


## **Resources & Education given to Candidate:**

### **Ways to Avoid Emotional Eating List**

- 1. Hang out on your favorite ObesityHelp.com message board (or check out others) and post**
- 2. Set up an online tracker to keep you motivated and track your food and activity**
- 3. Change your environment to change your mindset, i.e., from your family room to go outside**
- 4. Call a friend or loved one**
- 5. Take a walk**
- 6. Do a crossword puzzle**
- 7. Garden**
- 8. Brush your teeth**
- 9. Paint your nails**
- 10. Take a shower or a bath**
- 11. Drink water (many times thirst masks as hunger)**
- 12. Organize a bothersome drawer or closet**
- 13. Play a video game**
- 14. Check out new apps on your mobile device**
- 15. Read a magazine**
- 16. Try out a new hobby**
- 17. Catch up on emails**
- 18. Go shopping at a mall**
- 19. Walk around the mall while you are there**
- 20. Eat a cinnamon or mint-flavored sugar-free mints**
- 21. Watch a movie**
- 22. Make a cup of soothing herbal tea**
- 23. Watch a favorite television show**
- 24. Write in a journal**
- 25. Do crunches and/or push-ups**
- 26. Take a drive - either alone or invite someone to go with you**
- 27. Create your own goal using the ObesityHelp Goal System**
- 28. Put in an exercise DVD and workout**
- 29. Play solitaire**
- 30. Listen to your favorite tunes**
- 31. Dance to those favorite tunes**

- 32. Check out Before/After Photos for lots of motivation**
- 33. Lift weights, kettlebells or use resistance bands to tone and build muscle**
- 34. Go for a bike ride**
- 35. Call, write a note or email to tell someone how much they mean to you**
- 36. Create a scrapbook of your favorite photos or your own weight loss journey**
- 37. Color in a coloring book (remember how much fun you had as a child?)**
- 38. Write down 10 people and things you are most grateful for**
- 39. Read a book**
- 40. Play a board game with friends and family**
- 41. Check out classes or lessons (singing, piano, cooking) that you are interested in**
- 42. Paint**
- 43. Try a hobby that involves your hands such as looming, knitting, counted cross stitch, floral design, etc.**
- 44. Write down the reasons you had bariatric surgery and wanted to lose weight; post it on your refrigerator**
- 45. Prepare a new healthy WLS-friendly dish**
- 46. Take a nap**
- 47. Take photographs of family, friends, outside and some selfies **
- 48. Plan your next vacation**
- 49. Play (or learn) an instrument**
- 50. Pray or Meditate**
- 51. Do Yoga**
- 52. Work on a jigsaw puzzle**
- 53. Go to the library and check out books**
- 54. Work on a Sudoku puzzle**
- 55. Buy an audiobook that you listen to only when you are exercising**
- 56. Make jewelry**
- 57. Check out volunteer opportunities in your community, i.e. school, church, hospitals, a favorite cause**
- 58. Read motivational and inspirational quotes**

- 59. Cruise the Internet to research about things you are interested in or, better yet, new things that interest you**
- 60. And last, but not least, address what is really bothering you so you can combat emotional eating**

## **10 Strategies To Cope With Stress Eating After Bariatric Surgery**

- 1. *Try progressive muscle relaxation (PMR).* This is an exercise in which you slowly tense and relax all your muscle groups including your feet, legs, abdomen, arms, hands, shoulders, and face. When the body relaxes, the mind soon follows. Many free PMR exercises can be found online.**
- 2. *Watch a comedy.* It is not just fun to laugh - it also reduces stress! Add some great comedies to your Amazon or Netflix watch lists or have a stack of your favorite DVDs at the ready.**
- 3. *Create art or do a craft project.* Make a trip to a craft store so that your supplies are stocked and ready to use.**
- 4. *Breathe deeply.* Breathe deeply through your belly for five minutes.**
- 5. *Try a guided imagery exercise.* Give your mind a break by visualizing yourself having a peaceful experience. Many free imagery exercises can be found online.**
- 6. *Take a nap.* Make it a comfy one!**
- 7. *Write in a journal.* Give yourself some time in reflection and write about what you are grateful for. Gratitude is associated with reduced stress and enhanced well-being.**
- 8. *Take a walk-in nature.* Take your time and really experience the outdoors with all your senses.**
- 9. *Turn on some music.* Have soothing playlists ready to go on Spotify or break out your favorite CDs.**
- 10. *Try aromatherapy.* Certain scents, including lavender and lemon, relieve stress and lower heart rate. Pair aromatherapy with any of the strategies above for a truly stress-relieving experience. Be prepared for stressful moments with candles, sachets, and essential oils.**

## **Seven Steps to Improving Emotional Adjustments Post-Surgery**

**1. Follow your doctor's orders and recommendations. This means following the dietary changes from the start. Get lots of rest and take care of your physical needs.**

**2. Journal. I know what you are thinking. Journaling is boring and tedious, and we do not like it, right? By keeping track of the foods, you eat and how you feel will truly help you feel more in control emotionally and physically. This is especially helpful if you find that you are emotionally eating.**

**3. Set realistic goals and expectations. For many, goals may be getting off their medication(s), walking without getting winded or the ability to cross their legs. So, whatever your goals are, make sure that you write them down and modify them as needed.**

**4. Reflect on the past. Although it is important to move on, it is also important for candidates to remember the moment when they decided to have weight-loss surgery. It is sort of like we have to hit our "low or bottom" to realize that we have to change.**

**5. Take lots of pictures, measurements and keep your pants. It is important that we take pre-op pictures and post-op pictures regularly. This reminds us about our success. Measurements and pre-op clothing are important especially during the dreaded plateaus. We may be losing inches and it is important that we have visual aids to help us realize our success. Although you may be a smaller size, you may still view yourself as the larger you. It is important to have a visual reference point to remind us that we are losing weight.**

**6. Seek help. It is important to ask for help if you find that you are having difficulty adjusting to the many changes after surgery. Seek support via support groups, family, friends, and/or professional counseling. Support groups and counseling are especially rewarding and helpful because we realize that many candidates often experience the same adjustment issues, and it makes us feel less isolated and alone while we travel our journey.**

**7. Live life to the fullest. You deserve to be healthy, happy and have fun! Enjoy and savor every moment of your weight-loss journey. You deserve it.**

### **Weight loss diet relapse**

**This journey to long-term weight loss and health is a journey of patience and perseverance. A lapse, a temporary return to old habits or patterns, is a part of the voyage. The more you understand that this is a regular part of the process, the less you will beat yourself up over it and the quicker you can refocus on your goals.**

**Diet relapse is specifically not following your diet for more than one meal. Cheating on your diet is different than a full-blown relapse! A relapse is falling off the weight-loss wagon and giving up for a period of time due to a wide range of circumstances.**

**Staying motivated**

### **Take Control of Your Diet - Weight Loss Diet Relapse Prevention**

**Instead of allowing your thoughts to run and cause you to feel like a failure, you can remind yourself that lapses are a normal part of the process; they are expected. This way, you can focus your attention on assessing the situation so you can become aware of the thoughts and feelings that drove you to that unwanted behavior. This way, you can learn from it so that you consciously make a different decision next time you are in a similar situation.**

### **Questions to ask yourself during a diet relapse**

**What was the reason for the lapse or relapse? What was I thinking and feeling at the time?**

**What beliefs drove my behavior? Are these beliefs I am willing to change at this time?**

**What can I tell myself or do differently next time to get a different outcome?**

**Simple steps to train your brain to avoid a diet relapse**

**An excellent way to test your plan in advance is to visualize the plan.**

**Take a moment to close your eyes and put yourself in the same situation. Bring up all the thoughts and feelings that derailed you from your healthy eating behaviors.**

**Once you have them up and running, put your plan into place. When visualizing the idea, did it feel congruent in your system, like you would do it?**

**Find out ways to get around these events from occurring again. What happened in the end? Were you able to make a different choice that you felt good about?**

**If you can get success in your visual practice, more than likely, it will work in real life. If it does not work in the visual practice, take a few more minutes to rework the plan.**

### **How to Avoid My Stomach Stretching After a Gastric Sleeve?**

**It is one of the biggest misconceptions and misinformed questions in bariatric surgery. Yet, candidates need to know this to maintain healthy, effective, and long-term success with gastric sleeve surgery.**

**The key is being mindful of the volume of food you ingest and choosing nutrient-dense proteins, fats, and carbohydrates.**

**Mild stretching of the stomach is necessary to get enough nutrients and stay healthy post-op. However, it can become a problem if candidates are mindless in their eating behaviors or engage in emotional or binge eating. This can quickly escalate to causing unnecessary stomach stretching, which could lead to weight regain.**

### **Weight Regain after Gastric Sleeve Surgery**

**Although difficult, candidates can regain weight after sleeve surgery for a variety of reasons. A larger stomach will not necessarily cause weight regain. Weight gain can be a multifactorial problem; The key is to remember that gastric sleeve surgery is a tool to support healthy behavior change.**

**If you lose a pound or two, you must remember how much you have lost already. If you have gained 10 or 20 pounds, it is time to start**

**thinking of possible solutions to address weight gain after gastric sleeve.**

**More than 70% of gastric sleeve surgeries are successful in losing 50% or more of excess weight loss and maintain it for at least 5 years.**

### **Causes of Weight Regain After Gastric Sleeve:**

- **Binge/emotional eating**
- **Lack of control of impulse eating**
- **Stress**
- **Depression**
- **Inactivity or Immobility**
- **Overconsumption of sugary or alcoholic beverages (we don't endorse the consumption of alcohol)**
- **Hormones in Meat**
- **Genetics**
- **Lack of sleep**
- **Medication**
- **Pregnancy or Menopause**
- **Imbalanced meal planning**

**Weight regain will be hampered by any of the leading causes. It is important to be cognizant of any barriers that may be contributed to being obese in the first place.**

**Thus, if you are regaining weight postoperatively, it is important to revisit and assess what choices lead you to the current state you are in now.**

### **How to Keep Weight Off Long Term?**

**Because your stomach will stretch after surgery, it is important to adopt healthy lifestyle choices. If you go back to the same eating and lifestyle choices that you had before undergoing sleeve gastrectomy, they will inevitably gain weight at the same rate they had before.**

**Lifestyle changes and eating nutrient-rich foods will help to produce substantial weight loss and keep the weight off. Remember, the gastric sleeve was performed in your stomach, not in your head.**

- **Minimize Unhealthy Weight Gain**
- **Balanced meal planning with lean proteins, healthy fats, and non-processed carbohydrates**
- **Portion control: do not overeat**
- **Training your taste buds to like non-sweet beverages like water, herbal teas, and True Lemon products**
- **The practice of Mindful Eating**
- **Do not drink with your meals; it pushes food through your pouch faster causing you to be hungry faster**
- **Stress management tools like meditation, yoga, exercise, and mindful walking**
- **Treat yourself to no- food items**

### **Exercising to Maintain Weight Loss**

**Candidates will need to keep moving to maintain weight loss; this is especially important as they get further from their surgery date. Candidates focusing on the intensity and not the duration of physical activity will have the most success postoperative. Those who engage in exercise will also experience a multitude of additional benefits.**

- **Exercises:**
- **Yoga/Pilates**
- **Weightlifting**
- **Speed Walking**
- **Jazzercise**
- **Zumba**
- **CrossFit**



**These exercises are not for all candidates – please consult with your physicians. If you drink high-calorie sodas and fruit juices, you may not lose weight. This is the same as consuming alcohol.**

### **Post-Op Stomach Phases with Gastric Sleeve Surgery**

**Gastric sleeve surgery is a tool that can have a profound effect on your long-term health. In the short term, gastric sleeve focuses on restriction for the candidate to feel satiety, while their body utilizes the excess fat in their bodies as energy.**

**With this newly reduced stomach, candidates will only be able to consume small amounts of food. With only a few bites, candidates will be malnourished in the long run but in the short term, causes significant weight loss.**

#### **Stomach Size: Post-Op Meal Size**

**1 Month: 1 – 2 ounces of solid food**

**6 Months: 4 – 6 Ounces**

**1 Year and beyond: 6 – 8 ounces**

#### **Stomach Response To Food Intake**

**Our stomach is made up of folds or mucosal lining called ‘Rugae’ which permits expansion and contraction as a direct response to our food intake. In general, the food you eat gets chewed and swallowed through your mouth and passes through the esophagus into your stomach to be broken down by acids.**

**The food moves relatively rapidly through the sleeve and into the intestinal tract. As you continue to eat, more food enters the stomach to be processed. Food passing through the stomach and intestine triggers stretch receptors to release a chemical called cholecystokinin (CCK) to signal your brain to send signals you experience as feelings of fullness or satiety. In overweight people, the hunger and fullness signals (CCK mechanism) may not function properly.**

**When your stomach is overstretched, you are constantly overeating. Since it takes a longer time for your stomach to fill up and you will eat**

**larger quantities of food before your brain can signal satisfaction and fullness.**

- **Preventing Your Stomach Stretching**
- **Take small bites**
- **Eat slowly, pause between bites, and chew your food to enjoy the taste.**
- **Be cognizant of your body's response to being satisfied.**
- **Use a smaller plate as smaller plates hold less food.**
- **Avoid overeating**
- **Portion Control**
- **Do not drink when you eat. Stop all liquids thirty minutes before and thirty minutes after. This will allow fluids to not take up space for nutrient-dense foods or push the food through faster.**
- **Stop mindless snacking; the only snack when you are physically hungry and chose whole food options like nuts, avocado, boiled eggs, vegetables, and fruits**
- **Use healthy recipes that are suitable for people who have gone through sleeve surgery.**
- **Remember progress, not perfection; stay focused on your "why."**
- **Create a healthy routine**
- **Get involved in our support group -via Facebook.**
- **Get help if need be from our Nutritionist and Health Coach.**
- **Are You Ready to Make the Lifelong Commitment?**

**Although weight loss surgery is one of the most successful tools for long-term weight loss, it is important to understand the surgery is NOT a weight loss guarantee. People go into weight loss surgery thinking they have instant success, this for many is not the case. There is a set of bariatric guidelines that are essential for long-term success.**

**For long-term weight loss success, this decision is much more than just deciding to have bariatric surgery. You need to prepare and realize that changes will need to be made in many areas of your life like work, family, and social life. Remember this is a lifestyle commitment which means you are committing to changing a variety of aspects in your current life.**

### **Home Exercises:**

- 1 – Planks give you the energy you need!**
- 2 – Knee-to-elbow kicks are a premium cardio exercise!**
- 3 – Squats are the ultimate fat burners!**
- 4 – Crunches could reshape your abdominal area!**
- 5 – Jogging is the absolute fat killer!**
- 6 – Running with intervals is training your cardio system!**
- 7 – Weightlifting is the source of muscle development.**
- 8 – Dancing is the ultimate fat demolisher!**
- 9 – Pushups may involve all your chest muscles and burn belly fat.**
- 10 – Pullups are the deadliest enemy of fat!**
- 11 – Deadlifts can develop your leg muscles and burn more fat.**
- 12 – Aerobics and Step Ups Are the Most Efficient Cardio Exercise.**
- 13 – Jumping rope has been the calorie burner factory and leg muscle developer.**
- 14 – CrossFit is the combined way to exercise your muscles and burn tons of calories!**
- 15 – Bench dips can increase your metabolism and strengthen your muscles.**
- 16 – Lunges are a premium way to lose booty fat.**
- 17 – Glute Bridge can be a cardio exercise that helps you lose weight.**
- 18 – Donkey kicks burn more calories and develop your glute muscles.**
- 19 – Burpees offer you the best balance between cardio and muscle strengthening.**
- 20 – Short sprints wake up your metabolism and enhance muscle mass.**
- 21 – TRX Suspension Training is the most effective fat burner of all time!**

**2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines pdf:**

**[https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines.pdf](https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf)**

**Best Meal Prep Resources To Use Blogs / Websites**

- 1. Meal Prepify**
- 2. Meal Prep Mondays**
- 3. Budget Bytes**
- 4. Meal Prep On Fleek**
- 5. Renaissance Periodization**
- 6. Mashup Mom YouTube**
- 6. Fit Men Cook**
- 7. Downshiftology**
- 8. Caitlin Shoemaker**
- 9. Mind Over Munch**
- 10. Lemonade Mom Instagram accounts**
- 11. Food Prep Princess**
- 12. Meal Prep Daily**
- 13. The Girl on Bloor**
- 14. Damn Delicious**
- 15. We Love Clean Food Communities**
- 16. Meal Prep Sunday Subreddit**
- 17. Meal Prep Ideas Facebook Group Paid (but awesome!) Meal Prep Resources**
- 18. \$5 Meal Plans**
- 19. Smart Money Mamas Pintables & Packs**
- 20. Plan to Eat**

**Tracking systems to monitor weight loss:**

**MyFitnessPal, Loselt, SparkPeople, CRON-O-Meter, FatSecret, Printable Food Logs, Noom, ChooseMyPlate, USDA's ChooseMyPlate Daily Food Plan, MyNetDiary, Calorie Counter & Diet Tracker, Nutrients app, MyPlate Calorie Counter, Nutrition Facts app, Calorie Counter & Diet Tracker, Protein Tracker, SuperFood – Healthy Recipes app.**

## **8 MEALTIME HABITS TO IMPROVE DIGESTION**

**1. Chew your food: Digestion begins with the act of chewing to mechanically break food into smaller pieces that are easier to digest. As you chew, glands in your mouth secrete saliva that coats the food to make it easier to swallow. This saliva also includes digestive enzymes (amylase and lipase) which begin the breakdown of food right in your mouth. Chewing also signals the stomach to begin making stomach acid and for the pancreas to begin producing digestive enzymes. The primary reason for chewing your food well (other than to prevent choking) is that digestive enzymes really only work on the surface of the food you swallow so the more you chew, the more surface area there is for the enzymes to do their job. To put it in perspective, if you swallow a chunk of apple, only the outer portion of the apple will have access to your digestive enzymes and stomach acid and you'll see bits of undigested food in your stool. When you see this, it's time to start chewing more thoroughly so you don't miss out on all the nutrients in the food you're eating. Try chewing each bite of food to the point that it's nearly unrecognizable on your tongue, then swallow**

**2. Drink less water with meals: You'll often hear us say 'drink enough water' because being hydrated is essential for life – and for a healthy body. What you might not have heard us say is this: Just don't drink too much at your meals. Why? Drinking fluids at meals actually dilutes your stomach acid which, right there, throws a wrench in your digestion.**

**Limit your intake of fluid at mealtimes to 8 ounces or less (even less if heartburn or reflux is your main complaint)**

**Focus more on hydrating between meals – so carry a water bottle with you wherever you go and try to stop drinking about 30 minutes before your next meal.**

**3. Pause between bites: Often a big culprit of bloating and excess gas is eating too quickly. When we eat quickly we end up gulping air as we work to eat and breathe simultaneously. Put your fork down between bites to slow the pace of your eating. If you have a fast eater in your family remind them to also pause between bites because whether you know it or not, their pace will influence yours**

**4. Free yourself from mealtime distractions: I know you've heard this a million times before but it's so important that it's worth repeating one more time. Put away your phone, turn off the television or computer or tablet, close the book/magazine/newspaper in front of you and just sit down and eat (no standing over the sink, please). As you eat, notice if you're chewing enough and take the time to appreciate the smells, texture and flavors of your food and let go of stressors as you are able to. Try not to eat when you are upset or in a bad mood. Your brain and your digestive tract are interconnected so these feelings can impact the effectiveness of your digestive system. I get that life is hectic and stressful and that your to-do is a mile long – mine is too. But let's be honest, how many other things do you do in the course of the day that are just for you? Probably none to very few. So take advantage of this time to unplug, let go and be in the present. Your mind and your belly will thank you.**

**5. Be grateful and pause to give thanks: We often forget to take time to pause and give thanks for our meal or note the things in our life that we are grateful for. Stopping to give thanks helps you shift your focus from immediate life stressors and the fires you need to put out to something bigger. Pausing before you begin to eat also helps prime your digestion – just seeing and smelling the food starts the production of saliva in the mouth which then signals to the stomach that food is on its way. Take a moment before you eat to visualize 3 things you are grateful for in your life. You don't have to say them aloud, just take note of them in your head Give thanks for the food on your plate and the farmers, growers, Mother Nature and everyone else who made it possible – from the sun to the chef, offer up a silent "Thank you" to honor their work**

**6. Minimize eating while on-the-go: By on-the-go I literally mean 'on-the-go'. Like while walking or driving your car. When you're involved in other things that require your attention, you're not able to focus on eating. Failure to pay attention to what you're eating (and the fact that you're eating) can cause you to forget that you've actually eaten. Take for example that Hershey's Kiss you grabbed from your coworkers' desk as you walked by. And the one you grabbed the second time you walked by... because you were not giving your full attention to eating your brain didn't register that you'd eaten those kisses.**

**7. Wait to eat after a hard workout:** Sports nutrition gurus will tell you that consuming a small snack that contains protein and carbohydrates immediately after a hard workout will help your body refuel and rebuild. We agree however, eating too soon after an intense workout can cause serious digestive upset in some because until you've had time to get your heart rate down and rest for a bit, your body is still in 'flight or flight' mode – and it's not going to be focused on digesting food. To optimize your digestion, you ideally want to be in 'rest and digest' mode. And this applies to all meals and snacks, not just those that happen post-workout. The best advice we can give you is to listen to your own body. If eating right away after exercise causes stomach cramping, diarrhea or nausea then it's best to wait a while longer before you refuel.

**8. Choose foods that nourish:** We're huge fans of sauerkraut and bone broth for their gut-healing properties and these are foods that you can easily add to your regular diet. But before you get too carried away with what else you can add let's talk first about what might need to be taken out to optimize your digestion: **Gluten** – Gluten, found in wheat, spelt, barley and rye, is a common allergen and gut irritant. Even those who aren't allergic to these grains find that they feel better when they avoid them because gluten can cause (or exacerbate) 'leaky gut' and systemic inflammation in those with even a mild (and often undiagnosed) gluten sensitivity **Dairy** – In the list of Top 8 Allergens, dairy tops the list. Even if you're not allergic to dairy you may find that removing it from your diet can decrease or alleviate symptoms such as gas, bloating, acne, sinus issues and even skin rashes **Soy** – Processed soy, found in many convenience foods, can leach nutrients from the body, interfere with nutrient absorption and disrupt hormone balance plus it's also one of the Top 8 Allergens **Artificial anything** – This probably goes without saying but artificial colors, flavors, preservatives, additives, fillers and synthetic ingredients have no place in a healthy, real food diet Ultimately, what it comes down to is whether or not the foods you choose to put into your body are going to nourish you and support optimal health.

**Coping Skills to be successful after surgery:**

**Find a support network-**There are local groups where people who have had weight loss surgery can meet to share their stories and provide

**support. If you are unable to make it to group meetings in person, look for support networks online.**

**Keep a journal-Your journal can be a place to record what you are feeling and get clarity. The physical act of writing down your feelings can make an enormous difference in your ability to deal with negative emotions. Make a commitment to write for at least a few minutes every day so that reaching for your journal becomes a natural response when you are feeling stressed or unhappy.**

**Take time to breathe-Meditation can calm you and reduce your feelings of stress. You do not need to set aside hours. When you begin to feel stress setting in, sit quietly and breathe evenly for a few minutes. You will find that the deliberate effort to slow your breathing and take control can help relieve feelings of stress and anxiety.**

**Learn to recognize and disrupt negative thought spirals-Often, one negative experience will lead to cascading negative thoughts until you are overwhelmed with stress. When you catch yourself in a negative spiral, deliberately stop yourself. Consciously choose to have positive thoughts that reinforce your progress instead.**

**Get some exercise each day-Start with small amounts at first. Even a 10-minute walk counts. Over time, as you become stronger, increase the lengths of your exercise sessions. Exercise releases feel-good brain chemicals known as endorphins. These make you feel calmer and happier while reducing your levels of stress.**

**Music-There are many research articles regarding the positive effects on both mental and physical aspects of music. Music has a way of soothing or energizing the soul. Turn up loud or keep it soft. Sing along. Dance it out if you need to.**

**Mindfulness – Using all five sense to experience life and food. Take your time to take everything in and experience the full effect. Be present in all life experiences. Ask yourself: Am I enjoying this? Does this feel like what I need? Is this getting me to where I want to be? Is this healthy for me?**

**Treat yourself- Treat yourself and practice self-care by doing something that you find relaxing, gratifying or energizing. Massage, manicure, an outfit, shoes, an outing, or a class.**

**Distraction- Hobbies, new skills, reading, games, bubble bath, or anything that get you out of the same mental spot can help with calming and soothing.**



**Talking-** There is great value in having a close friend or trusted therapist to be a sounding board and give you an opportunity to unload some of the challenges you have been carrying.

**Changing habits and coping skills takes practice and patience. It is not something that is easily changed overnight. Focus on small steps, goals, and achievements. Give yourself time and credit for the accomplishments that you have made. Always look at how far you have come, and the positive lifestyle changes you have made. There may be setbacks but do not beat yourself up about it, move on and continue.**

**Boundaries to be successful following surgery:**

- 1. Boundaries refer to guidelines or rules that show others how to treat you in different life situations. By creating boundaries, we mean that we are clear about our needs and expectations. Relationships work best when we let others know about our needs, ways they can support us and what to avoid doing to be successful following your Bariatric Surgery.**
- 2. Saying “no” is a way to establish a healthy boundary in relationships after bariatric surgery. “No” does not mean never. It often implies respectfully setting limits. It is a way to express that “I just can’t right now.”**
- 3. It is healthy to set boundaries with food and food-related situations. Try to have a plan and be prepared on the types of foods that you may eat that day, week, or in certain situations such as a party, football tailgate, or work potluck. For example, if you are attending a food social function with food (which most of them are), try to learn about the menu and ways to help well ahead of time. Ask if you can bring a healthy dish as then you still have a good choice if surrounded by unhealthy options. Also, be mindful of the emotional relationship that many people have with food. Food can be a comfort, reward, and emotional reliever in so many situations. To set healthy boundaries with food, it is helpful to identify other things that may offer comfort and a sense of being rewarded. The more non-food rewards you allow regularly, the less you will need that experience from food.**
- 4. You can still volunteer your time, energy, and resources to others but it is important to not compromise your own. Many people have put their own needs on the back burner and that also can**

**contribute to developing health problems and gaining weight over time. Focus on yourself as much as you focus on others. So, as you can see one of the key boundaries to set in this journey is with yourself. Give yourself grace. Give yourself understanding and kindness. Offer yourself self-care, self-compassion, and a system of self-monitoring that can enhance the overall success in the weight loss surgery journey.**

- 5. If you do have difficulty setting boundaries in any of these areas, please consider counseling support. You have already made an investment in your health, wellness, and future so engaging in the counseling process may only aid in that investment. Engaging in counseling should be viewed as a strength, not a weakness. It shows your willingness to do what it takes to be successful with this surgery process. If you do not like the term counseling, consider it coaching or a health consultation. Bariatric surgery is a powerful tool. But it is even a more powerful tool with a commitment to yourself and establishing healthy boundaries in relationships after bariatric surgery.**
- 6. Many people have trouble setting boundaries because they are inherently self-disrespecting. Another reason for this behavior is that they do not know any other way to function. Most of us attach ourselves to other people as a safety mechanism and seek their approval because of low self-esteem.**
- 7. We fail to realize that setting boundaries may deprive us of what we want, but it offers us what we need. People who do not have boundaries don't separate the needs of others from their own. We can say that people who do not set boundaries are actually scared.**
- 8. If you think about it, the whole world is operating on mutually understood boundaries. But, to set good boundaries, you must be sure of where you stand. Consider what you can accept or tolerate and what makes you uncomfortable. Our feelings help us identify our limits and define them clearly so others can respect our emotions.**

### **Benefits of Setting Boundaries Before and after Surgery**

- 1. Assertiveness-Boundaries help you assert your needs. You must focus on your feelings and tune into what you need. This will allow you to feel more assertive in your communication, and you can ask**

**others to treat you in ways that meet your needs following your surgery.**

- 2. Self-Love-Taking care of your emotional and physical health is not selfish. Boundaries help you put your own needs over the needs of others, without hurting anyone. It is not as bad as it seems because when you set boundaries for yourself, you also respect other people's boundaries.**
- 3. Less Stress-Most of us are always worried about pleasing and satisfying others. But how do you think it makes us feel? When you put others before yourself, you are stressed out because you put their feelings before your own. Setting boundaries is a great way to de-stress and put your happiness before others so you do not fall into habits of "pleasing others" instead of focusing on the necessary changes you need to implement following surgery to be successfully and be assertive with your communication of what you need from others so you can be successful, and they can support you the way you need to be supported.**
- 4. More Self-Awareness-Before you set boundaries, you rarely spend any time to reflect on your emotions and thoughts. Setting limitations gives you more time for yourself, and you search for your real emotions and feelings that you may not even know to exist. It is important to identify self-awareness before the surgery and share your concerns with your support system and prepare to implement boundaries ahead of time by establishing a "relapse Prevention plan" that will meet your emotional needs post-surgery.**
- 5. More Emotional Stability-If you do not know how to say 'no' to people, you give others the power to decide your happiness and your success following your surgery. Their thoughts and actions influence you easily, and can lead to depression, anger, and emotional instability. Learning how to set boundaries can help you regain power over your emotions and feelings and help others understand that you need to put yourself "First" so you can be successful in your journey to complete your surgery and make necessary behavioral changes to be successful.**
- 6. More Understanding-Communication is crucial for letting others know how you feel. If you are going through a bad phase after your surgery, letting others know can help you set the right boundaries. As a result, you do not offend anyone and enjoy your personal freedom and space to overcome your emotions that are natural**

**and normal following your surgery, without damaging your relationships and friendships.**

- 7. But one aspect of community care that we do not discuss enough is falling into the role of emotional caretaking.**
- 8. There is a big difference between caring for others and being an "emotional caretaker". Emotional caretaking looks like constantly caring for and supporting the emotions of other—and feels like your own emotions are left 'silent no.'" That "silent no" is the result of taking time to honor and understand exactly what our boundaries might look like. Once you are clear with what your needs are, you'll be able to clearly ask for others to respect the boundaries you ultimately set. Remember, boundaries look different for everyone. It is OK if yours does not look like someone else. It is important to first find what is comfortable for you and adjust from there. Have A Plan of Action:**
- 9. Preparing for what might happen if your boundaries are crossed is an important part of shaking that emotional caretaking' role. "A good question to ask yourself is: What happens when you feel your boundaries have been crossed?" Asking yourself that can help you mentally and emotionally prepare for what your response might be.**
- 10. Rehearsing that can come in handy in other ways, too. Practicing the many ways, you can say "no" to others who might dismiss what you have set. "This will help to build a script to help you. Set—And Honor—Your Boundaries:**
- 11. If you have always filled a caretaking role for others, setting boundaries is key to protecting your energy become more comfortable with setting a boundary." Shake Any Guilt- You might feel guilty about taking time to prioritize your needs to be successful following surgery. It can be hard to shake that guilt, and that very guilt "often implies that we feel that we are doing something wrong, In this case, feeling bad for wanting to meet your own needs can sometimes lead us to 'over care' for others to alleviate those feelings of guilt." But it is important to remember: Self-care isn't selfish. "Caring for ourselves is not a luxury, it's a responsibility, it is totally normal to prioritize your needs and attempt to have those needs met." Saying "no" to protect your energy can be harder now than ever but asserting yourself in effective ways is crucial to preventing burnout overall. Because the truth is: Even if we're caring for others because we love and**

**care for them, we can't forget to care for ourselves. Your surgical goals will require you to put yourself first so you can be successful and meet your personal goals.**

**Emotional Boundaries-Such boundaries serve as an imaginary force field that separates you and others. When you set healthy boundaries, you do not hold or blame others for your happiness. They offer protection against feelings of guilt, anger, and resentment. Realize that you do not have to respond or react to other people's negativity and be clear with others when you are not receiving the support that you need so they can adjust and support you with your goals after surgery.**

### **Ways to Manage Stress Eating:**

**In order to get control of stress eating, you have to control your stress levels. The best way to deal with stress is to address current situations head-on and, at the same time, learn to be prepared to manage stressful situations in the future before both the problem and you're eating behavior get out of hand. When stress affects someone's appetite and waistline, the individual can forestall further weight gain by ridding the refrigerator and cupboards of high-fat, sugary foods. Keeping those "comfort foods" handy is just inviting trouble. Know your stressors. Identify the circumstances and emotions that lead you to stress-eat. These are your emotional eating triggers, and once you recognize them, you can take steps to avoid them or at least be prepared for them.**

**Exercise to reduce stress. If you are physically fit, you're more resistant to the effects of stress. Exercise causes chemical changes in the brain that reduce stress but, unfortunately, stress itself can prevent some people from taking steps, like exercising, which could make a difference in their mental and physical health. If your personal circumstances make it difficult for you to get to the gym or even do formal exercises at home, try to increase the amount of walking, gardening, cleaning, and other lighter forms of movement, and exercise you normally do from day to day. While cortisol levels vary depending on the intensity and duration of exercise, overall exercise can blunt some of the negative effects of stress. Some activities, such as yoga and tai chi, have elements of both exercise and meditation.**

**Reach out for help. Friends, family, and other sources of social support have a buffering effect on the stress that people experience. For example, research suggests that people working in stressful situations, like hospital emergency departments, have better mental health if they have adequate social support. But even people who live and work in situations where the stakes are not as high need help from time to time from friends and family. Talk out your feelings and your unhealthy responses to stress with close friends and family who can give you the support you need to get through tough situations. If you often feel guilt, shame, or regret over your eating habits, you may want to speak with a professional counselor.**

**Develop a practice of mindfulness. Countless studies show that meditation reduces stress, although much of the research has focused on high blood pressure and heart disease. Meditation may also help people become more mindful of food choices. With practice, a person may be able to pay better attention to the impulse to grab a fat- and sugar-loaded comfort food and inhibit the impulse. Meditation, yoga, tai chi and other mindfulness-based exercises and programs help calm the mind and the body. When you are mindful, calm, and focused, you are better able to make smarter and healthier lifestyle choices. Mindful eating—slowing down and paying more attention to what and how you eat—is a form of mindfulness.**

**Learn intuitive eating that complements mindful eating, and that is still recommended by nutrition experts today.**

**Intuitive eating means paying more attention to the natural, internal hunger and fullness signals sent between your brain and your gut. These signals help you determine when, what, and how much to eat. It is also about trusting those signals. Once you understand and trust your own natural eating cues, unless you have dietary restrictions, you can give yourself permission to give in to a craving for, say, chocolate cake just as easily as you give yourself permission to eat vegetables, without guilt or shame. You will know intuitively when to say “enough!” Your decision is based on hunger as well as the appeal of certain foods at certain times, but not on how stressed or emotional you feel in the moment.**

## **Coping skills for Emotional/Stress eating habits/behaviors following Surgery:**

**Here are a few tips to help you control emotional eating after bariatric surgery. Learn to recognize your emotions and how they affect your habits. Next time you are feeling stressed, worried, sad, or anxious, pay attention to those feelings and be conscious of the food choices you make when you are feeling emotional. Train yourself to stop before eating and ask yourself if you are truly hungry, or if you are eating in response to your emotions. Practice mindful eating. Never eat meals or snacks while watching TV or engaging in another activity that takes your focus off the meal you are eating. Instead, always eat meals and snacks mindfully while sitting at the table. Think about every bite you take and make each meal purposeful. Surround yourself with support. Living in isolation is never healthy. Surround yourself with people who will encourage you when you are feeling stressed or emotional and who will hold you accountable to making healthy choices. Consider joining a bariatric support group, where you will gain inspiration and motivation from others on the same journey. Find a healthy way to relieve stress. Regular exercise is a proven way to reduce stress and one of the best things you can do if you are feeling anxious, sad, or stressed. Invest time in a hobby or spend time with loved ones. Find alternative ways to manage your stress and emotions by creating new habits rather than reaching for a bag of chips or a box of cookies when you are feeling down. Keep junk food out of the house. Avoid purchasing foods that may be a weakness for you during stressful or emotional times. Keep cut up veggies and fresh fruit on hand so you will be more likely to reach for something nutritious when you're sad or stressed. If emotional eating has been a pattern for you over the years, schedule an appointment to talk with your physician or therapist who can help you develop a healthy plan to deal with your stress and emotions.**