

The 6 STAGES

OF WEIGHT LOSS & WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

As with countless areas in life, we experience change in stages or phases; the weight loss journey is no different. There are six stages of weight loss that people often go through on their way to creating a permanent lifestyle change in regard to their physical body and relationship with food. Some people experience only some of the stages, while others experience all five. Regardless, knowledge is power and knowing the stages will help you recognize where you stand and what may be coming next.

STAGE 1: THE HONEYMOON

This is the stage where you are gushing about your new diet program to anyone who will listen. Your expectations are sky high and so is your motivation. You feel excited, ready, and willing to make changes. You feel eager to do whatever it takes to lose weight. You can't wait to achieve your goal and you are 100% committed to your efforts. You are compliant and adhere to your meal plan perfectly.

It is also likely that you track everything you eat and drink, plan and prep your meals, and exercise regularly and with enthusiasm. This stage feels great and you would love it to last forever. Unfortunately, as most of you know, it doesn't last forever.

*It is important to note that research demonstrates that people who spend the majority of time in this stage yield better weight loss and long term weight management.

STAGE 2: FRUSTRATION & REALITY SETTING IN

During this stage, the thrill depletes and reality sets in. Frustration builds as weight loss begins to slow down. You may be saying things like "I only lost 1lb this week," "It doesn't seem like it's working," or "Why can't I lose weight faster?" You realize that planning for weight loss success can be tedious and time consuming. This is the time to get the support you need and reconnect with your "why" (the reasons you decided to lose weight in the first place.) We at RMWL are here to help and provide you with the skills you need to successfully move through this phase.

STAGE 3: TENTATIVE ACCEPTANCE: "IT'S FINALLY SINKING IN."

This is the period of time where the reality of losing weight finally sets in. You have a clearer set of expectations while understanding how the process works. You can actually see yourself reaching your weight loss goals, but realize it will take time and effort. During this stage, you may also be ready to be more consistent about exercising, following your meal plan, controlling your portion sizes, and everything else that goes along with building new healthy habits.

STAGE 4: AMBIVALENCE: "I FEEL LIKE GIVING UP"

This stage is where a second roadblock is likely to happen. You are probably months into your weight loss journey and you begin to think "this weight loss is taking forever." During this period, you may grow tired of the routine, bored of your meal plan, frustrated with eating differently from your friends and family, and tired of limiting alcoholic beverages. This is a crucial time to set new goals, meet with your provider, and possibly obtain extra support through counseling with a behavioral weight loss specialist to help you move through this critical phase of your weight loss journey.

STAGE 5: FEAR OF THE FUTURE/FEAR OF SUCCESS

This stage is characterized by a real fear of success. It doesn't seem to make sense on the surface, but the underlying fear is real! For some people, successfully losing weight brings up anxiety about the future. You may be asking such questions as: "What will my life be like at a lower weight?" or "Will people look at me differently after losing weight?" or "Can I maintain my weight loss long-term?"

It may seem silly, but most people who have a significant amount of weight to lose have similar fears. Be encouraged to not let the fear of a healthier future prevent you from continuing on your journey to better health. Putting your fears aside is not easy, but it is vital to long-term success. Again, seek counseling with a behavioral weight loss specialist if you need extra support.

STAGE 6: SUCCESS

Congratulations, you have made it! You are now a successful long-term weight manager. At this stage, you keep up your new habits even when you have had a bad day or week. You cope with stress and emotions in a healthy way. This is a great and perfectly attainable place to be, and the end-goal for every journey to better health.

It is important to remember that you may move in and out of these stages many times before a permanent lifestyle change is made. In fact, expect to alternate between periods of motivation and resolve, and times of frustration where you feel like quitting. However, do not quit! Be patient, as it takes time to develop healthier attitudes, eating habits, and exercise routines. We are here to help you create the healthy lifestyle you want and deserve.

So, what stage are you in?

