

I'm worth it!

What's gone well today?

What can I learn from this?

I'M ONLY HUMAN'

One step at a time

The future starts today

What's gone well today?

7 things successful women are thinking

How tapping into the positive patterns that work for others can help you achieve your live-healthier goals

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SUCCESS MINDSET #1

I'm worth it!

Successful women know that thinking 'I'm worth it!' isn't about being better than anyone else. It's about accepting yourself, warts and all, and still knowing you're worth investing time and effort in. It's being your own best friend, coach and cheerleader rolled into one. And sometimes that means putting yourself first. 'It's not always easy, especially if you're used to putting yourself last,' says Kim Freshwater, Consultant and Slimming World's Woman of the Year 2013, who lost more than 17st and now runs the Havant group. 'The wake-up call for me was realising I was so overweight I could actually die. It sounds dramatic, but it brought home to me that looking after myself wasn't an indulgence, it was an investment in my future and my family's future.'

There's good news if your self-belief is a bit shaky. Investing in yourself is a chicken-and-egg situation – it's true you're more likely to look after yourself if you feel good about who you are (and it does work the other way, too...). Take time to nourish yourself with healthy eating and lifestyle choices, and you'll also nurture your

self-esteem. And when you feel better about yourself, you're more likely to stay on track. Welcome to your own virtuous circle!

SUCCESS MINDSET #2

What's gone well today?

Taking the time to remind yourself of the good stuff – what you're grateful for and what's gone well – does more than make you feel good; it can rewire your brain. As a species, we evolved with 'better safe than sorry' brains that are naturally tuned into negative events, as these are more likely to be a threat. A side effect is that we can overlook or discount the positive things in life, and that can take its toll on our mood.

It is possible to reset your mind's negative filter, though, by taking the time to focus on what's gone well every day and savouring your triumphs. Remember any achievement, however small, says Claire Henderson, Slimming World Consultant for the Hedge End groups: 'You can celebrate simply making a good choice. Replacing a negative habit with a helpful one is an accomplishment, too.'

Try keeping a 'big-me-up' book and writing down all your successes, as well as any compliments you receive, suggests

leading life coach Carole Ann Rice (realcoachingco.com). 'It's important to take time to savour your successes, however small, because a sense of achievement builds self-esteem. It avoids the "hamster-wheel" feeling – immediately thinking "What's next?" every time you achieve a goal. Plus, you'll have black and white evidence of how far you've come to draw on when you're feeling low.'

Thinking about what went well is also a great last-thing-at-night habit, says executive coach Ruth Groves (pushmindandbody.com). Try it when you're lying in bed, or brushing your teeth. 'Or think of three things you're grateful for,' she says. Research shows regular gratitude exercises make you feel 25 per cent more optimistic about life, and the happier you feel, the easier it is to stick to a healthy-eating plan.

SUCCESS MINDSET #3

I'm not the only one

'I can't emphasise enough what a difference it makes finding people who are facing the same challenges,' says Kim Freshwater. 'You can feel very alone with a weight problem. When you're struggling on your own and there's no one else to give you a sense of perspective, you can end up feeling trapped and hopeless. Other people believing you can do it can transform your confidence and renew your motivation.'

That's why behind every successful woman there's a tribe of like-minded supporters, says Carole Ann Rice. 'If you

surround yourself with people who prefer to stay in their comfort zone rather than make changes, you will also stay stuck,' she says. 'People who share your goals instead will give you the support and motivation you need to succeed.'

And what's so great about group is that it's full of people who'll empathise with you, says Claire Henderson. 'That's empathy, not sympathy. People feeling sorry for you won't get you anywhere – you need people who can step into your shoes and really understand the challenges you're facing,' she adds.

Sharing our goals with like-minded people has another benefit, says Ruth Groves – it can make us accountable. 'Research shows we're more likely to stick to a goal if we've told other people about it,' she says. While we're only answerable to ourselves, of course, at times 'saving face' can give us extra incentive.

SUCCESS MINDSET #4

What can I learn from this?

There's a reason that 'learning to fail well' has become a hot topic in both business and education; we're finally wising up to the fact that we can learn just as much when things go wrong, as we can when everything goes to plan. Successful women try to see setbacks as opportunities to learn, not to beat themselves up. 'No one gets from A to Z without failure,' says Carole Ann. 'This hurts and it's OK to feel sorry for yourself for a little while. The key is to pick yourself up and think "Right, what can I do differently next time?" The more often you do this, the more resilient you become.'

By taking away the judgement and blame when we go off track, we can look objectively at a situation and learn from it. 'There's no doubt that experience dealing with stumbling blocks improves your long-term chances of success – ask any member who's reached their target weight,' says Slimming World Consultant

Sharon Mann, who runs the Cowplain and Waterlooville groups. 'Every setback is a chance to build knowledge that can help you for the rest of your life.'

SUCCESS MINDSET #5

One step at a time

When you've got big changes to make, it's hard not to feel overwhelmed by the task ahead – it's like standing at the foot of Mount Everest looking up at how far you have to climb! That's why successful women know the secret of tackling the big stuff is to break it down into small chunks. 'If I'd walked into group and been told I'd got more than 17st to lose, I'd have walked right out again. It would have seemed impossible,' says Kim Freshwater. 'Instead, I set a goal of losing 7lb. When I'd achieved that, I aimed for another 7lb. It can be hard to keep going when you don't see any noticeable changes, so I thought about how every pound I lost was taking the pressure off my joints and heart.'

Focusing on one step at a time can also help you stay on track when you're super-busy, says Claire. 'Sometimes thinking about the weeks ahead on your weight-loss journey can feel overwhelming. So just focus on today, or even break it down into half days or meal by meal, and think "What good choices can I make now?"'

SUCCESS MINDSET #6

I'm only human

Psychologists have recently identified conscientiousness as one of the personality traits most likely to lead to success – because conscientious people plan ahead and are prepared to put in effort. There's a difference between being

conscientious and being a perfectionist, though. Successful women set the bar high, just not so high that they set themselves up to fail. 'Perfectionism is one of the biggest barriers to success and it's often a secret saboteur,' says Carole Ann. 'For some people, it stops them trying anything new in case they don't do it perfectly! When you're a perfectionist, there's no room for failure and minor slip-ups can make you feel like giving up. 'When you let go of the need to be perfect, you gain the courage to roll up your sleeves, get stuck in and just have a go,' she says.'

SUCCESS MINDSET #7

The future starts today

Everyone arrives at Slimming World with a different weight-loss history, and time and time again members prove that the past doesn't have to hold them back, says Claire. 'While you can't change yesterday, you can change tomorrow. The secret is making a commitment to a different future.'

Dwelling on your regrets is a waste of time and energy, says Ruth. 'A better use of your time is visualising your ideal future. Every top sportsperson uses visualisation because it works,' she adds. And it's also a technique used in group, where members are encouraged to picture themselves making positive, in-control decisions around food, so that when the real-life situation arises they're already prepared. 'Grab 10 minutes and take the time to daydream and create a detailed picture of what your life will be like when you've reached your weight-loss goal. What will you wear, how will you feel, what will you do differently?' says Ruth. It's a way of embedding your good intentions in your mind and setting yourself up for success. ●

Taking the time to remind yourself of the good stuff – what you're grateful for and what's gone well – can lift your mood and rewire your brain