

+H-A-L-T THE BARRIERS TO WEIGHT LOSS

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Do you want to make it easier for you to stick with The Daniel Plan? Then put a H-A-L-T to the barriers that threaten to sabotage your progress.

The acronym H-A-L-T is a term commonly used in addiction treatment programs that can be very helpful in dealing with the daily obstacles you face. I understand that you may not equate an addiction program with weight loss, but in my opinion, chronic overeating is akin to substance abuse. And H-A-L-T has proven to be a very effective way to keep people on track when they are trying to change their habits.

H-A-L-T stands for:

- Don't get too **HUNGRY**.

- Don't get too **ANGRY**.

- Don't get too **LONELY**.

- Don't get too **TIRED**.

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DON'T GET TOO HUNGRY

Going too long without food lowers your blood sugar levels, which can lead to a variety of emotional issues, including feelings of anxiety and irritability. These may trigger your overeating.

Low blood sugar levels are also associated with lower overall brain activity, which is linked to an increase in cravings and impulsiveness. Heightened anxiety and irritability coupled with more intense cravings and impulsiveness is a recipe for overeating. Keeping your blood sugar levels even throughout the day is critical to keep you on track.

Tips to maintaining healthy blood sugar levels:

- Eat a healthy breakfast—people who maintain weight loss eat a nutritious breakfast.

- Have smaller meals throughout the day. Eating big meals spikes your blood sugar levels then causes them to crash later on.

- Stay away from simple sugars and refined carbohydrates, such as candy, sodas, cookies, crackers, white rice, and white bread. These also spike your blood sugar then cause it to crash later on.

- The supplements alpha-lipoic acid and chromium have very good scientific evidence that they help balance blood sugar levels and can help with cravings.

MY DON'T GET TOO HUNGRY PLAN

Write down the things you plan to do to help prevent you from getting too hungry. Keep this list with you at all times.

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DON'T GET TOO ANGRY

Uncontrolled anger can send you racing to the cookie jar to calm your emotions. Here are some tips to help keep anger under control.

- When you feel mad, write down your thoughts and ask yourself, "Is it true?"
- Practice deep-breathing exercises to calm your mind and soothe your emotions.
- Count to 10. When you get angry, count to 10 before reaching for something to eat. Sometimes that short delay can be enough to calm your temper and interrupt the urge to eat.
- Get moving. If you feel anger bubbling up inside you, go for a walk or a short burst of exercise. This releases brain chemicals that help calm you down.
- Express your feelings. After you have calmed down, express your feelings in a non-confrontational way. Letting your anger fester can drive you to overeat.

MY DON'T GET TOO ANGRY PLAN

Write down the things you plan to do to help prevent you from getting too angry. Keep this list with you at all times.

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DON'T GET TOO LONELY

Social skills and a positive social network are critical to your emotional well-being. Working on your current social situation is important to healing. Here are some tips to increase your social bonding.

- Enlist a team of supporters and healthy role models.
- Volunteer in your community.
- Join a small group at Saddleback Church, a recreational sporting team, book group, or any other type of group that appeals to you.
- Make it a priority to spend time with your friends and family.
- Make a list of people you can reach out to when you are feeling sad, anxious, mad, or frustrated.

MY DON'T GET TOO LONELY PLAN

Write down the things you plan to do to help prevent you from getting too lonely. Keep this list with you at all times.

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DON'T GET TOO TIRED

A 2007 study found that sleep deprivation caused the emotional centers of the brain to become 60 percent more reactive to negative emotional stimuli. That means your brain simply can't cope as well with stressful situations, leading to worse moods, more anxiety, greater irritability, increased anger, and more frustration. And when your emotions are running wild, you are more apt to run to the refrigerator for solace.

In addition, lack of sleep lowers overall brain function, which leads to more bad decisions. Several studies have shown that lack of sleep leads to higher calorie intake and higher consumption of refined carbohydrates, which as you learned in the Don't Get Too Hungry section, causes blood sugar levels to spike and then crash.

Make sleep a priority to boost brain function, moods, and energy levels, and to improve judgment and self-control. Here are 10 ways to make it easier to drift off to dreamland and get a good night's sleep. Remember that we are all unique individuals and what works for one person may not work for another. Keep trying new techniques until you find something that works.

- Maintain a regular sleep schedule—going to bed at the same time each night and waking up at the same time each day, including on weekends. Get up at the same time each day regardless of sleep duration the previous night.
- Create a soothing nighttime routine that encourages sleep. A warm bath, meditation, or massage can help you relax.
- Some people like to read themselves to sleep. If you are reading, make sure it isn't an action-packed thriller or a horror story—they aren't likely to help you drift off to sleep.
- Don't take naps! This is one of the biggest mistakes you can make if you have insomnia. Taking naps when you feel sleepy during the day compounds the nighttime sleep cycle disruption.
- Sound therapy can induce a very peaceful mood and lull you to sleep. Consider soothing nature sounds, soft music, wind chimes, or even a fan.
- Drink a mixture of warm milk, a teaspoon of vanilla (the real stuff, not imitation), and a few drops of stevia. This increases serotonin in your brain and helps you sleep.
- Take computers, video games, and cell phones out of the bedroom and turn them off an hour or two before bedtime to allow time to "unwind."
- Don't eat for at least two to three hours before going to bed.

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- Regular exercise is very beneficial for insomnia, but don't do it within four hours of the time you hit the sack. Vigorous exercise late in the evening may energize you and keep you awake.
- Don't drink any caffeinated beverages in the late afternoon or evening. Also avoid chocolate, nicotine, and alcohol—especially at night. Although alcohol can initially make you feel sleepy, it interrupts sleep.

MY DON'T GET TOO TIRED PLAN

Write down the things you plan to do to help prevent you from getting too tired. Keep this list with you at all times.

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