



Procrastination. Prevarication. Or plain old putting things off. If your motivation does a disappearing act when you need it most, here's how to understand the deeper beliefs that could be holding you back

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There's no time like the present to make healthy lifestyle changes. The trouble is, it's all too easy to put off losing weight or starting exercise, even when you really want to be slim. And it's not down to laziness or lack of motivation, says executive coach Robert Kelsey, author of *Get Things Done – What Stops Smart People Achieving More and How You Can Change* (Wiley, £10.99). More often than not, procrastination is a sign of low self-esteem. 'A subconscious belief that you're going to fail can hold you back from even trying,' he says. With the right strategies in place, you can overcome your doubts and find the motivation you need to change your life for the better. Start now and you could be slimmer, and fitter, by summer!

Procrastination pitfall
'I'll start after my holiday/when I'm less busy at work'

When you're at the start of your weight-loss journey, reaching your target weight can

seem like an impossible task – especially if you have a lot of weight to lose. So is it any surprise that you keep putting it off? However convincing your reasons seem for delaying getting started, the truth is they're often actually a smokescreen and the real reason you're hesitating lies deeper. Maybe you're secretly convinced that you won't be able to do it? Or that it will make you miserable? 'I've seen plenty of new members arrive with no real belief that it will work for them,' says Slimming World Consultant Emma Chapman. 'Then they lose their first half-stone, and slowly but surely their confidence grows, along with their motivation to stay on the journey.'

Do it now
Don't underestimate the power of setting yourself goals, says Robert. 'The right goals are like creating a path in the right direction. All you need to do is follow the path and eventually you will get to your destination.' And while it's good to set yourself an overall target, mini weight-loss goals will keep you going week by

week. 'I know from personal experience that mini-targets work,' says Lynda Stock, a Slimming World Consultant. 'I had five stones to lose when I joined Slimming World and it seemed quite overwhelming at times. Setting mini-targets and aiming for each half-stone award kept me on track. I still set myself a mini-target every week, although now I'm almost at my target weight, it might just be to lose a pound, or to stay the same, depending on what I have going on.'

Procrastination pitfall
'I'll start exercising when I've lost weight'

Getting into exercise can seem daunting, especially if you're self-conscious about your size. Put it off until you're slimmer, though, and you're missing out, says Slimming World Consultant Gaynor Hale. 'While it is absolutely possible to lose weight without exercise while Food Optimising, many members find it keeps them motivated, as it boosts mood and energy levels.' And as a bonus, studies

show you'll boost your body confidence by being more active, even before any visible changes take place.

Do it now
Visualise an active you. Find somewhere quiet, close your eyes and picture yourself exercising. Make a full-colour movie in your mind and include lots of detail – what you're wearing, who you're with, what day and time it is. Focus on the activities that appeal to you most, whether it's cycling to work, going for an early morning swim, doing a dance class or following a 'Couch to 5K' running programme (visit nhs.uk). 'Visualisation is an incredibly effective technique – it's why every athlete uses it,' says Robert. Do five minutes of 'virtual exercise' a day, and don't be surprised if, by the end of the week, you find yourself signing up for Zumba or typing 'Nordic walking' into your internet search engine!

Procrastination pitfall
'I started well but I've hit a plateau'

Whether you decided to lose weight after a 'light bulb' moment, or you gradually came to the realisation that things have to change, there's nothing like the initial buzz of those first few weeks of Food Optimising. Fast-forward a few months, when the compliments have slowed down, and the numbers on the scale seem to be sticking, and suddenly, it can feel like much harder work. 'Focus is the key to change,' says Robert. 'When you lose focus or get distracted by other things, you'll find that you stop seeing results.'

Do it now
Write a new 'For' and 'Against' list. There's nothing more motivating than rewriting a detailed list of every reason you have for losing weight. And on the flipside, the 'against' list can be just as useful, especially if your weight loss has stalled. 'I ask members to write a 'For' and 'Against' list if they've had a few weeks of maintaining or gaining,' says Gaynor. 'It can tap into the deeper reasons that are holding you back – for example, does being slim mean that you've outgrown some old friendships? Has it changed the dynamic with your partner? Are you worried about not being able to maintain your weight loss? Getting these thoughts down on paper and truly evaluating whether your worries are real can help give you a more positive perspective.'

Procrastination pitfall
'I just don't have time to think about it this week'

If you already have a to-do list as long as your arm, adding exercise or cooking from scratch to it can feel like the last thing you need. Share your concerns with your Slimming World group. You'll be surprised how many other members have faced the same problems and they'll have loads of tips for fitting Food Optimising and Body Magic into a hectic schedule. One thing they'll all tell you is that it's more than worth the effort.

Do it now
Tap into habit power. Not all habits are bad – productive habits can be a powerful force for good, says Robert. 'Making something an ingrained part of your daily or weekly routine – like always walking or cycling to work on a certain day of the week – means you're more likely to do it, even when you don't feel like it.' And sometimes, investing time helps you to save time, says Gaynor. 'For example, 15 minutes at the beginning of the week spent planning your meals and making a shopping list means you've always got the ingredients you need to hand.'

Procrastination pitfall
'I've only got a few pounds left to lose, so why am I stuck?'

Procrastination can kick in at the end of your weight-loss journey, as well as the start. Your target is in sight, yet suddenly you're maintaining or gaining. The truth is, sometimes we subconsciously stop just short of achieving our goals because deep down, we think we don't deserve success, or we worry we won't be able to keep it up.

Do it now
Side step self-sabotage. 'An SAS (Slimmers Against Sabotage!) log is useful if you've stopped losing,' says Gaynor. 'It helps you uncover the unconscious patterns that could be hampering your success – maybe you've stopped counting Syns, or are skipping breakfast.' Ask your Consultant for details, or download an SAS log from Lifeline Online, the free mobile-friendly website for members. Remember, too, that reaching target isn't the end of your journey. 'It can take time for your body image to reflect what you've achieved,' says Lynda. 'If you've lacked confidence for years, you won't change overnight. It's one reason why it's so important to keep going to group. Yes, you've proved you can do it, but that doesn't mean you no longer need support. Plus, as a target member, you can share your experiences with newer members and inspire them to achieve their goals. It's incredibly rewarding.'

