

Learning to Celebrate NON-SCALE VICTORIES

by Natalie-Jean Schiavone, PhD

Most of us have been here at least once in our lives – standing on the scale and looking down at the number in complete and utter disbelief. We begin to beat ourselves up for not exercising enough, not drinking enough water or not eating enough vegetables. We begin to over-analyze our efforts and criticize ourselves for not losing weight. We question all that we do from diet and exercise to everything in between. Meanwhile, we're still obsessing about the number on the scale. What happened?



SUCCESS BEYOND THE SCALE

Weight-loss can be quite challenging, especially when you don't see much, or any, improvement with the numbers on the scale week after week. But don't get discouraged! Take a step back and start to think about other factors unrelated to the scale. For instance, think about your energy level, sleep quality, mental clarity, changes in clothing size/fit or physical activity level. All of these factors indicate ways in which your body is changing despite what the scale shows. Even if the number isn't budging, it doesn't mean you aren't moving in the right direction. Let's break things down.

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INCREASED ENERGY

Before you started your weight management journey, try to recall how much energy you had. Were you a little more tired or sluggish? Did it take you longer to get out of bed in the morning? Now, think about your energy level today. Are you able to get out of bed with more spring in your step? Are you feeling more energized throughout the day?

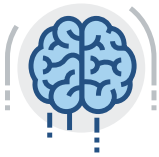
If you can say that you are now feeling better, you are on your way to improved health. You are creating new habits, resetting your body and gaining strides with every step you take. Your body is responding and helping you feel better. Good job!



BETTER SLEEP

Now think back to your sleep habits. Before you started your journey with weight, were you getting tired mid-day? Did you want to nap all the time? Were you waking up during the night or having difficulty falling asleep? Compare that to how you are feeling since you started making changes to your lifestyle. How are you feeling? Do you have more daily energy? Do you want to nap? Are you sleeping more soundly and falling asleep within minutes of laying your head down?

If you answered yes to any of these accomplishments, you're on your way to improved health! Sleep is your body's way of recharging, so if you have started to improve your sleep patterns and/or habits, you are restoring and refueling. This will make you feel better with each ounce of quality sleep you gain. Good job, and continue catching some shuteye.



MORE MENTAL CLARITY

Can you recall your ability to focus before you started to manage your weight? You might have had trouble staying on task and making simple decisions, or you may have been easily confused or overwhelmed when dealing with minor activities.

However, now that you are on your way to a healthier lifestyle, you might be finding it easier to remember things or stay on task. That feeling of being overwhelmed may be a thing of the past. You can focus and execute your day with ease. These wonderful results may be caused by changes to your diet and/or lifestyle. Research shows that when individuals modify their lifestyles and adapt to healthier behaviors, their mental clarity improves. You should be able to navigate your day a lot easier and discover increased productivity.

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COMFIER AND SMALLER CLOTHES

Before you started to manage your weight, were your clothes a little snug? Did your wardrobe consist of clothing that was two sizes too big for you? Did you feel uncomfortable going out in public because of the way your clothes fit, or have trouble shopping for certain styles?

Let's examine where you are today. Perhaps your clothes are a little less tight around the waistline or you have more confidence when picking something out for a night on the town. Are you wearing clothes that actually fit your body? Do you feel less overwhelmed walking into a clothing store? If any of this applies to you, you are successfully changing your body in healthier ways and modifying your lifestyle. This is a big accomplishment and you should feel proud! However, if you're still facing challenges when it comes to confidence in clothing, know that this doesn't mean you aren't making progress. These things take time, and feeling comfortable in your skin is a part of your journey.



IMPROVED FITNESS AND EXERCISE

Let's take a look at your ability to exercise. Before you started to modify your lifestyle, perhaps you experienced pain or discomfort during exercise. Maybe even the idea of taking the stairs was a challenge for you. Perhaps you avoided any type of exercise because you didn't feel like you could handle it. However, now that you've taken steps to getting your overall health and wellness back on-track, let's re-examine your thoughts on exercise.

Are you able to navigate through an exercise class pain-free with ease? Maybe taking the stairs is no longer a challenge, but has become a great way to squeeze-in a few extra steps. Perhaps you no longer feel as though exercise is something you can't handle. Maybe you welcome it as part of your new daily routine! If you have experienced any of these victories, then well done! You're taking control of your life and have successfully modified your lifestyle with healthy improvements.



HELPFUL HINTS TO REMEMBER:

If you find yourself still obsessing about the number on the scale, try keeping a weight-loss or weight management journal. Log your food intake, water consumption, exercise level, mood and physical measurements. At the end of the month, retake your measurements. Do a comparison and see how much your body has changed. You may not be showing obvious signs of weight-loss, but your body is changing in numerous ways – and that is a good thing!



Also, remember to smile! Take a full-length picture of yourself before making any new modifications. Keep in mind that we see ourselves every day, so it may be difficult to notice the subtle but positive changes our bodies are going through. After a few weeks, retake the same full-length picture wearing the same or similar-looking clothes. Then, place the photos side-by-side and compare. You may not see changes in the mirror, but your health is likely improving in a number of different, less obvious ways!

Diet and exercise are still the gold standard for long-term weight management. They are a necessary part of our lifelong weight and health journey. Make sure you drink plenty of water and get plenty of sleep as well. When you add-up all of these small changes, your wellness journey will be a success!

NOW, LET'S RECAP

Don't get discouraged if you see the number on the scale stay the same or even move up every once in a while. Pay attention to how you are feeling and all of the great things you have done for your mind and body. Also keep in mind that muscle takes up less space than fat, so while the scale may not be changing the way you'd like, your body might actually be growing stronger. You are being proactive and taking control of your overall health and wellness. This is a big deal and you should feel proud of yourself! Keep going.

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Keep moving. Keep taking greater steps to improvement. Have confidence that each effort you make with exercise, diet modifications and lifestyle changes will have a positive impact on your mind and body. Finally, give yourself a pat on the back. You've got this!

About the Author:

Natalie-Jean Schiavone, PhD, has more than 20 years of experience in the healthcare industry. After receiving her Master's degree in General Psychology, Natalie-Jean went on to complete her doctoral degree in Health Psychology with a specialization in obesity. Dr. Schiavone conducted her research and completed her dissertation on female adolescents with obesity and their social experiences. Using her education, experience and expertise, Dr. Schiavone works with patients to create a healthier lifestyle where knowledge is a key factor in this modification.