

# The Shift

# **What's in it for me? Learn how your mind is the most powerful tool in your weight loss journey.**

Have you ever tried a weight loss program? Did it work for you? And how do you feel now? Maybe you feel like you're fighting all alone or that you keep hitting setback after setback. You might even feel like it's all hopeless. Don't beat yourself up. Change is hard. In these blinks, we'll walk through a kind and loving approach to weight loss. And we'll take a closer look at the author's idea that lasting change starts with the mind before it can happen in the body. By tackling seven major mindset shifts, we'll see that you can learn to love and respect yourself with a whole new appreciation. And soon you'll be achieving your weight loss goals almost as a side effect of living a more joyful life. In these blinks, you'll learn

why being grateful can help you lose weight; how happiness is a choice you can make at any moment; and how to find your personal superpowers.

## **For weight loss, what you think is more important than what you eat.**

OK – pop quiz. Which do you think is healthier: a banana, or banana bread? Too easy? Alright, here's another one: Which is a healthier breakfast, oatmeal or pancakes? Still aching it? Here's one more. It's lunchtime, should you pick grilled fish or fried fish? If you picked banana, oatmeal, and grilled fish – congratulations, you get the blue ribbon for wise food choices. But in all honesty – were these really hard questions? Deep down, you probably already know the answers to which foods are best for your optimal health. That's why we're not going to dive into the benefits of one diet versus another. Instead, we're going to dig into the real transformation, the one that happens inside your head. Because here's the beating heart of the issue: when it comes to weight loss, what you think is way more important than what you eat. To really tackle significant and sustainable weight loss, you have to alter your mindset. Thoughts about your body and your weight are tied to your self-esteem, how you view yourself, and sometimes ideas about your success and future. Until you disentangle these things, you can't make meaningful progress. So, in these blinks, you'll learn about seven mindset shifts. But before we start, let's confront one truth: setbacks will happen. They happen to the most disciplined, organized, determined people, and they'll most likely happen to you at some point. An extravagant birthday weekend will challenge your discipline, your organizational skills will fall aside when your preschooler gets sick and you need to take care of her, a reservation to a tempting new five-star restaurant will undo your stern determination. And all of that's OK. Setbacks happen to everyone, and they can be overcome. In fact, the occasional obstacle serves to sharpen the skills we're about to explore and will help you on your journey to meaningful, sustainable weight loss. So let's dive in and start a journey of small steps that can take you to a whole new destination. First stop: self-compassion.

## **Self-compassion is the best remedy to**

# setbacks.

Think of how many times you've heard someone say: I cheated on my diet today. Cheat is a harsh word with some pretty tough ramifications in any other context. Cheat on your taxes and you go to jail. Cheat on your spouse and you break up your family. Does enjoying an ice cream sundae truly equate? Of course not! We need to change those harsh, judgmental tones we use when speaking about weight loss and replace them with compassion and love for ourselves. That can be a challenge in a society that views overweight people with contempt and even hostility. Let's think about this anecdote the author shared about a bride-to-be. Standing in front of a mirror in a bridal shop wearing the perfect dress, she felt beautiful. That is, until she overheard the store owner tell her mother that they'd have to pay extra because she'd need a plus-size gown. Her happiness turned into loathing of herself and her inability to be slim. When you constantly tell yourself you're a loser, or useless, or pathetic, you overlook all the wonderful qualities that make you who you are. You're beginning from a place of hopelessness, of thinking you aren't capable or worthy of change. Now let's try the opposite of this tough-love approach. Imagine that rather than criticism, you engage in self-compassion every time you hit a setback. This is the first mindset shift: Speak to yourself with kindness. Tell yourself that this was just one small stumble and that with all the wonderful qualities you have, you'll be able to get back on track. Let's try an exercise you can practice that can help you have more compassion for yourself. Imagine that a close friend is in the same situation that you find yourself in now. How would you speak to that friend? Imagine the conversation and pay attention to the words you use and the tone of your voice. Now zoom back into your real life. How are you talking to yourself? Chances are, not as nicely as you did to your friend. It might feel a bit awkward the first few times you do this, but try to talk to yourself as you would to your friend. With practice, it'll become a habit - one that'll help you be kinder to yourself not just with weight loss, but any challenge in your life.

## Clear your mind of negative thoughts.

To stay in that zone of self-compassion, there's an essential chore you have to take on - emptying your "mind trash." Because your thoughts determine your feelings, and ultimately your actions, you won't see the results you want until you very deliberately take apart your old and destructive ways of thinking. This is mindset shift number two: embracing positive ways of thinking. Let's dissect this. Say you weigh yourself and, to your horror, you've actually gained two pounds. You think, "Nothing's working!" You're disheartened and decide that you aren't capable of making this change - so why bother? You might as well raid your freezer and eat that tub of ice cream. See how your thoughts sabotaged your goals? It's a lose-lose cycle! To better equip you with the skills to overcome these negative thoughts, let's look at four types of negative thinking that can hijack your journey. Our first culprit is all-or-none thinking. You eat right all day, but you did have a piece of your coworker's birthday cake. You may think, "I ruined everything!" Well, no you didn't. You ate oatmeal for breakfast, walked for 30 minutes, and you plan to eat grilled salmon for dinner. One slice of cake doesn't ruin your day. Our second culprit is the negative filter. If you watch a movie that you enjoyed but found a scene boring, is that enough to write off the entire experience? In the same way, judging your entire effort by focusing on one or two setbacks isn't an accurate picture of the overall situation. The third type of negative thinking you may have experienced is the once-makes-always thought process. This is where "I forgot to pack breakfast"

immediately translates to “I’m too disorganized to achieve any goals.” You’ve probably noticed that these three negative patterns all have something in common; they revolve around a habit of catastrophizing. The fourth type of negative thinking is a little different though. People stuck in the don’t-worry-be-happy mindset are confident they can overcome setbacks – which is great. The problem is that they don’t have a clear plan of how to do it. “Sure, I’ll get back on the exercise wagon next week,” they say. But they’d be more successful if they said, “Next week, I’ll work in a 20-minute walk before work and schedule yoga sessions for Tuesday and a Zumba class on Thursday night.” In the next blink, we’ll learn more about how to transform big thoughts into doable actions.

## **Clear goals will get you to Destination Weight Loss.**

To take action that transforms your thoughts into goals, let’s talk about the power of how. This simply means asking yourself how something went well, or how you can have a different outcome next time. Doing this has a powerful impact: it gives you power over the result. And this is where mindset shift number three comes in – goal setting. Answering the how of things helps you come up with a clear, precise, hassle-free plan that leaves no wiggle room for procrastination or confusion. Let’s take a broad statement like “I’ll eat better” and break that down by asking how. Maybe that starts with “I’ll eat more fruits,” then gets more specific – “I’ll eat more oranges and apples and try new fruits, like kiwi and dragon fruit.” And ultimately, eating better could mean “I’ll eat an orange every weekday morning, an apple at 4:00 p.m. daily, and two other fruits on Saturday morning with my breakfast.” See how that works? Now you have specific details that can help you plan a grocery list and set times for fulfilling your goals. Think of these as the step-by-step directions to Destination Weight Loss. You’ll notice that these goals don’t say anything about how many calories to eat or how many pounds to lose in a week. That’s the beauty of this – if you continue showing yourself compassion, thinking positive thoughts, and making specific plans, the weight loss will happen, and along the way, you’ll find that you’ve become a happier, healthier person. That’s because as you carry out your planned steps of action, over a period of time, you’ll notice that they’ve morphed into something else – habits. It’ll become a habit to reach into your fruit bowl rather than grabbing a packaged snack. And here’s a handy guide to creating the kind of habits that stick. First, identify the change you want to make – let’s say you want to eat healthier so you’ll add specific fruit to your diet. Next, assign it a cue. Perhaps tea. You’ll have a fruit with your morning tea and one with your afternoon tea. Now here’s the fun part – reward yourself! How about eating that fruit while sitting outside and reading a book on your patio? You’ve created a habit worth keeping.

## **Use your superpowers to lose weight and become a better person.**

After all that hard work of learning how to be kind to yourself, losing the negative toxic inner voice, and creating actions that turn into good habits, this next step is going to be easy. All you have to do is be yourself – the best version of it. Mindset shift number four is all about leaning into your strengths, so get ready to brag! This is where this exercise

usually grinds to a halt because most of us have been trained to do the exact opposite. But identifying your strengths is crucial to the process. Two of the founders of positive psychology, Dr. Christopher Peterson and Dr. Martin Seligman, studied religions, philosophies, and texts from religions and cultures around the world to come up with a comprehensive list of 24 character strengths across six virtues – courage, humanity, justice, temperance, transcendence, and wisdom. To read about these 24 traits in detail and find which ones resonate with you head on over to [viacharacter.org](http://viacharacter.org). If you're still too modest to list your strengths, you can try this. Take a few moments to think of a friend's strengths. If you can see the ways in which your best friend is awesome, you can definitely come up with a few strengths for yourself! To truly shift your mindset to lose weight and become a better person, you have to leverage your top strengths. Think of them as your superpowers. Let's say a love for learning popped up as one of your top five. Use this strength to research new recipes or exercises. You can also use one strength to build up another – maybe "creativity" and "kindness" can team up to create menus that you can share with friends who are on the same weight-loss journey as you. Here's the beauty of this step. Much like the other mindset shifts we talked about earlier, focusing on your strengths doesn't just help you in your weight-loss journey, it actually helps you live a happier, more fulfilled life in general. When you set goals with your strengths in mind, you're starting from a place of self-confidence and enjoyment, which only makes you succeed in your food and exercise goals, which grows your strengths in these traits . . . see what's happening here? It's a positive loop!

## **Your amazing body is worthy of respect and appreciation.**

After listening to that last blink, I hope you're in positive self-appreciation mode because you're going to have to bring all that energy to this blink. This is where you're going to focus on mindset shift number five: appreciating your body. A lot of us have complicated relationships with our bodies. It's a unique, personal relationship that's defined by three general areas: your personal history of everything anyone has told you about your body, your cultural standards, and how you talk to yourself and think about your body. It's far too easy for all of the above to become negative and for your thoughts to spiral away from specifically body issues to life issues overall. If you've heard relatives describe you as "chubby" compared to your siblings, and noticed that your skinny friends were asked out on dates in high school but you weren't, you may think that your body is the reason. This scorn can get ugly, spilling out into ideas about how you're lazy, have no respect or discipline, and will never have true worth in your own or anyone else's eyes. But weight shouldn't dominate your entire sense of self. Once you've connected your weight to your self-esteem, it becomes a self-defeating game of elimination – "I won't go to pool parties until I've lost 50 pounds," or "I'm declining all my friends' wedding invites until I can fit into a size 8 again." Ouch. This couldn't be further away from the self-compassion you want to begin this journey with. Remember that while it's true that a good, healthy diet and exercise can reap rewards for a long and happy life, 40 to 79 percent of the variation in your body weight is determined not by what's on your plate, but by what's in your genes. Despising yourself for what is completely out of your control is futile. Instead, focus on what you can control by treating your body with the dignity and respect it deserves, which includes healthy eating, regular exercise – and appreciation. Here's one quick exercise to help you appreciate your body: Think of one body part you don't like, maybe your "flabby" arms. Now think about all the things your arms do that help you live your best life – your arms



carry your baby, hug your spouse, garden, paint, drive. Not so shabby anymore, are they? Your glorious body supports your life and it deserves your best thoughts.

## **Don't be afraid to ask for help.**

Your body supports you, and your positive mindset supports your body getting healthier. Now let's cast that net wider as we discuss mindset shift number six: getting the help you need. Peer pressure is real. It's powerful and it's pervasive. So imagine what can happen if you get all those peers working for you and supporting your goals! Actually, there's no need to imagine. Studies show that people who have social support are more likely to eat healthy and exercise and less likely to go back to old ways of eating and inactivity. At the six-month mark, those with the support of friends and family lost more weight than those who went at it alone. And yet, a lot of us are notoriously reluctant to ask for help, especially with a journey that seems so private with its potential for failure and embarrassment. We feel like no one will care or that weight loss is something we should have the discipline to do alone. But don't you help other people? What makes you think they won't want to do the same for you? Some people almost have to be included in your journey because of their proximity to you, like your immediate family members. You might include others who are interested in the same lifestyle change, like friends, colleagues, or people you meet on social media. You may have other criteria for companions on your weight-loss journey, like someone who lives close by, or someone who's nonjudgmental. When you've identified your people, be specific with what you need from them. Don't just say, "Hey, make sure I eat right and work out!" Instead, try "Can you handle the dishes so I can hop on the treadmill for half an hour?" or "Can you leave cookies off this week's grocery list?" Some conversations can be more awkward, but are just as necessary, especially when dealing with saboteurs. Let's take, for example, a teenager who can't help making snarky comments about your weight. Or the overinvolved sibling who counts your helpings. If any of your supporters are making you uncomfortable, call them out and ask them why they're doing or saying what they are. You can also help them adjust their mindsets by pointing out specifically what they said that was unhelpful and why, and perhaps suggest a more helpful approach. And here's a useful tip that can apply to all areas of your life: Learn to say no when boundaries are breached - whether it's to staying late at work or to a second piece of birthday cake.

## **Choose happiness now.**

What if all your life, you've been putting the cart before the horse? What if you don't need everything you thought you did to be happy? The dream job. The perfect spouse. Genius children. Instagram-worthy vacations. Beautiful homes. Six-figure salaries. Parents who are proud of you. Being a size two. Waiting for even just one of these things to happen to be happy is waiting too long. Happiness is its own reward and you can reach for it anywhere, anytime - even now, before a single one of your weight-loss goals has been met. Happiness is a choice. You'll find that once you make that choice over and over again, good things will start happening to you. It's a fact! Studies even show that levels of cheerfulness in 18-year-olds affected their salaries at age 27. Much like weight loss, finding happiness can sound like a hazy destination with no directions. But here's the best way there: through gratitude. Make a habit of finding at least one thing you are grateful for every day. Like happiness, gratitude is not static. It can grow daily. Now, you might be wondering: How do happiness and gratitude tie into the goal we set out to achieve in these blinks, to lose weight? Let's answer that question . . . with a question!

Why do you want to lose weight? It's hardly ever just to lose weight. It's because you want to become healthier and live a happier, more balanced life. So far, we've talked about six of the seven mindset shifts: how to be kind to yourself; how to embrace helpful styles of thinking; how to set goals and form good habits; how to identify and enhance your strengths; how to appreciate the body you have now; and how to seek support. Practicing these brings us to the seventh: Be happy now. You don't need to lose 25 pounds or go down a few sizes to be happy. By practicing gratitude, having a positive mindset, eating healthy food, and living an active lifestyle, you may find yourself way ahead of your goals. When your mind has shifted to this happier place, it feeds into a positive, constructive loop. In this happier place, your happiness is separate from your weight. When you've arrived at this place of self-love, you'll find yourself more inclined to treat your body with compassion and respect, and when this takes the form of healthy eating and exercise, your weight loss is just a wonderful bonus.

## Final summary

The key message in these blinks is that: Sustainable, meaningful weight loss can't occur without the mind taking the first steps. All the exercise and diet in the world will only make a difference if it's intentional and comes from a place of kindness and self-love. Once you've made the seven shifts in the way your mind thinks about your body and your weight, you'll learn to live a more positive, happy life, which in turn will support your weight loss goals. And here's some more actionable advice: Write yourself a letter. If you're struggling to speak to yourself with compassion after a setback, write yourself a letter like you would to a close and respected friend. Be compassionate and nonjudgmental, and help analyze what went wrong and how you can change things to feel happier and more fulfilled.