Using your values to empower healthy change

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- I receive royalties from New Harbinger and APA for books co-written on topics similar to the subject of this presentation
Weight Management is Multifaceted

- Many pieces to the puzzle
- This is one piece
Here lies Pat...

- ...who finally lost that last 20 pounds
- ...a caring friend and a loving parent
The tyranny of the scale

- A disservice?
- Scale merits...
- Fear of the scale...
- Numbers trap...
- But...what happens when the numbers don’t go down?

“Don’t step on it… it makes you cry.”
Gold Standard Intervention...

does not achieve long-term weight loss

Weight loss and maintenance are not the same thing
Comparison

Weight Loss
- Motivation typically high initially
- Frequent rewards (weight loss, energy gains, social recognition)
- Mood improvements
- Sense of accomplishment

Weight Loss Maintenance
- Weight plateauing/ metabolic changes
- Mental fatigue
- Perceived effort increases
- Hunger increases/ food more rewarding
- Lack of continued rewards

Result: shift in cost-benefit ratio from positive to negative, motivation erodes
If it doesn’t matter, you won’t keep doing it

Goals are typically not met unless there was a reason to meet them that reflected the deep interests and personal values of the individual

I don’t care...
• Looking in the mirror?
• Magic wand test...what are you **DOING** different than now?
• If can’t answer, might find it difficult to sustain
Autonomous motivation is key for sustaining healthy habits

Teixeira, Carraca, Markland, Silva, & Ryan (2012). Int J of Behav Nutr Phys Act, 9, 78
Values

• NOT for money, to avoid feeling bad, to appease others, or following rules
• Values: Doing an activity/behavior is in line with a way of living that is deeply meaningful or important to you
• For physical activity: Most robust finding was for consistency with values
Premise: Behavior change is empowered when changes are consistent with what is personally meaningful for the individual - i.e. foster autonomously motivated behavior change

Values Strategies

- Exploring what deeply matters to you
- Linking everyday behaviors to a broad vision of life well-lived (defined by you)
- Monitoring your behavior in relation to set of chosen, stated values

Acceptance Strategies

- Being willing to contact difficult experiences, including unwanted thoughts, feelings, memories, and bodily sensations in order to engage in behavior consistent with your values
ACT on Health RCT study

- Adults with clinical levels of disinhibited eating
- Could adding values and acceptance strategies improve weight loss as compared to gold standard?
- 1 year comprehensive lifestyle intervention
Weight loss during treatment (%)

Study Month

0  6  12

Values-enhanced

Standard

~9% (~9 kg)

Lillis, Niemeier, Thomas, Unick, Ross, Leahey, Kendra, Dorfman, & Wing (2016). Obesity, 24, 2509-2514
Weight regain after treatment

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<th>Study Month</th>
<th>Values-enhanced</th>
<th>Standard</th>
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74% (6.9 kg) vs. 51% (4.3 kg), $p = .005$

Lillis, Niemeier, Thomas, Unick, Ross, Leahey, Kendra, Dorfman, & Wing (2016). Obesity, 24, 2509-2514
What can you do?
1: Choose your direction
Find what deeply matters to you

- Write - 5 mins a day
- Domains: Family, relationships, vocation, personal interests
- Look back: What done that felt vital, meaningful, satisfying?
- Look ahead: 10 years later, how would you like to have acted?
- Talk and share
Develop values narratives

- Brief, action-focused, infinite, not goals
- Dead person couldn’t do better
- Examples
  - Being a loving and caring partner/friend
  - Being a nurturing and supportive parent/family member
  - Seeking personal/spiritual growth
  - Being a reliable and effective co-worker
  - Being active and engaged
2: Identify the connection between your values and your desired healthy habits
How can your health habits empower values-consistent living?

- Energy/stamina = stay more active/engaged with my children
- Healthy Habits = positive example, positive influence on family
- Fitness = participate in desired activities with friends/ new hobbies
- Improved mood = more patience and better listening with partner
- Better focus/ concentration = perform at a higher level at work
3: Monitor values-behavior congruence
Tracking

- Check in once per day to once per week
- How consistent am I behaving with my values?
- If not, what could I do today, tomorrow, rest of the week?
Healthy habits suck, but...
Recording calories for the hundredth time...but now with awareness
Infuse the everyday with satisfaction and vitality
Clarify, link, and monitor
Thank you for listening!

My meaning

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- twitter.com/DrJasonLillis
- www.amazon.com/-/e/B0080F1NHG
ACT for obesity


