

Deal with Disappointment

At some point while you're still losing weight, you'll undoubtedly feel discouraged. It might happen this week if the scale doesn't register the number you're hoping to see. It could happen tomorrow or next week when you're with friends and see them eating foods that you can't have. At some point that disadvantages of dieting will seem to outweigh the advantages. You might feel resentful or even a little rebellious: *Why do I have to follow this programme? There must be an easier way!*

It takes time to change a mind-set that took years to form. Even though you now have many new skills to fight *sabotaging thoughts* and increase your confidence, you should expect to face times of doubt and disappointment.

When this happens, you'll need to remind yourself that you've freely chosen to lose weight. And having done so you have another choice as well: *You can either make yourself miserable by feeling sorry for yourself or you can accept the disadvantages of having to lose weight, as a necessary means to an end.* Once you truly accept that you need to follow the steps in this programme, your struggle will diminish and losing weight will become much easier.

Remember while you can't stop sabotaging thoughts from arising, you can respond to them. When you notice such thoughts as, *It's not fair that I can't eat this,* or *There must be an easier way,* just say to yourself, **Oh, well. Or in other words... That's life... I don't like this but I'm going to accept it and move on.** Doing this eliminates the struggle, helps you feel better and allows you to focus your attention elsewhere.

Practice saying "Oh, well" in response to situations like the following:

- I want some of that cake, say... **Oh, well** It's not on my plan so I can't
- I really feel hungry, say ...**Oh, well** I will be eating later so it's ok
- I don't feel like exercising today, say... **Oh, well** I know I must, so just get on with it

It's a simple but extremely important concept.

What are you thinking?

Sabotaging Thought: I don't think this will work for me. It seems too simplistic

Helpful Response: It won't take much effort to give this a try. What do I have to lose?

Sabotaging Thought: I don't want to accept the things I have to do. Dieting should be easier.

Helpful Response: I have a choice, I can struggle with what I have to do and feel bad, or I can accept that this is the way it is. It doesn't mean that I like. There are many things I don't like in my life. I don't particularly like paying bills or cleaning the house but I just accept them as part of life and move on.

Counter the Unfairness Syndrome

Mary is at work. Her colleagues are eating sweets, she thinks to herself, *It's not fair that I can't eat what everyone else is eating*, and starts to feel resentful. Then she thinks, *I don't care*, and she gives in and eats some sweets.

What Mary doesn't realize is that while it might not seem fair that her colleagues can eat sweets while she can't, it's even less fair that eating the sweets will affect her mood and strengthen her "giving-in" muscle. Even if she doesn't care at the moment, she's going to care very much in a few minutes.

Many people give themselves permission to eat when confronted with issues of fairness. You might be one of them. We've all grown up with the idea that life should be fair – but life isn't fair. It isn't fair that some people have to struggle with their weight. It isn't fair that some people (due to economic conditions) go hungry every day. It isn't fair that some people die young. **Life just isn't fair sometimes!**

Putting Fairness in Perspective

If the thought that dieting is unfair encourages you to eat, do the following

Remind yourself why you decided to lose weight in the first place. Unless you are forced to lose weight for medical reasons, you've freely chosen to lose weight. You don't *have to* lose weight. You *want to* lose it. Read your Advantages Response Card to remind yourself why it will be worth the effort

Make a mental list of the good things in your life. As compared with many people in the world, you have much more freedom to do what you want, to speak out and to live life as you choose. Maybe you have supportive family and friends or are more financially secure than many other people. Focus on the positive parts of your life.

Create a Response Care. If you constantly think that it's unfair that you have to lose weight, you need a Response Card to help you change your thinking.

RESPONSE CARD

Having to lose weight might not be fair, but I have two choices:

1. I can feel sorry for myself, stop following my plan, never reach my goal, and continue to be unhappy with myself.
2. Or I can sympathize with myself but go ahead and do what I know I need to do. Everyone experiences some kind of unfairness in life. This is one of mine. Besides, the greatest unfairness to me would be if I let this excuse prevent me from reaching a goal I strongly want to achieve.

What are you thinking? Sabotaging thoughts about unfairness of dieting may arise sooner or later. Here are some common ones, along with helpful responses:

Sabotaging Thought: It's not fair that I can't eat normally

Helpful Response: Actually, I probably wasn't eating "normally" before either. Before I started dieting I was probably eating too often and too much and choosing too many unhealthy foods. I'm now eating normally for a person who has a goal to lose weight.

Sabotaging Thought: I shouldn't have to deal with this problem.

Helpful Response: I have three choices:

1. I can give up and stay at this weight – or, more likely, continue to gain weight every year
2. I can diet on and off. Spend some days/months/years eating whatever I want. Some days/months/years trying to stick to a diet and most of the time weighing more than I want to
3. I can accept the fact that dieting isn't fair and move on, continuing to do what I have to do to lose weight. I'm freely choosing this third option.

Deal with Discouragement

For most people, losing weight starts off easy because their motivation and confidence are high. At some point, though, it begins to get harder. Life intervenes in ways that make sticking to your diet a real effort. Cravings become more intense, and some people begin to panic. They have sabotaging thoughts such as:

- ✓ It shouldn't be this hard
- ✓ I'll never be able to keep this up
- ✓ I don't want to do this anymore

It's normal to feel discouraged at times. It's natural to have doubts about whether you can keep doing what you know you have to do, but it's not okay to let these thoughts overwhelm you. When you have discouraging thoughts, you have a choice. You can allow them to erode your motivation, give up, and abandon your goal. Or you can vigorously respond to these sabotaging thoughts, feel better, become more motivated, and continue to work toward your goal.

It's important to remind yourself that **you can** do what you need to do!

Remember, losing weight does get easier. The following task will help you persevere with your efforts even when the going gets tough:

Finding Encouragement

To motivate yourself, especially in the face of self-doubt, do the following:

Read your Advantages Response Card more often. It'll probably help to rewrite this card, thinking about each item carefully. Add any new advantages that you hadn't written previously.

Add up the difficult hours. Some clients have come to me and say "I have had such a bad week, it was a "write-off" but when I get them to recall the slips they had, it turns out that most of them struggled for between 20mins and 2 hours, just a few times during the week. So for the other 6 ¾ days or 130 hours of the week, they did well.

Figure out how many minutes or hours you actually struggled in the past week versus how many hours you actually stuck to your plan.

Focus on what you can do today. Thinking too far into the future is incredibly unhelpful. Every time you find yourself thinking. *I can't keep this up for a month, a year, or longer,* tell yourself. Forget the long term...Focus on today...I know I can continue to do what I need to do today ... If it's hard tomorrow: I'll deal with it then. Make a Response Card to remind yourself of all this.

What are you thinking? When you feel overwhelmed about the future, you may notice some of the following sabotaging thoughts. Prepare for them now by creating Response Cards.

Sabotaging Thought: I feel overwhelmed. This programme is way too involved. I can't do it.

Helpful Response: This programme will help me, step by step. I don't have to learn everything in one day. I can reread and practice. I can ask my coach to help me

Sabotaging Thought: These tasks are too hard. I don't want to keep on doing these things.

Helpful Response: I'm just feeling overwhelmed at the moment. It doesn't always seem this hard. Later on today or tomorrow, it'll probably feel easier again.