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I Built an AI Fat Loss Chatbot and Discovered Why You're Overweight

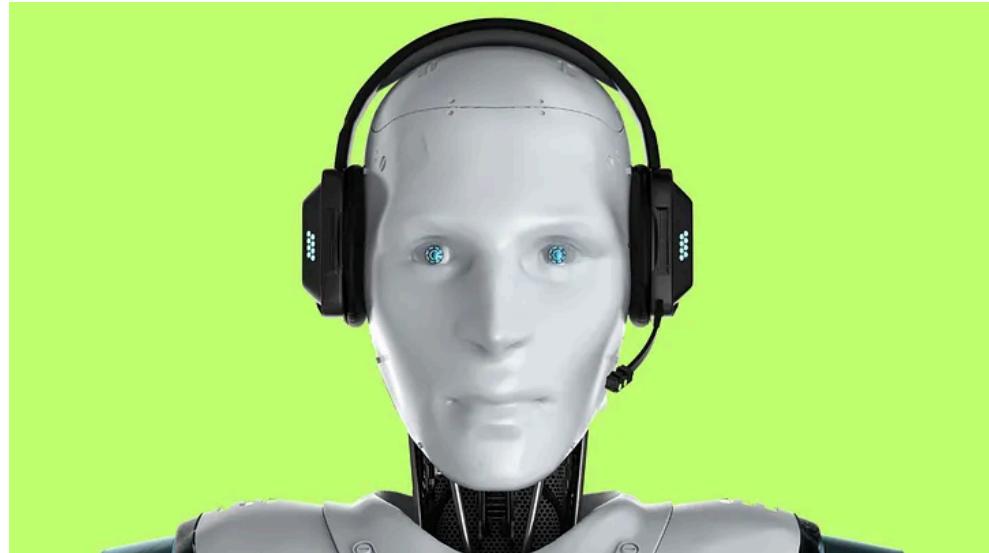
The data doesn't lie. These 3 main mistakes are keeping people out of shape.

Chris Davidson · [Follow](#)

Published in In Fitness And In Health · 6 min read · 4 hours ago



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Canva

You'd be surprised how much overweight people work out. It's a lot.

I mean the cliché is that folks are overweight because they "*just don't move enough*", they have a sedentary lifestyle, etc.

And yet of the men and women in their 40s and 50s who recently used a [Calories & Macros Calculator](#) AI chatbot I built (using plain old FB

I Built an AI Fat Loss Chatbot and Discovered Why You're Overweight | by Chris Davidson | In Fitness And In Health | Sep, 2023 | Medium
Messenger), 70% of those who wanted to lose weight claimed to already be training 3–5 times a week.

Surprising right? As a coach, online and in-person, I run my own training studio. I could *technically* work out every day for hours.

But I don't, because over the years I've also found 3–5 workouts a week, totaling around 2–2.5 hours in total is the sweet spot for folks over 40.

So how can so many people be training in that sweet spot of 3–5 workouts a week, yet still be out of shape and overweight?

Luckily the answers are right there in the data from over 150 people who have used my Calories & Macros Calculator AI Chatbot (*yeah, it needs a snazzier name right? Gimme some name ideas in the Comments!*), showing 3 main mistakes we make in our behavior, workouts, and diets, that keep us out of shape despite what feels like our best efforts.

#1 — We Give Ourselves Unwarranted Medals for Diet Adherence



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64% of folks who are trying to lose weight answered that their diet was either '*decent*' or '*completely dialed in*', yet they aren't losing weight.

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This statistic reminded me of another, from [a study by Cornell University](#)
[that found overweight people underestimate their calorie intake by 40%](#).

This all points towards a phenomenon I see with coaching clients before I ask them to write down everything they eat each day.

Namely, we tend to:

- remember the good stuff
- forget the bad stuff, and
- ignore the things we nibble on throughout the day.

So before we give ourselves a pat on the back for having our diets ‘dialed-in’, because we only conveniently remember the protein shakes and salads, be sure to *actually note down* for a couple of days the calories and macros you’re eating — believe me, it’ll be an eye opener.

#2 — We Misunderstand How Muscle Building Works



Canva

The chatbot asks what your main goal is from knowing your target calories and macros.

Most folks choose ‘Lose Weight’, so the calculated Target Calories are less than Maintenance Calories, to achieve a calorie deficit. So far so obvious.

However, 14 guys who are already pretty overweight chose ‘Build Muscle’ as their main goal, something that requires them to eat in a Calorie Surplus ([muscle building requires extra fuel](#)).

This points to a misunderstanding that men in particular have. Here’s how it goes:

“I am overweight, and out of shape, and I want to look slim and muscular”

“I can’t currently see any muscles, so I need to build muscle”

“Muscle will simply replace my body fat if I build enough”

If only that were true!

Eating in a calorie surplus while training right may well add extra muscle, but also some excess fat. What extra muscle you build will *still* be hidden under a layer of body fat.

So if you’re an overweight guy, by all means, have a goal to **look** more muscular, but **prioritize fat loss first** (while still training with weights).

Then once you reach your target weight or body fat level, you can add a few extra calories to slowly but surely add **more** muscle if you want.

#3 — We Rely on Medium-Intensity Cardio to Burn Calories



The heavier the respondent is, the more likely they are to answer '*Endurance/Cardio*' as their main form of exercise.

This has also been my experience when coaching folks. Here are the most common reasons I hear:

- "*I'm self-conscious in the gym, I prefer to stay on a treadmill out of the way*";
- "*I can't do high-intensity stuff, it hurts my joints*";
- "*My main goal is fat loss, and I read weight training doesn't burn many calories*";
- "*I don't get a sweat on when I lift weights, but spin classes and running make me sweat bucketfuls, that's what I need*".

The first two reasons make total sense — gyms are often not the most welcoming places to out-of-shape folks.

Plus any exercise involving impact can be too-much-too-soon if you're carrying excess weight and haven't trained in a while.

The final two reasons are common misconceptions though:

- Exercise in general doesn't burn as many calories as you'd hope, so isn't the best thing to rely on for fat loss — a **better diet is**.
- Cardio *does* burn more calories than weight training, but combining both burns even more, so you can get stronger muscles and bones, improve your body shape AND burn more calories in the process. Nice!
- The amount you sweat during exercise is not related to how much fat or calories are burned, it's just your body's cooling system at work.

So while I am very much in favor of folks incorporating resistance training into their exercise regime, for all-round fitness and a body shape they're happy with, I'm not saying 'cardio sucks'.

In fact, I always recommend that clients stick to the kind of exercise they enjoy (and if that's cardio then great), as they're more likely to do it regularly!

But if you are sticking with medium-intensity cardio (plodding away on a treadmill/bike/cross-trainer for 30–45 minutes), because it feels safe, easier,

The Key to Losing Weight As You Get Older

It seems too obvious to need saying, but if you want to lose weight... you need to do the things that make that happen instead of just going through the motions and kidding yourself:

- figure out how much you currently eat (*include everything!*), compare that to how much you **should** be eating to lose weight (see link to Calories & Macros Calculator AI Chatbot below);
- treat the fat loss as a focused *phase*, instead of trying to achieve multiple conflicting outcomes at the same time, e.g. aiming to lose fat and build muscle.
- use exercise for its health benefits, not its calorie-burning effects — it takes a lotta pavement pounding to burn off a Big Mac, better not to eat the Big Mac in the first place ;-)
- incorporate resistance training into your weekly training regime to improve your body shape, so that when you lose the weight you want, you're happy with the beautiful masterpiece you've built!

I'm a fitness and lifestyle coach for the over-40s. Fat loss is complicated, and the first step is knowing how many calories and what/how to eat in the first place — [click here](#) to start my Calories & Macros Calculator AI Chatbot, or [start a chat here](#) and type 'Macros'.

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Q 2





Written by Chris Davidson

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Writer & 1:1 Online Coach for the Over-40s • Tired Dad of 3 • Irishman • Trainer • Free Guide: 'No Weird Sh*t Diet': <https://www.overfortyblogger.com/diet>

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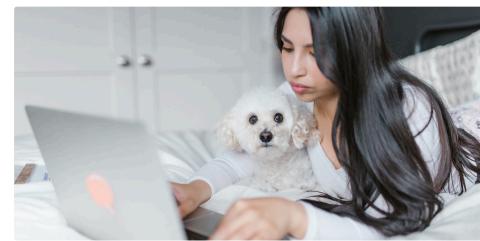
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