just like you can use fiber. Be cautious, however, because fat is the highest calorie per gram macro nutrient. It's very easy to eat a high amount of calories in a short period of time if you aren't paying attention to what you're doing.

Nuts are a great on-the-go snack. They're high in healthy fats and very portable. Peanut butter, though high in calories, is also a great option. Not only is it high in fat but it's a great source of protein as well. These options may use a large portion of your daily calories but should leave you feeling fuller for a longer period of time.

I recommend a *minimum* of 30g fat per day for health purposes, but when you're dieting, use them to your advantage!

## Chapter 5: How Many Calories Should You Eat?

So how many calories should you eat to lose weight? Unfortunately, there's not an easy answer for this. It's a game of trial and error, and at first you'll just have to estimate. Are you ready for some math?

The best way to do this is to record everything you eat for two to three days. You would then calculate the calories eaten each day by reading food labels and looking up calories online (we'll talk more about this later.) Once you have your calorie count, average the days to "guesstimate" how many calories you're eating per day.

Most people eat very differently each day. One day you might eat 2,000 calories, the next day you might eat 3,800 calories, and the next day 1,600 calories. Most people don't eat the same amount of calories every day, but that has to change if you follow this type of plan. *You will eat the same amount of calories every day.*

Let's use the above as an example by adding up all three days worth of calories: (2,000+3,800+1,600=7,400 calories). Divide that by 3 days since you ate those calories over 3 days and on average, you're eating 2,466 calories per day. Now that we have our best "guesstimate" of calories (2,466), we need to eat less than that to lose weight.

I suggest starting slow. You could say, *ok, well then I'm going to eat 2,000 per day.* That would cause you to lose weight pretty fast. But once that stops working, you'll have to eat less. And once that stops working again, you'll have to eat even less. You can only keep cutting your calories for so long. You'll be starving and your performance will suffer quickly. Your energy levels will drop significantly. This is why I suggest moderate and slow changes. Moderate and slow changes will last longer than a "short cut diet" or "30 day weight loss" type diet.

I'm always an advocate for starting slow and easy. Your goal should be to make the most progress with the least possible work. Let me be clear with you: you should try to eat the most calories you can while still seeing progress. No reason to cut your calories hard and fast. If you do this, your progress will stall. And when that happens, you'll need to lower your daily calorie intake. *Remember: you can only lower your calories so much.*

Sometimes simply becoming consistent with your daily intake will make you lose weight, even if you aren't lowering your average daily calories. In the above example, you're eating a different amount of calories per day, but the average is around 2,500 per day. For your first week, you could eat 2,500 calories per day, and still might see some progress. Just becoming more consistent with your daily calorie intake affects your metabolism in a positive way resulting in weight loss. 2,500 daily calories would therefore be a good place to start your trial and error.

A common issue I see my clients run into is that they don't eat the prescribed, consistent amount of calories even after figuring out their daily average. If you determine that you need 2,500 calories per day, you have to commit to eating 2,500 calories per day, even if you don't want to. No more, no less.

Some of my clients will tell me they weren't hungry on 2 or 3 of the days between check-ins, and so they ate less. If the goal is weight loss, I can understand why they would think this is okay. However, this inconsistency causes issues when my clients and I try to evaluate the weekly results and make alterations to their diet plan. We no longer know how many calories they have been eating that week, and it becomes impossible for me to make accurate changes to the plan because we didn't accurately know how much they ate that week.

I had a client once who couldn't eat enough calories every day (don't you wish we all had this problem?), so I told him that if at the end of the day he still couldn't hit his calorie goal, he needed to fill in the remaining calories with ice cream. He had to do so on 2-3 nights that week. He came back after the week to check his results with me and he lost weight! He didn't understand how that was possible. I explained to him that by simply making his daily calorie intake more consistent, his body already started showing results.

That is, of course, an extreme example. Not everyone is going to be able to go and eat ice cream multiple days out of the week to try and hit their calories and then lose weight. And that was just that client's first week. As time goes on, you'll be consuming less calories and you will probably get hungry. The point is that when you normalize your daily calorie intake or eat the same amount of calories per day consistently, you can start to see progress.

## Chapter 6: Fat Loss VS Health

The example in the previous chapter—about my client who ate ice cream and *still* lost weight—had a second point to it. At first you probably thought, *how is that possible? You can't do that. No way. Ice cream is bad for you.*

I *hate* the phrase “That’s bad for you” when referring to food. What makes food bad for you? I had a friend once who liked to tell me “X” food was bad for me. I can’t remember if it was a cheeseburger or pizza or something, but I asked them why. They responded with something like “Well, you know, it’s bad. Like, people say you’re not supposed to eat that ‘cause it’s bad for you”. I tried to dig deeper. They responded with “Well, it has a lot of fat and carbs or something”.

Ok, and...?

See, people tend to think a food is “bad” for them when it’s high in carbohydrates or fat. What they usually mean is that a “bad” food is one that is high in calories. But who cares if it’s high in carbohydrates or fats? Calories only come from three things, remember? Carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. And who cares if it’s high in calories? As long as you’re eating fewer calories than your body needs, you’re going to lose weight!

There is a difference between fat loss and health. Fat loss is going to be based on calories. Like I explained in the chapters previous, calories are king. If you’re eating less calories than your body needs, you’ll lose weight. Period.

If you need 2,000 calories per day and you eat 1,800 calories of bacon and cheese, you’re going to lose weight. If you’re not eating enough calories to fuel your body, you have to get those calories from your body’s fat stores. Are you going to feel the best? Not at all! You’re probably going to have a stomach ache and unpleasant trips to the bathroom. On top of that, your performance, whether it’s cardio or weight training, is going to be negatively affected by that kind of diet (we will cover these different types of exercise later on).

No, I’m not advocating eating bacon and cheese all day to meet your daily calories. But do you see the point? It’s all about creating a negative energy balance. Remember that calories are energy.

This is NOT the same as being “healthy”.

When you ask someone what being “healthy” means when referring to food/diet, they’ll probably say something about eating lots of fruits and veggies and whole grains. Yes. I totally agree. Eating a sufficient amount of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals found in fruits, vegetables and whole grains are important for your health. As you continue your weight loss plan, you’ll incorporate more and more of these foods into your diet. You’ll soon come to understand that fruits, veggies, and fiber will help you feel fuller for a longer period of time. For example, when I diet to lose fat, I eat a lot of peppers and onions because they’re low in calories but help me stay full.

Your diet will naturally move towards becoming “healthier” and more nutrient dense (meaning that the foods you eat will have more vitamins and minerals). You’ll learn that those higher calorie “bad” foods just won’t be worth it to you anymore. You won’t want to use 1,000 calories on a cheeseburger when you could have had a *pound* of chicken breast (440 calories), two bell peppers (80 calories), an onion (40 calories) and a zucchini (40 calories), with 400 calories to spare. Good luck eating all of that, by the way—you’ll be stuffed.

Along with these changes to your diet, losing weight alone will improve your health. Your cholesterol and triglycerides will likely go down, and your blood pressure will probably go down along with your other vital signs. Not only that, but you’ll feel better! You’ll feel healthy.

My point is, there is a difference between eating for weight loss and eating to be healthy. But a lot of times these two goals coincide with each other. When people say they’re eating “healthy”, I don’t think they quite know what that even means. I’ve had clients come to me saying “It just doesn’t make sense. I eat really healthily but I can’t lose weight.” They think that automatically by eating “healthy”, they’re going to lose weight. You know why they don’t? Because they aren’t eating less calories than their body needs. You can eat “healthy” all you want, but if you’re not eating less calories than your body needs, you aren’t going to lose weight. It is very possible to eat “healthy” and gain weight if you’re eating too many calories! Once again, Calories are King when it comes to weight loss.

## Chapter 7: Fad Diets vs. Lifestyle Change

The point of this guide is to help you make a lifestyle change. The information here is not a diet. It is a new way to look at food and enjoy life while reaching your weight loss goals. Food is one of the great joys of life. It brings people happiness. There are actually hormones such as serotonin (the feel good hormone) that are released when you eat certain foods that you enjoy, and food *should* be enjoyed. I don't think you should feel like you "have to" eat a certain way or that you "aren't allowed" to eat certain foods.

A "diet" is usually a set of rules or guidelines that people follow. There's a ton of them out there: I had a coworker who was on a "500 calorie per day" diet where you aren't allowed to exercise. I had another friend who tried a "protein only" diet which actually landed him in the hospital. There are endless "fad diets" out there with extreme restrictions and "rules".

Let me explain some thoughts I have about the diets I just listed. When you starve yourself by eating 500 calories per day, of course you're going to lose weight. You're in a massive caloric deficit. You're starving yourself. It won't matter what you eat. And no exercise? How is that "healthy?" You know why there is a "no exercise" rule? Because you'll pass out. Protein only diet? Remember how calories come from 3 things: protein, carbs and fats. So of course, by cutting out two out of three of your macronutrients, you're going to lose weight. You're in a caloric deficit. Do you see what I'm getting at?

*The key to all these diets is that they create a caloric deficit. When you eat fewer calories than your body needs, you're in a caloric deficit, and that's all that matters when it comes to losing fat.*

The difference between a "fad diet" and a "lifestyle change" is that a fad diet (like the two explained above) tends to be short term and unsustainable. You can't keep doing a fad diet forever. And in general, when you stop a fad diet, you have a "rebound" effect. That is, you gain a lot (if not all) of the weight back in a short period of time. A "lifestyle change" is just that, a change to the way you live. I hope that this guide helps you look at food differently. I hope it allows you to feel free when dealing with food. I hope you can make a lifestyle change and keep the results that you work hard for. You don't need to starve yourself with these ridiculous shortcut diets. Do something that will leave long-lasting results: make a lifestyle change.

## Chapter 8: The Keto Diet Explained

I'm sure you've either heard of the Ketogenic Diet or know someone who has done it. It's extremely popular. First, let me explain what the "keto" diet is.

Basically, keto is eating either a low carb or zero carb diet, depending on who you ask. The science behind it is pretty interesting. Your body's first source of energy is from carbohydrates. That is your body's preferred method to get energy. The goal of the keto diet is to get your body into what's called "ketosis". This is when your body switches from using carbohydrates as the first source of energy to using fat as the body's first source of energy. People who do the keto diet are hoping that by reducing or eliminating their carbohydrate intake, they'll force their body into this state of ketosis.

This next part gets a little scientific, so hang in there: When we eat carbohydrates, our body converts them into what's called glycogen. Glycogen is stored in the body in two places: the liver and muscle tissue (this was discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.) Because glycogen retains water, and because water has weight associated with it, when you stop eating carbohydrates your body will burn through that stored glycogen without replacing it (since you aren't eating any carbs to replace it with). As you burn through those glycogen stores in your muscle tissue and liver, the water that is retained by the glycogen also leaves the body. This is why the diet is so popular. Within a few days to a week, you've now burned off almost all, if not all, of your glycogen stores. All the water that was retained with those glycogen stores is gone, and now you've lost 5-10lb! And you did it in a week!

But this is where people mistake weight loss with fat loss. They are NOT the same thing. Yes, you lost 10lb in a week, but it wasn't all fat. As soon as you start eating carbohydrates again, you're going to gain that weight right back, because you'll be replenishing your glycogen stores and the water that is retained with them.

There are a few problems I see with the keto diet. First off, to truly get your body into "ketosis" takes a while. You have to eat zero carbs for up to two weeks to get there. I used some keto urine strips to see how long it took me to go into ketosis. I would urinate on the strip and based on the color on the strip I could see where I was at. It took me 13 days until I was in the true ketosis state. 13 days of 0 carbs.

At the fire station, a lot of the guys go through phases of dieting. A common one the guys like to try is the keto diet. One time, I was sitting at the dinner table with the crew getting ready to eat. One of the crew members told me earlier in the day that he was doing the keto diet. For dinner, we had a beef roast, green beans and mashed potatoes. The crew member who told me he was doing keto put a big pile of potatoes on his plate. I said something along the lines of "aren't you doing keto?" to which he responded, "yeah but sometimes I don't really follow it that much..."

So, let me get this straight: you're doing keto, but only sometimes? He probably didn't realize that by eating those potatoes, he was taking himself out of ketosis (if he had even reached ketosis by that point). He probably wasn't doing a true keto diet. He was just eating low carb, which is completely different. He was missing out on carbs thinking he was doing the keto diet, when he didn't even

understand how it works. I see this sort of thing all the time. Someone tells me they're doing keto, and then they eat something like an apple or black beans (both of which have carbs). That's not keto.

And we haven't even talked about the dreaded "keto fever". This is a phenomenon that happens during the initial switch from carbs to fat as the primary fuel source. If you're doing a true keto, this is something that could happen to you. During the first week or two, when you're trying to eat no carbs and get your body into ketosis, a common side effect is a fever. I've had multiple acquaintances that have had this happen to them when starting the keto diet, and then they gave up since they felt like garbage.

The brain prefers glucose (sugar) to function. Sugar is energy for the brain. If you go into ketosis, the brain can use "ketones" as an energy source, but that's not its first choice. Your body also has the ability to convert excess protein into glucose if needed. The point is, your brain function can suffer if you're not giving the brain the energy it needs. But you could argue that when you're eating in a caloric deficit, you're going to have this reduced brain function already.

Finally, keep in mind that calories only come from protein, carbohydrates, and fats. The keto diet is eliminating one out of three of your calorie options, and you're therefore more likely lose weight because you have a higher chance of being in a caloric deficit. That being said, you can still gain weight on a keto diet: if you're eating more calories than your body needs, you'll gain weight, regardless of if you're eating carbs or not.

I'm not saying that the keto diet is necessarily "bad" or doesn't work. I just think people don't understand it completely and don't do it correctly. I've done it myself when preparing for a bodybuilding show in the past. It worked very well, but I suffered a lot. I was eating cheeseburgers (no bun) with veggies and bacon. Sounds great right? But I was *dying* for a piece of bread, I was crankier than other diets I have tried, and my energy levels were low. It was hard to get myself to workout.

Give it a shot for yourself and see how you like it. Maybe you'll love how you feel and you'll love the results. The initial weight loss might be motivating for you to keep going too. And as long as you're in a caloric deficit, it will work. I hope that this section has helped you better understand what it is and why it's so popular. Just remember, calories are king when it comes to any diet!

## Chapter 9: Recording Your Progress

Most people use the scale when checking their progress. They weigh themselves every so often, hoping to see the number go down. Although useful, this should NOT be your number one indicator for fat loss. Notice what I said there: fat loss. Most people will say “I want to lose weight”, when in reality, they mean “I want to lose fat”.

The reason I don't like to focus on weight is because your weight is determined by a lot of different factors. For example, a main factor in weight is water retention. Carbohydrates and salt both retain water, which means that if you eat a higher carb and salty meal, you're going to retain more water with it. Water is weight, but weight is not necessarily fat. There are a lot of other things that can affect weight without being fat:

**Hormones:** I had a client once who gained eight pounds when she was on her period. She swore she followed her diet and exercise plan, and to be honest, I didn't believe her at first. But a week went by and the eight pounds (plus some) were gone! Despite sticking to her plan, her hormone changes caused water retention.

**Inter-intestinal weight:** This weight comes from the food/fluid that is inside your intestines and hasn't left your system yet (by going to the bathroom). This is weight that is not necessarily fat, but it adds to the scale.

**Traveling:** Yes, just traveling can cause bloating, and bloating equals water retention.

This all being said, weight is still somewhat important. In theory, if you're losing fat, you should be losing weight. The key takeaway here is that you should not solely rely on the scale to track your progress.

On the next page, you'll find a data sheet used for recording your results and checking your weekly progress. This is the exact template I use for my clients. When you weigh yourself each week, make sure to do so on the same scale and at the same time of the day. Different scales will read differently, and you don't want to have to account for this variable. Likewise, your weight will fluctuate through the day (due to eating, exercise, going to the bathroom, ect.) and so you want to weigh yourself at the same time every day.

Only weigh yourself **once per week**. I had a client once who weighed herself multiple times per day. The anxiety drove her crazy. After reading what affects weight above, why would you weigh yourself multiple times per day? Why would you even weigh yourself every day? Weight fluctuation is normal. Don't let checking your weight become a mental handicap. I've seen this happen to clients many times. And if you're the type of person who checks the scale frequently, change that now. You'll be grateful you did in a few weeks when you no longer feel the need to check your weight all the time.

The body parts listed down the left side of the table are for you to measure with a soft measuring tape. Tracking your progress in this way is more helpful than tracking your weight alone. To get these numbers, it's best if you can find someone to measure for you. It's even better if it can be the same

person every week. The reason it should be the same person every week is because everyone will measure differently. You're going to be seeing 1/8" changes on some weeks. That can very easily be human error if you have different people checking your measurements.

I also suggest using physical landmarks when taking measurements, such as a freckle or a mole. If one week you're measuring your arm right in the middle, and the next week you're measuring it a half inch further up or down, your circumference measurement is going to be different. This is another example of human error and a controllable factor. It's important to remember that human error may occur even if you're trying your best to measure exactly the same way you did the week previously.

You'll only be able to fill out the "calories", "hunger" and "energy" section on the bottom so far. We'll go over the rest of the boxes in that bottom section later on.

Next to "calories", write your daily amount for that week. If we keep using the example we used earlier, you'd write 2,500. You'll fill out the "hunger" section *after* each week. You'll use a scale of 1-10, with 1 meaning not hungry at all and 10 meaning that you're starving. This will help you gauge how hard you are dieting. If you're at a 9 or 10, you know that you're not eating enough. If you're at a 1, you know that you can safely lower the amount of calories you're going to eat the next week.

You'll also fill out the "energy" section *after* each week. You'll use the 1-10 scale again with 1 meaning that you have no energy at all and 10 meaning that you have plenty of energy. If you're not eating enough, your energy levels will fall. This is an overlooked factor that is very important to keep track of. If you don't have enough energy, your workouts are going to suffer. Not only that, but your work performance and mood can decline. This in turn can affect your job security and relationships with others. Dieting can be mentally taxing and there is no need to push yourself more than you need to

# Chapter 10: Client Data Sheet

NAME:

AGE:

GOAL:

DATE									
WEIGHT									

NECK									
ARM									
CHEST									
WAIST									
HIP									
LEG									
CALF									

CALORIES									
CARDIO MODE									
FREQ									
TIME									
HR									
HUNGER									
CARDIO									
ENERGY									

NOTES:

## Chapter 11: Tracking Calories and Reading Food Labels

Tracking your calories and reading food labels can take time to get good at. It's a skill that is very important to have if you plan on dieting successfully. However, some helpful tools and tricks can make this easier.

There are some free apps out there that can really help make calorie tracking easier. The one I have my clients use is called "MyFitnessPal." You can look up just about any kind of food on there, whether it's a restaurant, pre-packaged food or even carnival/baseball game foods. It's important to understand that some of the calorie values listed are estimates. If you look up "baseball game hot dog", it's going to be an estimate, since every ball park is going to have its own hot dogs with their own caloric values.

Still, there is always going to be a little bit of "guesstimating" when you're calorie counting, but apps like MyFitnessPal can help. If you're eating out at a restaurant or eating things like casseroles, which are a bunch of ingredients mixed together in unknown proportions, sometimes you will have to do your best to estimate how many calories you are eating. I'm not saying these foods are off limits—not at all! Just understand that they can be difficult to accurately count calories for. In general, I tell my clients to overestimate when they're unsure how many calories are in something they're eating.

I had a client once who told me He had 800 calories left one day, so he went and had a double cheeseburger and French fries. He told me he was "guesstimating" how many calories were in the food. This is a poor example of recording calories accurately. He easily ate 1500+ calories with that meal.

You can enter in all your food on these free apps to record your calories, but I've found that the easiest way is to just keep my calculator open on my phone and add the calories up as the day goes on. You can also keep a food journal if that helps you. Take time to figure out which way is easiest for you, and then stick to it.

Even if you are planning on recording your calories via one of these apps on your phone, I think it's very important to know how to read food labels, since they can be tricky. Here's a picture of a label from a small package of trail mix:

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size: 1/2 bag (29g)	
Servings Per Container: 2	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 110	Calories from Fat 70
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>12%</b>
Saturated Fat 1.5g	<b>8%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 25mg	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 8g	<b>3%</b>
Dietary Fiber 3g	<b>12%</b>
Sugars 3g	
<b>Protein</b> 4g	
Vitamin A 20%	Vitamin C 8%
Calcium 4%	Iron 6%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

This is one of those smaller packages that you buy at the gas station when you're on the go. You might look at this food label and say "awesome, only 110 calories!" But that's not correct. Notice that the serving size is 1/2 of the bag. The number of servings in this container is two, meaning if you eat the entire bag, you're eating two times the calories listed. This would be 220 calories.

Here's another label, this time from a container of mixed nuts:

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size 1/3 Cup (30g)	
Servings Per Container	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 190	Calories from Fat 150
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 16g	<b>25%</b>
Saturated Fat 2g	<b>10%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 220mg	<b>9%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 6g	<b>2%</b>
Dietary Fiber 3g	<b>12%</b>
Sugars 1g	
<b>Protein</b> 5g	

The serving size listed is 1/3 cup. It's important to measure out your servings when you're tracking calories. I chose this label for a specific reason: it's very easy to eat a high amount of calories with mixed nuts if you're not paying attention to how much you're eating. It's necessary to measure out the serving size to be accurate. You might think that you can estimate how much you're eating, but based on my experience with past clients and myself, it's very easy to underestimate just how many servings you ate, unless you measured them out.

Sometimes on the front of a food product, you'll see something like this:



You might see the “140” and quickly think that’s how many calories are in the product, but don’t be fooled! Turn the package around and check the “serving size” and “servings per container”. This is a common practice on sodas and sports drinks. It’s not unusual to see 2 or 3 servings in what appears to be a single-serving size container.

Here’s another one from a Gatorade bottle:



It would be easy to look at the front of this bottle, see the “80 calories” on the bottom right and count it as such. The 32oz medium size Gatorade has 2.5 servings! That’s 200 calories, not 80. Make sure to check how many servings are in each container, regardless of what the front says.

If you want to be accurate in your daily calorie consumption, measuring and weighing your food is important. Weighing food might sound “extreme” to some people, but this is only important when you’re cooking and eating meat. If you look up the calories in meats, they are measured by weight. For example, four ounces of chicken breast is 110 calories. What does four ounces of chicken look like? You can either weigh it out (with a cheap food scale from Amazon) or you can estimate: in general, four ounces of meat looks like a deck of cards. Just remember that the more accurate you are at tracking and recording your calories, the better results you’re going to see.

## Chapter 12: Creating Your Own Diet Plan

We've come to the point where you can actually start writing a diet plan for yourself. You now have an understanding of "calories in" vs. "calories out", the different macronutrients that calories come from, the different dieting approaches, what a caloric deficit is, and the importance of reading food labels and recording your calories. Now let's put it all together and write a diet plan!

First, determine the number of calories you're going to try and eat every day. Refer back to Chapter Five, "How Many Calories Should You Eat," for help with that. We'll use the same number of calories discussed in that chapter for the sample plan that we'll work on here: 2,500 calories per day.

Next, determine how many grams of protein you should be eating at a *minimum* to sustain your muscle mass. Refer to Chapter Four, "Macros," for help with that. Once again, we'll use the same example in that chapter: a 180lb individual requiring 120g protein per day.

### Written Diet Plans vs. Free Eating

Before we fill everything out, I want to discuss a few options. Ultimately, how you plan your diet will be your decision, but let me share some of the things I've observed and learned:

Some people want to have an itemized diet plan with everything written out exactly as they're supposed to eat it. This takes a lot of the brain work out of the equation. Once you design your diet plan, you basically have a checklist of food throughout the day. You know everything you get to eat for that day. After a week, when you check your results and make alterations to the plan (we'll discuss this later), you have the choice to alter your food choices and re-design your diet plan. You're sick of the peanut butter and jelly sandwich every day? Well, after one week you don't have to include that on there anymore. You can change it up.

Other people like to do what I call "free eating". That is, they eat differently every single day, but remain at that pre-determined calorie intake for the day (2,500 in this example). This allows a ton of freedom, but it also requires a lot of brain work. You get to eat different foods every day, but you have to make sure that you aren't eating a majority of your calories before the day ends. Otherwise you end up hungry at 6pm with little to no calories left. You have to constantly be checking food labels and looking up the calories in food via apps on your phone or online, but you get to eat what you want, when you want. There might be more "guesstimates" going on with this method as well. If you choose this method, you don't need to write out a diet plan. I suggest keeping your phone calculator open and adding calories throughout the day as you eat or drink them.

What a majority of my clients end up doing is a mix between the two. In this example (2,500 calories), they might write out an itemized diet plan for 2,000 calories and then allow the remaining 500 calories to be "free calories", meaning that they could eat whatever they wanted with the 500 remaining calories left over. This method allows them to have structure during the day and takes the brain work out of it, while also allowing them freedom to choose at night, often times when they get home from

work. They would follow the diet plan while at work, knowing exactly what they were going to eat, and then when they got home, they could eat a variety of food or indulge a little bit. Remember, calories are king when it comes to fat loss. As long as you're eating fewer calories than your body needs, you're going to lose weight.

Now, let's fill out your diet plan with foods that YOU like to eat. Here's a simple set up that's easy to follow:

Food	Calories	Protein	Fat	Carbohydrates

You don't necessarily need to use a chart like above, but I'll include one on the next page if you'd like to. Some people find it easier to stay organized that way. I often times just write down the diet plans for my clients on binder paper in a similar fashion as above. Whichever way makes it easier for you to follow your diet plan is the best way for you.

As we write down the food items, make sure to be *specific* and include the amount. For example, for a Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich:

Food	Calories	Protein	Fat	Carbohydrates
2 Pieces Whole Wheat Bread	200	8	4	38
2 Tbsp Peanut Butter	180	8	16	5
1 Tbsp Strawberry Jelly	50	0	0	13

**NOTE:** I wrote "2 Tbsp" Peanut Butter above. I don't expect you to measure out 2 Tbsp peanut butter every single time you make a sandwich. Measuring out Peanut Butter is messy! What you should do is measure it out two to three times and pay attention to how much you're putting on. Try to mentally remember about how much two tablespoons looks like the next time you make a PB+J. As long as you're consistent with the amount of Peanut Butter you're using, you'll be ok.

As you continue to fill out your personal diet plan, keep track of your total calories and total protein. Remember that you need to hit your minimum protein requirement (120g in this example) and you need to get as close as possible to your target number of calories (2,500 in this example). I will include a couple of sample diet plans with these target numbers.







## Chapter 16: Cheat Meals—Leptin and Ghrelin

What are cheat meals? Why do people do them? Should you do them? Are you going to lose progress? To answer these questions, we need to discuss a couple of hormones: leptin and ghrelin.

Ghrelin is “the hunger hormone.” When the stomach is empty, ghrelin is secreted, making you hungry. We don’t want ghrelin to get too high, or you will always be hungry.

Leptin inhibits (stops) hunger. The more fat you have, the more leptin produced. We want our leptin levels to be high when we’re dieting. The problem is, when you’re dieting and losing fat, your leptin levels go down.

That’s where cheat meals come in. The purpose of a cheat meal is to try and boost those leptin levels again, therefore stopping hunger.

The idea of a cheat meal has become somewhat warped through social media. People think a cheat meal is just a cheeseburger and fries. But research shows that you will have a greater leptin response from a high carbohydrate meal as opposed to a high fat meal.

If you’re going to have a cheat meal, it should be high in carbohydrates to produce the greatest leptin response. That being said, there is another reason for the cheat meal that I think is overlooked or misunderstood, and that’s for mental purposes.

When you diet for a long period of time, it gets mentally taxing. One of the reasons I like cheat meals is because it gives you a mental break. It allows you to “let loose” and enjoy a meal without having to worry about it. It also gives you something to work towards; if you know that you have a cheat meal coming up at the end of the week, you have a reason to keep going. You’re sticking to your diet plan and working out hard to get to that cheat meal.

I don’t start my clients off with cheat meals. I wait until the dieting starts to get difficult and mentally taxing. Then I introduce cheat meals. This is going to be up to you. I don’t recommend doing more than one per week, and it shouldn’t be an all-out calorie party (that would be called binging). I suggest adding 500-1000 calories on top of your normal daily calorie intake for your cheat meal.

500-1000 calories extra!? I’m dieting, are you crazy? Don’t worry! You won’t set yourself back by doing this. Trust the process. Remember that by the time you introduce a cheat meal, you’ll have been eating in a caloric deficit for some time. You’re eating less than your body needs. Also remember that it takes about 3,500 calories to gain/lose one pound of fat. Even if all 1,000 calories of your cheat meal were stored as fat (which they won’t be—they’ll be used for energy because you’re eating in a caloric deficit), then you would only gain 1/3lb. Also remember that weight is not equal to fat. Even if the scale goes up, it is most likely going to be due to increased water retention or inter-intestinal weight (the food that is inside your intestines still, waiting to be excreted).

Again, whether you decide to use cheat meals is up to you, but if rewarding yourself with 500 calories gets you through the week (and increases your leptin levels) they can be well worth it.

You don't have to make your cheat meal high in carbohydrates. You can be doing your cheat meal solely for the mental benefits. I just want you to understand the science behind a cheat meal and the purpose for having them.

If you're worried about going too crazy with a cheat meal and eating too many calories (more than the 500-1,000 in excess), I suggest trying a "Low Day/High Day" dieting approach. It's similar to a cheat meal but it's more controlled. Just saying the words "cheat meal" might make you feel like you're cheating on your diet and ruining your results. (Just keep in mind that is 100% your own mental perception-cheat meals can help you make progress, not set you back).

The Low Day/High Day approach is just that. You have your "Low Days" of say, 2,000 calories, and then you have a "High Day" of 2,500 or 3,000 calories. I've found that by calling it a "High Day" as opposed to a cheat meal, you don't feel as "bad" about what you're doing (although it's essentially the same thing). I think sometimes the phrase "Cheat Meal" is associated with eating burgers and pizza, while a "High Day" is just some extra calories for that day. It's just a different mental approach to the same thing.

Call it what you want, but I suggest using these to your advantage. They are another tool in the toolbox for your fat loss journey. Use them correctly and reap the rewards, but don't let it get out of hand.

## Chapter 17: Cardio

If you refer back to your “Weekly Progress Sheet” from Chapter Ten, you may have noticed sections titled “Cardio Mode,” “Frequency,” “Time,” and “HR.” In this chapter, we’ll talk about what these mean and how to fill them out.

Cardiovascular exercise (cardio) is extremely important for fat loss. This includes things like running and biking, and is an important form of exercise. Remember: *Exercise burns calories*. By now you understand that you need to create a negative energy balance by eating in a caloric deficit. Another way to create that negative energy balance besides limiting calories is by using more calories. One of the ways you burn more calories is through cardio.

My approach to cardio is very different than most trainers. I can’t take the credit for the way I do this—when I was preparing for one of my bodybuilding shows, my new coach at the time introduced me to this method of cardio. This is the **only** way I prescribe cardio for clients because it is the most effective way to burn calories.

It doesn’t mean anything if someone says to me, “I did twenty minutes of cardio today.” The question I usually ask them is “What kind of cardio? Did you track your heart rate?” This usually gets a blank or confused stare followed by “Well, no. But it felt hard”.

The number one mistake I see people make when “doing cardio” is that they don’t track their heart rate. Your heart rate is a way to gauge the intensity of your exercise. The harder you’re working, the higher your heart rate will be. The higher your heart rate, the more calories you burn. There is a huge difference in the amount of calories burned during a cardio session where your heart rate was 110 beats per minute as opposed to a cardio session where your heart rate was 160 beats per minute.

There is a “safe” heart rate formula based on age that you need to keep in mind as well. Remember that these numbers are not hard and fast. Rather, they’re estimates. I learned these while getting my National Strength and Conditioning personal training certification.

A normal heart rate is considered 60-100 beats per minute. Your “Max Heart Rate” is 220 minus your age. This is the fastest your heart should be able to beat while exercising safely. Now that I’ve gone through paramedic school and deal with cardiac patients on the daily, I know that your heart rate can exceed this number, but it is not healthy, and I do not recommend it.

Here are a couple of examples:

25 years old:  $220 - 25 = 195$

30 years old:  $220 - 30 = 190$

35 years old:  $220 - 35 = 185$

40 years old:  $220 - 40 = 180$

45 years old:  $220 - 45 = 175$

A good place to start your cardio sessions would be at 70% of your max heart rate. Here are some more examples:

25 years old: max heart rate = 195

$195 \times 0.70 = 136$

30 years old: max heart rate = 190

$190 \times 0.70 = 133$

35 years old: max heart rate = 185

$185 \times 0.70 = 130$

40 years old: max heart rate = 180

$180 \times 0.70 = 126$

45 years old: max heart rate = 175

$175 \times 0.70 = 123$

For your first week, I suggest trying to *hold* a heart rate of 70% of your max heart rate. You should work hard to get your heart rate to the target number, and then adjust accordingly to keep your heart rate there. When I work with clients, I don't have them start their timer until they reach that target heart rate. The time that it took to get their heart rate to that target number does not count.

It's in your best interest to get your heart rate up to that target number as quickly as possible because the time spent getting it there does not count. You could try doing jumping jacks or running for 30-60 seconds to get that initial boost in your heart rate before hopping on the machine of your choice and starting your timer. If holding 70% of your max heart rate is too hard for you, try 60%. It's very important that you listen to how your body feels.

You don't need to be exactly on the target heart rate. It would be nearly impossible to hold a heart rate of exactly 126 for an extended period of time. Shoot for 124-128. Give yourself some play room.

Once you've calculated this number, you'll fill it in under the section that says "HR" (Heart Rate).

## How to Track Your Heart Rate

Now that you've calculated the heart rate you're going to try and hold, how do you track it? You have a few options:

1. *Buy a heart rate monitor.* This is the most accurate method. You'll want to get one that straps around your chest and has readout on a watch. I understand that this can be pricey, so the other options might work better for you. But I will say that this is by far the best way to track your heart rate. If you're serious about your fat loss journey, consider investing in one.
2. *Check your pulse manually.* This is probably the second most accurate method. First, you need to find your pulse. You can either check on your carotid artery (your neck) or your radial artery (your wrist) and feel for your pulse. You'll need to watch a timer while counting in your head how many beats that you feel. This can be tricky to master, but once you get it, it's not too bad. I usually suggest that my clients watch 10 second go by on the clock while counting the beats in their head, and then multiply that number by 6. This will give you your pulse rate in beats per minute. I suggest checking every 2-3 minutes to make sure that you're hitting that target heart rate.
3. *Use the machine.* Many of the cardio machines at gyms have the ability to track your heart rate if you hold onto them. The reason this is not my first choice is because they tend to be inaccurate. Unfortunately, some machines just don't work like they're supposed to.

## Cardio Mode

Should you run? Should you walk? Should you use the stair stepper or the bike? The cardio mode that you choose does not matter as long as you're hitting your target heart rate, but I will give you some suggestions. In general, the intensity of the cardio mode goes like this, from easiest to hardest:

Bike  
Walking  
Elliptical  
Walking at an incline  
Running on a treadmill  
Stair Stepper  
Running Outside

I suggest starting at the easiest mode possible while still reaching your target heart rate. Let's say you are able to hold your 70% max heart rate on the bike. This will not work indefinitely. You will become more conditioned (get in better shape), and you will no longer be able to use the bike to get your heart rate to 70% max. You will then need to move up to a more difficult mode of cardio. For this reason, I do not suggest that you start your cardio regime by running or on the stair stepper. If you are no longer able to raise your heart rate with those modes of cardio, you will have no option but to go faster and harder. It is in your best interest to start with the easier modes of cardio and progressively move up to the more difficult modes of cardio as needed.

**TIP:** When you're walking at an incline or using the stair stepper, do NOT hold onto the machine. Many people use the handles as a crutch. This makes the exercise easier. The point of exercising and working out is not to make it easier. Your goal is to push your body. If you hold onto the handles while walking at an incline or lean over the top of the stair stepper, your heart rate will drop. It will be harder for you to reach your target heart rate if you do this. I see this all the time at the gym: someone will be going super fast on the stair stepper, but they're leaning over the top of it, which is making it easier. Or someone will be walking 4mph at 15% incline on the treadmill while leaning back and holding onto the handles. They have to walk so fast and steep because they're holding onto the machine, therefore making the exercise easier! Remember that heart rate gauges the intensity, not the speed or level that you're doing on the cardio machine.

### **Frequency**

The frequency section is where you'll write in how many cardio sessions per week you're going to be doing. I suggest starting off slow. If you start at three sessions per week, and then your progress stalls, you'll be able to add a day of cardio. If your progress stalls again, you'll be able to add another day, etc. If you start your program by doing six to seven cardio sessions per week, and then you stall out on your progress, you don't have the option to increase your number of cardio sessions per week. Once again, we're going to start easy, and progressively get harder. *You want to be able to see the most amount of progress with the least amount of work possible.*

### **Time**

The time section is where you'll write in how long your cardio session is going to be. Remember, start easy and work your way up. A good starting amount of time would be fifteen to twenty minutes of cardio at your target heart rate. I do not suggest starting with a high amount of time per cardio session for the same reasons listed earlier. Your progress will stall. And when it does, you'll need to increase the amount of cardio time that you're performing. If you start with an hour of cardio, you don't give yourself much room to increase time. You can only do so much cardio. I never have clients do more than an hour and a half of cardio per day, and that's for extreme clients who are competing in bodybuilding shows. I can't stress this enough: *you want to be able to see the most amount of progress with the least amount of work possible.*

### **Cardio**

On your sheet you'll see a section labeled "cardio". After each week, you'll put a number from 1-10 in that box describing how hard cardio was for you, with 1 meaning not hard at all and 10 meaning that you're working as hard as possible. This will help you plan the following week. If you're working at an 8/10, then you know that you are working fairly hard and adding cardio is probably not your best option. If you're working at a 2/10, then you know that for the following week, you'll be able to safely add more cardio without killing yourself.

## Intervals

Another option for your cardio regime is intervals. Some people call it HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training). The goal of HIIT is to get your heart rate close to your max heart rate for a short period of time followed by an easier “resting period” which allows your heart rate to drop, and then repeating the process.

HIIT gets your heart rate very high. Remember that the higher your heart rate, the more calories burned. HIIT can be very taxing and difficult, and I do not recommend it for beginners. It is a great tool in the box to be used by more advanced clientele. Once you start making progress and are altering your program weekly to raise the intensity, use HIIT to break through plateaus.

The only word of caution I would say is that if you perform HIIT every single day, you might “burn out”. HIIT is very taxing to the central nervous system and if you perform too many HIIT sessions, you might feel “drained” or low energy. This will in turn affect your workouts negatively. This is why listening to your body is so important. If you’re going to use HIIT, try two to three sessions per week along with two to three sessions of the cardio described above (holding a constant target heart rate).

## EPOC

After you drive your car for a while, it gets hot. It takes a while for the temperature of the car to cool down. Essentially this is the same concept as “Excess Post-Exercise Oxygen Consumption” (EPOC). When you exercise, your body heats up and uses energy and oxygen. After you’re done exercising, your body needs time to cool down and return to normal (homeostasis). This process of needing to “cool down” burns calories long after your workout session is over. Your body has to “catch up” with what just happened. It needs to replenish energy stores (ATP), re-oxygenate the blood, decrease core body temperature and lower your heart rate and breathing rate back to normal.

EPOC is greater with higher intensity exercise. This can be either from cardio such as HIIT (as explained earlier) or through intense bouts of weight training (we’ll cover that later). Another reason to exercise at high intensity is to raise your EPOC and get the greatest calorie burn hours *after* you’re done exercising.

## “Fat Burning Zone”

The “Fat Burning Zone” is the idea that at lower heart rates a higher percentage of the calories burned come from fat. Is this true? Yes, but it’s very misunderstood. We’ll have to use some fake numbers here, but hopefully it gets the point across.

Let’s say you do 20 min of HIIT training and burn 400 calories. Remember that HIIT training is going to increase your EPOC too. That means more calorie burning hours after you’re done working out. But let’s say that only 50% of those calories burned are coming from fat cells on your body. So 200 calories:

20 min HIIT  
400 calories burned  
200 calories from fat cells/fat stores

Now let's say you do 20 min of low intensity cardio with a heart rate of 120. You burn 200 calories. Your EPOC didn't get raised, so you're not going to be burning calories later on. Instead, you'll only burn them during your exercise. But hey, 90% of those 200 calories came from fat cells on your body. That's 180 calories:

20 min low intensity cardio  
200 calories burned  
180 calories from fat cells/fat stores

Wait...that's *fewer* total calories AND less calories from fat stores burned during the low intensity cardio session than the HIIT cardio session described above. You see the problem? You burn more calories doing higher intensity exercise because you would have to do a lot more low-intensity cardio to reach the same caloric burn of a higher intensity, short cardio session. If sitting on a bike for 2-3 hours is your thing, then go ahead. But I'm all about getting the best bang for my buck, which in this case means burning the most calories possible in the least amount of time.

Higher intensity cardio is going to burn more calories than lower intensity cardio, period. Even if a higher percentage of those calories are from fat cells/fat stores, remember that when you're eating in a caloric deficit your body will pull extra calories from fat stores any way. You'll burn more total calories per cardio session by going with a higher intensity/higher heart rate.

## Chapter 18: Making Changes to Your Plan

At this point, you should have your “Weekly Progress Sheet” (Chapter Ten) filled out for week one. You should have your measurements and progress pictures taken with a specific goal written down. And you should have your diet plan and cardio regime planned and written in the corresponding boxes.

After week one, you’ll re-take your measurements and weigh yourself. It’s important to weigh yourself with the same scale and at the same time of the day as you did the first time. Using a different scale can skew your results, and weighing yourself during a different time of the day will also skew your results. These are variables that you can control.

**NOTE:** Weigh yourself *only* once per week. Don’t become mentally incarcerated to what the scale is telling you day in and day out. Weight fluctuation is normal from day to day. After one week, you should be able to see if you’re making progress. Remember, weight is not the most important factor here. That’s why we’re recording all of the other body measurements.

Based on the results you see, you’ll want to make alterations to your plan. If you lost a half inch from your waist and dropped three pounds this first week, you may not need to change anything at all. You might be able to “squeeze more juice out of the lemon” without making your plan harder for another week. It’s all dependent on how fast you want to see results. If you didn’t gain or lose weight and your measurements are pretty much the same, you should consider making changes to your plan.

There are only 4 things that you can change to continue to make progress:

1. Eat less calories
2. Do more cardio (minutes)
3. Do more cardio (sessions per week)
4. Make cardio harder (heart rate)

These four changes are ways to create a larger caloric deficit. You can change one, two, or all of them if you would like. Once again, it all depends on how fast you want to see results. But remember that these are your only options to continue to see progress. If you use them all up too quickly, you will run out of options. If you’re eating 1,200 calories per day and doing an hour of cardio six times per week with a heart rate of 170, you don’t have many options on what you can do to continue progressing. I recommend making one or two changes per week, slowly, and re-evaluating your results after another week has gone by.

I’ll say it again: *You want to be able to see the most amount of progress with the least amount of work possible.*

For example, if week one looked like this:

2,500 calories per day  
3 cardio sessions per week on the bike  
15 min cardio session  
Heart Rate 130

And you saw no results after a week, you might want to try and do something like this:

2,300 calories per day (-200 calories per day)  
3 cardio sessions per week on the bike  
20 min cardio session (+5 min per session)  
Heart Rate 130

Or you could try this instead:

2,500 calories  
4 cardio sessions per week on the bike (+1 day cardio)  
15 min cardio session  
Heart Rate 135 (+5 beats per minute)

The changes that you decide to make to your plan weekly are up to you. This is what you usually pay a trainer for, but if you can master this skill, you won't need a trainer to tell you what to do. I know from working at both 24Hr Fitness and Gold's Gym that personal training is very expensive. When I worked there, it was about \$35 for a half hour session. Think of all the money you can save!

Some of the factors that might help you decide what changes to make are the "Hunger", "Cardio", and "Energy" boxes on your Weekly Progress Sheet. Each week you should be putting a number from 1-10 in each of those boxes. We covered these in previous chapters, but here's a refresher:

*Hunger:* 1 meaning not hungry at all and 10 meaning that you're starving

*Cardio:* 1 meaning cardio is not hard at all and 10 meaning that you're working as hard as possible

*Energy:* 1 meaning that you have no energy at all and 10 meaning that you have plenty of energy

If you wrote 8 in the "Hunger" box, you probably shouldn't cut your calories the next week. If you wrote 9 in "Cardio", you probably shouldn't make your cardio harder. And if you wrote 7 in "Energy", you know that you're either not eating enough or you're working out too hard. These three boxes will really help you determine what kind of changes you can, should, or should not make to your plan.

**NOTE:** Listening to your body is very important. If you make your plan too difficult, your body will tell you. Adjust your plan according to how you feel. Remember that you are trying to make long-term changes, not quick fixes or crash dieting.

After another week passes of following your revised plan, you'll re-evaluate your measurements again. Use the Weekly Progress Sheet to keep track of all this data. You'll be able to see week by week how the changes you made are affecting your progress. Based on the results you see, make changes again. Continue doing so week by week until you reach your goal.

That's it! The whole process isn't too difficult. It's a bunch of data collecting and trial and error. Your plan didn't work this week? Well, make some changes and try it out again. Maybe try a cheat meal (Chapter Sixteen). That worked for you? Awesome, keep it up! When progress stalls, make some more changes to your plan so that you continue to see results.

## Chapter 19: Eating Too Few Calories

There is a phenomenon that occurs when you eat too few calories: you don't lose weight. I say phenomenon because it doesn't always happen. If it did always happen, people who are starving or anorexic wouldn't lose weight.

That being said, I have seen it twice where someone was eating too few calories and couldn't lose weight. I added calories to their diet (yes, *added* calories) and suddenly we started seeing progress. The only "scientific" reasoning I can think of is that they were eating so little calories that their metabolism was extremely slow. Metabolism is key to burning calories. Think of your metabolism as a machine that needs fuel to keep burning. If you don't give it fuel it can't burn anything, including calories.

Some people refer to this as "starvation mode", claiming that since your body doesn't have what it needs, it stores all the food you give it as fat. I don't personally buy into this claim solely because if that were the case, starvation wouldn't be a thing. If you eat fewer calories than your body needs, you should lose weight, period.

If you fit into this category of people eating too few calories and not losing weight, re-evaluate your caloric intake first. I've come to find that a lot of people who claim to have this issue don't realize that the fluids they're drinking contain calories, or they "mindlessly" snack during the day, grabbing a small something here and there without counting it as part of their daily calorie intake. Another common mistake is that their caloric intake is radically different from day to day. They claim they eat 1,000 calories, and they might actually do that for 2-3 days out of the week, but then eat 3,000+ on two or three days of the week as well.

Make sure to accurately record your calories. Make your caloric intake consistent day to day. If you've done this already, try adding 300-500 calories per day for a week and record your results. I've seen someone eating nearly 1,000 calories per day go up to 1,800 per day and LOSE weight. Everyone's results differ. Like we've discussed in the previous chapters, this entire process is pretty much a big game of guess and check, re-evaluate, check again, and make alterations to your diet and exercise regime along the way so that you continue to make progress.

## Chapter 20: Weight Training

Weight training is extremely beneficial. I recommend that all clients, male and female, weight train. The main reasons I recommend weight training are:

1. *You burn calories when you lift weights.* Remember that the way to lose fat is to burn more calories than your body needs. This is another way to burn calories.
2. *You burn calories when your body is repairing the damaged muscle tissue.* When you lift weights, you're damaging the muscle tissue. Your body requires calories to repair muscle.
3. *More muscle = higher metabolic rate.* The more muscle you have, the more calories you burn *without even doing anything*. Once you've gained muscle, your body burns more calories just to maintain that muscle. This will allow you to eat more!
4. *Self confidence.* Lifting weights releases "feel good" hormones such as serotonin. You'll feel better about yourself because it feels good to workout.

I debated including an in-depth guide to weight training, but I think the topic can be very complex and lengthy. The purpose of this guide is for fat loss. Weight training is merely another tool to aid you in your fat loss.

I have included a basic, three-day workout plan in the next chapter. If you're unfamiliar with the exercises, you can easily do a Google image search or even find a YouTube instructional video showing how to perform the different exercises.

The exercises are written in a specific order, taking into account muscle groups that work together to perform the exercises listed. I recommend completing them in the order written. As per what day you should do which workout, that's completely up to you. It depends on how many days you're willing to go to the gym and lift weights. You could do the following workout plan on Monday/Wednesday/Friday, or you could do each workout twice per week, taking 1 day off in between or after. Listen to your body. It will tell you what you're capable of. If anything hurts, stop immediately.

If you're unable to go to a gym, you can be creative and find ways to "lift weights" at home. I've worked out with suitcases or backpacks full of books, used milk jugs full of water, my one-year-old daughter (carefully!), and chairs or small tables.

Bodyweight exercises are another great at-home workout. Bodyweight squats, pushups, and pull-ups, are great exercises for beginners and advanced lifters.

If you're having trouble being creative or thinking of workouts, I recommend using [Bodybuilding.com](http://Bodybuilding.com). There are thousands of free articles and workout plans on that website for all difficulty levels.

**NOTE:** Females should not be concerned about "bulking up" or becoming "manly" from weight training. Females do not physiologically have the hormones to become as muscular as a male. Not only that, but it requires a surplus of calories to gain substantial muscle. It would require years and years of heavy lifting and force feeding to gain the muscle that women sometimes fear.

## Chapter 21: Sample Workout Plan

### Pull Day (Back/Biceps/Abs)

Lat Pull Downs  
1-Arm Dumbbell Rows  
Seated Cable Rows  
Barbell Curls  
Alternating Dumbbell Hammer Curls  
Sit Ups  
V-Ups

### Push Day (Chest/Shoulders/Triceps)

Dumbbell Bench  
Dumbbell Flys  
Dumbbell Side Raises  
Dumbbell Shoulder Press  
Barbell Skull Crushers  
Tricep Cable Pushdowns (Rope or Bar)

### Leg Day

Barbell Squats  
Leg Press  
Lunges  
Leg Extensions  
Leg Curls  
Calf Raises

- \*Do 3 sets of 10 reps per each exercise**
- \*Rest 30-90 seconds between sets**
- \*Focus on form rather than heavier weight**

## Chapter 22: Supplements

Supplements can be helpful in achieving your fitness goals, but it's important to remember that supplements are an *industry*—they exist to make someone else money. Remember this every time you see an advertisement or hear about a “magical” supplement. Remember that someone else is going to be making money if you buy their product, and that's what they want you to do.

Supplements are just that: a supplement. They're meant to supplement your diet and exercise program, not replace it. Many people use supplements as a crutch to a poor diet or exercise regime. They don't want to work hard, record their calories, or watch what they're eating. They want to take a pill or drink a shake that will fix that for them. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. Don't use supplements as a crutch.

Many supplements tend to be expensive. You have to weigh the cost and benefit of every supplement. For example, I don't pay more than \$0.50 per scoop of protein. Protein tends to be extremely overpriced. You shouldn't need to pay more than that per drink.

Protein supplements are only needed if you aren't reaching your minimum protein requirement with food (See Chapter Four, “Macros”). A protein supplement is not going to make you lose weight nor gain weight. It's not going to make you “bulky.” If you're in a caloric deficit, you'll lose weight. If you're eating in a caloric surplus, you'll gain weight.

Supplements usually aren't FDA approved. The claims listed on the bottle or in the advertisement aren't approved by the FDA, and if a supplement isn't FDA approved, it doesn't have to do what the label claims it does. There are many supplement companies that exaggerate their claims and make their product seem too good to be true—which is usually is. I recommend searching around and reading reviews before deciding on a supplement.

“Fat burners” don't necessarily burn fat. Most fat burners have caffeine and herbs which will increase your heart rate and core temperature, therefore burning more calories. How many calories? I can't say. Are they worth it? Maybe, maybe not. It will be up to you if it's worth it to pay for the supplement and give it a shot. But remember that a fat burner is not going to magically make you burn fat. Advertising on fat burners is extremely misleading. They want you to think that you'll take this pill and get shredded or lose a ton of weight. That's not going to happen, only diet and exercise can do that.

Look at every supplement with skepticism. Read the labels. Learn about the ingredients in the product and what they do. A quick Google search will tell you what each ingredient is and what the “effective” dose of each ingredient is.

I will say that I personally recommend creatine to male and female clients alike. Creatine is basically another energy source. More energy means more work, and more work means more calories burned. A normal dose of creatine is five grams (5g) per day. Creatine is extremely inexpensive (less than \$0.10 per

scoop) and there are a lot of scientific studies to support its benefits. Creatine can lead to weight gain, but it's important to understand that the weight is from water, not fat. Remember, water has weight associated with it as well. And remember that weight is not equal to fat.

Pre-workouts are a new popular supplement. They help people by increasing energy levels and getting them mentally excited to workout. Most people I talk to don't understand the ingredients in pre-workouts. They'll just say something like "that one made me hear colors and see sounds" or "that one tasted awesome!"

There are basically 2 different kinds of pre-workouts: stimulant based and pump based. A stimulant based pre-workout would be taken to give you energy. A pump-based pre-workout would be taken to increase blood flow to the muscles, therefore engorging the muscle with blood. Blood carries nutrients. The thinking is that by engorging the muscles with blood and getting a "muscle pump", you're delivering nutrients to the muscle cells, therefore improving muscle growth and decreasing recovery time.

A pre-workout supplement is either going to give you more energy or it's going to increase your blood flow. The ingredients involved with these benefits combat each other: Caffeine is a vasoconstrictor (meaning it makes the blood vessels smaller), while Citrulline/Arginine are ingredients commonly found in pump-based pre-workouts that are vasodilators (meaning they make blood vessels larger).

Once again, do your research. Look up the ingredients on the bottles and see what the effective doses of each ingredient are. It's common for supplement companies to list on the front of their product something like: "Caffeine, Creatine, and Citrulline!" and then when you look at the back of the bottle, they have a fraction of the clinical dose shown to elicit a benefit.

In conclusion, supplements can help you achieve your fitness goals, but there are many factors that you need to consider. Remember that the supplement industry is a multibillion-dollar industry. They exist to make money. Make sure you understand what it is you're taking. Do some research on the ingredients. Make sure the benefit of the supplement is worth your money. Remember that advertising is extremely powerful. No magic pill or workout shake exist that will make you reach your goals in record-breaking time.

## Chapter 23: Mental Health

Dieting is hard: not only physically, but mentally as well. We live in a world where society places a large emphasis on image. This chapter will cover some of the less-discussed issues with dieting.

It's very important that when you go through this dieting process, you focus on **you**. Comparison is a joy-sucker. Try not to compare yourself to someone else. It can be very self-destructive. I've seen this time and time again with my clients throughout the years. They compare themselves to a friend, someone else they see at the gym, or someone they see on Instagram.

Let's talk about Instagram for a minute. On Instagram, you see a single shot into someone's life. That person wants you to think their life is amazing. You might see a "fitness chick" that looks incredible with a big smile on her face or a muscular guy who's shredded with veins popping out. But let me tell you the truth about those photos, because I have some photos of myself like that: I wasn't happy (although I was smiling in my pictures). I was suffering. I could barely function day by day. Getting up off the couch to go to the bathroom was a drag. My relationship with my wife suffered. My work performance suffered.

But no one on Instagram sees that. All they see is a picture of someone smiling and looking awesome. They don't know what goes on behind the scenes and what it took to get to that point. It literally took me five months of extreme dieting and cardio to get to that point, and I wasn't happy. I didn't even care that I looked awesome because I was so mentally drained and exhausted.

All I could think about was my next meal. I would literally have dreams of having two ounces of extra chicken. How crazy is that? Two ounces of extra chicken. Eating disorders are more common than you think. I've dealt with many people who have had them, including myself to some degree. Towards the end of one of my contest preps, I would literally go to the grocery store every day and just walk around, looking at food, imaging what it would taste like. I wouldn't buy anything. I would just look at it, then leave.

Not only that, but Instagram is full of filters and photoshop. It creates a false sense of reality for us. I think that when you're scrolling through Instagram, you're subconsciously comparing yourself without even trying. Your mind is grabbing those images (which are often fake) and storing them into your brain without you even realizing it. Then when you look in the mirror, you don't see what your brain saw, and you question why. (If you can't tell, I'm not a huge fan of Instagram fit pics).

Try to avoid comments such as "why can't I look like that" or "I wish I had legs like hers." Everyone is different. Every *body* is different. Focus on the good in yourself. Don't tear yourself down. Self-love is extremely important. Lots of clients I've dealt with have issues loving themselves for who they are and how they look.

Focus on the progress that **you** make. Don't focus on the accomplishments of others. I had a client once who was losing one to two pounds per week but wasn't happy because their friend (who I was also

working with) was losing two to three pounds per week. She was comparing herself to her friend and ignoring her progress. One to two pounds per week is amazing!

Life gets in the way sometimes. We slip up and let our diet or exercise take the backseat. That is normal; it happens. Don't let it get you down. You can always get back up and keep going. Don't be too hard on yourself. If you see yourself starting to have a negative relationship with food, or if your diet is affecting you negatively, take a break.

Balancing life and your diet and fitness goals can be tough. Eating is a very social activity. Think about when you want to go hang out with friends or family. Food is almost always an aspect of the social event. You might go to brunch or dinner, or there are snacks or treats on the table at a friend's house. Remember that this should not control your life. Food is meant to be enjoyed. Don't let your dieting goals destroy your social life and relationships with others.

In conclusion, try to be conscious of the mental changes that are occurring as your dieting. Try to focus on your own progress as opposed to others. Don't compare yourself to someone else. That will destroy your motivation and can lead to depression. If you aren't careful, dieting can take over and lead to these types of unhealthy behaviors and relationships. If it starts to happen to you, take a step back. Take a break. Talk to someone about what you think is going on and ask them to give you their honest opinion on your behavioral changes. Love yourself for who you are, not only based on your image.

## FAQ

What's the best diet plan to lose weight?  
Do I need to stop eating after a certain time of the day?  
Should I eat breakfast?  
What's the best thing to eat after a workout?  
Can I eat out while dieting?  
Do I have to eat chicken and veggies to lose weight?  
What's all this talk about the Keto Diet?  
What makes a food good or bad for you?  
I'm eating so good! Why can't I lose weight?  
I workout so hard. Why can't I lose weight?  
Will I get big and bulky if I lift weights?  
Will I get big and bulky if I drink protein?  
Does fat turn into muscle?  
How do I get toned?  
How do I lose the fat on my stomach, legs or butt?  
What's more important: The Diet or The Workout?  
Do I have to workout for hours to get in shape?  
Can I workout when I'm sick?  
Is it true that lower intensity cardio is better for burning fat?  
Any low calorie sweet treats?  
Should I do a cleanse?  
Are some foods like celery really "negative" calories?

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### **What's the best diet plan to lose weight?**

The best diet plan is going to be one that works for you. The diet that you will stick to and follow is going to work best and yield long lasting results. The key with any diet is that it needs to put you in a caloric deficit—meaning you need to eat less than your body needs.

### **Do I need to stop eating after a certain time of the day?**

No. If you need 2500 calories and you are eating 2000 per day, it does not matter when you eat them. Many of my clients have a "night time snack" before bed so that they don't wake up hungry.

### **Should I eat breakfast?**

Yes! Eating breakfast jump-starts your metabolism and starts the calorie burning for the day. Try not to skip breakfast.

### **What's the best thing to eat after a workout?**

A fast-acting carbohydrate such as white rice, pasta or a bagel to restore your muscle glycogen along with a protein source such as whey protein or another complete protein source, like meat, chicken, eggs, or milk.

### **Can I eat out while dieting?**

Yes! Calories are king. As long as you're eating within your calorie limit, you can eat out. Just realize that eating out will use up a lot of your calories quickly. It's very easy to eat a high amount of calories when eating out. Try to make smart choices if you do this. Use the free app "MyFitnessPal" and look up the calories in different food items on the menu.

### **Do I have to eat chicken and veggies to lose weight?**

Not at all! The reason people do this is because chicken and veggies are high in volume while being low in calories. They can eat a lot and feel full while using a small amount of their daily calories. Veggies also contain vitamins and minerals and fiber. (Refer to Chapter Four for more information.)

### **What's all this talk about the Keto Diet?**

Refer to Chapter Eight for more information on the Keto Diet.

### **I'm eating so good! Why can't I lose weight?**

It all comes down to calories. You can eat as "good" or "healthy" as you want and not lose weight if you're eating too many calories.

### **I workout so hard. Why can't I lose weight?**

You're not in a calorie deficit. You need to either eat less calories or do more exercise. If you're already working out a lot and not seeing the progress you want, re-evaluate your diet. Take a second look at your workout plan too. Make sure your cardio is high intensity. Refer to Chapter Seventeen for more info on cardio.

### **Will I get big and bulky if I lift weights?**

No! Lots of females believe if they lift weights they'll get big or manly. They do not physiologically have the hormones required to build the muscle that males can. Building muscle takes years of hard work and eating in a surplus of calories. Refer to Chapter Twenty for more info on why you should lift weights.

### **Will I get big and bulky if I drink protein?**

No! You need to be eating a surplus of calories to gain weight. Protein that is not used to repair muscle tissue will be used as fuel and burned off. You won't get big just because you're eating or drinking a high amount of protein.

### **Does fat turn into muscle?**

No. Your fat cells shrink as you burn calories. Your muscles are different tissue that can grow when you lift weights. There is no transformation of fat into muscle.

### **How do I get toned?**

Getting toned comes down to fat loss. Everyone has muscles. The reason they don't show on some people is because there is a layer of fat covering them. Everyone has abs. If you can get rid of the fat surrounding the muscle, you'll be more "toned". You can't "tone" a muscle. You can only lose the fat surrounding that muscle.

### **How do I lose the fat on my stomach, legs or butt?**

This is called "spot reduction" and it is not possible. Your body loses body fat simultaneously everywhere. If you want to lose fat on a certain body part, you need to lose body fat everywhere. Some people hold more fat in certain areas than other people do. This just means you'll have to work harder to show off the body part you want to look better. Some areas are more stubborn than others, and it's different for everyone.

### **What's more important: The Diet or the Workout?**

Both are extremely important. You can lose fat with diet alone, but I suggest pairing the two together for the best results. I would not say that there is a certain percentage associated with diet or cardio. Understand that you can work out as hard as you want, but if your diet is not in check, you won't see the progress you want.

### **Do I have to work out for hours to get in shape?**

Not at all. It's a balance of diet and exercise. If you can only dedicate 3 days per week to working out, then you need to adjust your diet accordingly. I have never had someone do more than an hour of cardio six times per week, and that was for an extreme bodybuilder. Most of my clients lift weights for thirty minutes and do around twenty minutes of cardio, three to five times per week. Even when I was competing in bodybuilding shows, I didn't work out for more than an hour-and-a-half per day, five times per week, and that was weight training and cardio combined.

### **Can I workout when I'm sick?**

I'm not going to give a medical recommendation, but when I'm sick I'll workout only if I do not have a headache or fever. I have worked out when I had cold-like symptoms, and sometimes I actually felt better afterwards. Listen to your body.

### **Is it true that lower intensity cardio is better for burning fat?**

This is called the “fat burn zone”. I do not agree with doing cardio in this fashion. See Chapter Seventeen on cardio for more info.

### **Any low calorie sweet treats?**

Yes! Sugar-free Jell-O is a great one. An entire box is between 20 and 40 calories depending on the flavor and brand. I drink a lot of sugar free Powerade or diet soda when I get really hungry. The carbonation helps me feel full and it has no calories. There are a few “protein ice cream” brands out there too that are fairly low in calories.

### **Should I do a cleanse?**

I completely disagree with the premise of a cleanse. Lots of people do it to “clean out” your system. Your kidneys and liver are organs used to filter out your system. Some people like cleanses because of the huge initial weight loss. This is because of water loss. If you’re eating close to nothing, of course you’re going to lose weight quickly. You’re going to gain it right back after you’re done with the cleanse. There is absolutely no purpose in doing a cleanse. This is a fad diet. Refer to Chapter Seven for more info on fad diets.

### **Are some foods like celery really “negative” calories?**

No. Every food has calories. People will argue that the body burns more calories digesting the celery than it actually provides you. There is no way to tell how many calories your body burns when digesting celery. Count it towards your daily calories.

## Testimonials

“Mike helped me realize that I didn’t have to starve to make progress. He helped me see that sometimes changing calorie intake helped me lose weight faster. I’m grateful for the help and guidance he gave me. Knowledge that I can use for a lifetime.” –Patti

“Michael was great! He really helped me understand that the balance between calories in vs calories out was key to fat loss and muscle gain. With his help and guidance I was able to drop over 80lb while gaining strength and more importantly keeping my sanity. No fad diets, fasting, none of that gimmick of the week nonsense. With just simply keeping track of my protein and calories, I was able to look the best I ever had and be the strongest in my life, while still eating my favorite foods and not feeling restricted. Really grateful to Michael for his guidance and helping me learn all that.” –Loyd

“This guide is an easy yet informative read to help anyone wanting to learn about lifestyle changes that work! It teaches you to effectively count calories and calculate how much you should be eating. Reading reminded me and motivated me to become healthier. Following the steps in this guide helped me feel better about myself and assisted me in losing my extra weight.” –Stacie

“Michael’s knowledge and experience are a must have for anyone starting their own fitness journey. Unlike a lot of other programs out there, his approach helps you adapt your program to your own needs and goals, so that it’s easier to stick with and see results.” –Wes

“I wanted to get rid of my belly and look better in my clothes. I wanted some muscle definition in my arms and legs...my clothes fit better now. I can tell that my T-shirts fit better and don’t snag on my belly. Best thing is that I can go almost all day without wearing my back brace belt. That was my ultimate goal. Before losing weight and working out, I could never go without it. I have more energy now and overall feel better about myself.” –David

“Mike has been my go-to every time I’m trying to get into shape. He’s taught me the principles in how he creates diet plans as he coached me. He always said the end goal was to not need him. I go to him anyways because he’s been that good of a coach.” –Jonathan