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The
**OPTIMAL
EATING
SOLUTION**

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by Trisha Mandes, MPH

The Optimal Eating Solution

Maintainable Weight-Loss and Longevity Even if You Can't Exercise

by Nutritionist, Trisha Mandes, MPH

The Optimal Eating Solution: Maintainable Weight-Loss and Longevity Even if You Can't Exercise by Trisha Mandes, MPH, Published by Trisha Mandes, Bethlehem, PA 18018
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Dedication

To my late father, Anthony Joseph Mandes, for lighting a fire inside of me to help others and fulfill my dreams. You are forever loved and forever missed, but never forgotten.

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Chapter 5

The Optimal Eating Framework: 7 Big-Picture Steps for Getting Your Life Back

Here's the big-picture steps you need to take to lose 30 pounds in 3 months even if you can't exercise. Keep in mind that all of the Optimal Eating Principles still apply from Chapter 3. Those principles are the foundation to this whole process and what help makes this a long-term, sustainable lifestyle change. When you apply those principles to this process, that's when everything clicks and you start seeing and feeling changes in your weight and your health.

In chapters 6 and 8, I dive deeper into each step, but just like ecological studies are important for seeing the "big picture," so is seeing the big picture framework before we break it down. These are the exact steps I take my clients through like Christine from Columbia, SC...

Christine had been struggling meal prepping and cooking and with her weight for the last 20 years. She joined the program because she wanted to feel confident cooking and also get stronger and leaner so she'd have the energy and confidence to do the things she loved most in life... paddle board, be active in her community, and use the park she'd moved next to. Christine repeatedly said to me, "I want to live my best life."

She joined the program and not only did she lose 1 pound per week on average, but for the first time in more than 25 years, she was making meals in the kitchen that she was certain were the absolute best thing for her body. She started exercising 4-5 times a week both walking with weights at the park she loved and doing weight workouts at the gym. She wasn't regularly exercising before she joined my program. Now she's confident and happy with where she is in life and has the tools and habits needed to keep it up for years on her own.

These are the exact steps I took Christine through and take all of my clients through to lose 1-3 pounds a week even if they can't exercise:

1. Your Optimal Eating Plan

Your Optimal Eating Plan is crafted just for you... for the health results you want with both your weight and additional diagnoses. (Remember, we want to improve your whole health while you lose weight, not make it worse.) Simultaneously, though, it's also crafted for your unique

lifestyle and taste buds. We need to make this work for your life and ensure you love what you're eating, not force you to comply with a generic plan.

For example, if you travel for work and have to eat in restaurants on the road, you'll continue to do that, but optimally for you. If you only use the microwave or don't know how to cook (or just don't like it), that's no problem either! The goal is to make your plan work for you, not make you work for your plan.

Your Optimal Eating Plan precisely states what foods to eat in unlimited amounts (only foods you love), what foods to limit and how, what to avoid, and what treats are and how to structure them into your life. It also tells you *how* you'll implement the guidelines.

Your Optimal Eating Plan is not a meal plan. I hate meal plans for clients and I won't make them. Why? Because meal plans alone won't help you eat optimally long-term.

Your Optimal Eating Plan is better than a meal plan because you'll know exactly what foods or meals you can eat in any food situation whether at an airport, a church picnic, or a work party. If you only had a meal plan and what was on your plan wasn't offered at your boss' Christmas Party, then what would you do?

Your Optimal Eating Plan gives you the structure and knowledge to construct a meal plan. An Optimal Eating Plan is like teaching you how to fish. A meal plan alone is handing you a fish.

2. Managing thoughts and emotions so negative thinking and emotional eating don't stop you from losing 75 pounds this year.

Do you think about food and your body all day long? I personally didn't realize how much mental energy I used to put into worrying about my body, food, and how to lose weight until I started eating optimally. Then that mental and emotional weight disappeared. Food and eating became a fun and enjoyable thing that I no longer felt guilty about. I was completely confident that what I was eating was great for my body and by eating optimally, I was doing a good thing for both the inside and outside of my body.

You don't realize how taxing that mental weight is until it's truly gone and you're free of it. These negative or "sabotaging thoughts" as the Aaron Beck Center for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy calls them, aren't just mentally draining and exhausting, but they can also stop you from reaching your weight-loss goals.

Sabotaging thoughts themselves though won't stop you from losing 30 pounds within 3 months of reading this book. It's that you'll decide to *act* on those thoughts and listen to them.

Let's say you have the thought "there's a new ice-cream flavor at my favorite gourmet restaurant so I'm going to try it when I go on Wednesday." That thought isn't ordering and eating that ice-cream... you are. You decided (maybe unconsciously) to listen to that thought and follow-through with what that thought was telling you to do with your actions and behavior.

We can't stop sabotaging thoughts from happening—they're automatic and once we conquer old ones, new ones come up. But what we can do is come up with *helpful responses* to those thoughts. Helpful responses talk back to sabotaging thoughts in a more powerful way so we choose to listen and act on these helpful thoughts instead. Then, we follow through with optimal behaviors instead of harmful ones (thank you Aaron Beck Institute for *helpful responses* too).

Here's a helpful response to our ice-cream sabotaging thought...

Helpful response: “Just because a food is new, doesn't mean I should eat it, especially if it's not optimal. I don't buy a dress from Anthropologie every time they have a new one, so I don't need to buy and eat every new ice cream flavor either. Losing 30 pounds in 3 months and saying ‘yes’ to the amusement park with my grandkids is way more important to me than that ice cream. Losing weight is what I really want. I can eat optimal chocolate banana ice cream to satisfy my sweet tooth instead.”

Notice this helpful response was completely clear on what was more important to her—losing 30 pounds and taking her grandkids to the amusement park. We also provided “evidence” as to why this thought was irrational (she doesn't buy every new dress she likes) and then we gave her a physical action she could take instead—eat an optimal daily dessert.

My clients and I start identifying sabotaging thoughts and creating helpful responses to them as soon as their Optimal Eating Plan is in place and throughout our whole time together. We start with sabotaging thoughts and helpful responses right away so you get good at identifying and crafting them yourself, but also because I want you to feel just as great emotionally and mentally as you're going to look and feel physically.

In the next chapter, you'll learn how to identify sabotaging thoughts, how to craft helpful responses, and what to do with them. We'll also cover other assignments I give my clients to help them end emotional eating and feel awesome mentally while losing weight and getting healthier. It's a game-changer!

3. Habit formation so your Optimal Eating Plan sticks long-term.

There are 8 main habits you'll learn how to adopt and enjoy so you can continue to lose 1-3 pounds a week and stick to your eating plan for the rest of your life. (I've been sticking to mine for 10 years now!)

Anytime you're trying a weight-loss program that doesn't include habit or behavior changes, you can be sure you're doing a short-term fix that will keep you stuck in the Diet Trap. I explain these 8 habits in detail in Chapter 7 but once applied, you'll continue to enjoy your Optimal Eating plan for years to come...

1. **Sanitize your environment:** Keep foods you're avoiding and any tempting foods *outside* of your house, car, and office.

2. **Certain cooking skills:** There are a few essential cooking skills I teach my clients that save them *hundreds* of calories a day without eating any less food. Even if you don't like to spend a lot of time in the kitchen, no problem. The few times you do, you'll need these skills.
3. **Understanding nutrition labels the optimal way:** Even if you read nutrition labels now, you have to understand *optimal* label reading. There are a few key things you have to know on the label and a lot of stuff you can completely ignore. You'll learn how to read a label on any food package and within 5 seconds, know whether or not it's an optimal food for you.
4. **Eating optimally in restaurants:** Eating optimally doesn't mean you still can't go out to eat 3 times a week. It just means that when you do go, you're still eating optimal meals. (There's one exception that I share in Chapter 7.) I'll make sure you know how to find and create optimal meals in restaurants and how to order them, without feeling like you're being a pain in the ass.
5. **Eating optimally while traveling:** Your life doesn't go on hold because you've decided to improve your health. You'll learn how to best prepare for eating optimally while traveling and how to eat optimally no matter where on the globe you.
6. **Handling family and social situations:** Family can be some of the most challenging people to deal with when you first start making healthier decisions. You'll learn how to eat optimally even when your sister-in-law insists that you taste her homemade German Chocolate Cake and say 'no' without making her feel bad (and without you feeling bad).
7. **Food journaling (optional):** This habit is optional because you can be successful without it, but in certain situations it can be really helpful. When I'm working with a client I always have them complete a daily food journal. They don't need to measure portion sizes or count calories. They just have to write down all of the ingredients of everything they ate that day. This way, I can best help them and catch things that they might not have noticed so they can keep losing weight without plateaus. You'll learn the reasons why and when you may want to food journal when eating optimally on your own.
8. **Weighing yourself:** My clients weigh themselves daily. Once a week is okay too, but once a day (not more than that!) is better. This way, you can see whether you're on target for reaching your goals or not.

4. Exercise (even if you can't).

Once you lose 10-15 pounds in the first 5 weeks, your habits are sticking, you're conquering sabotaging thoughts, and eating optimally starts to feel like second nature, *then* we move onto exercise (even if while reading this book, exercise seems impossible).

Once you have more energy, you're in less pain (or have none) and are seeing a physical therapist for any injuries, then we get you exercising. Our exercise end goal (not our starting point) is having you exercise 5-6 times a week for at least 45 minutes in your target heart zone doing a mixture of weight-training, aerobic, and stretching exercises. Once you start your routine, we'll constantly be increasing either the intensity, duration, and or frequency of your workouts.

I want you doing workouts that you enjoy, that you learn to prioritize, and that become second nature. We'll get you to the place where your body hurts more if you don't work out, then if you do. This may seem far away for you now but remember Savannah from Chapter 3? She had rheumatoid arthritis and could hardly walk up the stairs when she first started. After working with me for 3 months, she was going to hot yoga weekly and walking in her neighborhood regularly! She never thought that before 2 months had passed, she'd be down 20 pounds, no longer in pain, and doing hot yoga.

5. Fine-tuning and modification

As you lose weight, you're *enjoying* your optimal eating and everything has become second nature. There are normally small tweaks to both diet and exercise that we can make so you reach your goals faster, so you avoid weight-loss plateaus and stay the course no matter what obstacles arise.

In the beginning, you may not have to avoid as many foods but once your weight reaches a certain threshold and you want the scale to keep going down, we'll have to fine-tune your Optimal Eating Plan so you keep succeeding. Same thing with exercise. Once we get you moving for 5-6 times a week and you've lost 50 pounds, we'll adjust your workouts as you gain more strength, mobility, and endurance.

6. Overcoming obstacles

Weight plateaus, falling off the wagon, peer pressure, not having a supportive environment, unforeseen life circumstances, medications and medical tests and procedures are all things that could potentially impede your health and weight-loss progress. You have to be able to continue to eat optimally even when life is challenging and this book (and my program) shows you how.

7. Accountability, individualized feedback, and support

If you've been stuck in the Diet Trap for most of your life, I'm not going to lie, doing this on your own is going to be more difficult. You can absolutely do it but you're more likely to succeed, especially for the long-term, if you have accountability, personalized feedback, and support from a personal Nutritionist and Coach. The research supports that too.¹

You want personalized feedback to ensure you're taking the right steps and nothing more than what you should be doing. When you've studied health and read a lot of nutrition books in the past, you're way more likely to talk yourself into doing the wrong thing. You're bombarded with so much diet and nutrition information which makes choosing the best steps for you to take and in the right order, difficult. Plus, your doctor most likely doesn't know anything about nutrition. Stick to your plan and only do what you've been taught in this book.

Accountability is crucial for your success. I know what days my clients are exercising, meal planning, meal prepping (if at all), when they're going on vacation, etc. I hold them accountable to their goals. We set dates and times they need to accomplish certain assignments by and I tell everyone else in the program when they're completing these goals too so they stick to them.

Support from a group of people who understand what you're going through and whole-heartedly want to see you succeed is also helpful for you to reach your health and weight goals especially if you're a "people pleaser." You're less likely to accomplish all of these changes on your own if no one is cheering you on and telling you what to do and when.

When you go through this whole process, not just one or two pieces of it, that's when you unlock your key to longevity, a strong and lean body, and a happier you on the inside. When you apply everything in this book, that's when you'll start living again.

References Chapter 5

1. Painter SL et al. Expert Coaching in Weight Loss: Retrospective Analysis. J Med Internet Res. 2018 Mar; 20(3): e92.

About the Author

Nutritionist, Trisha Mandes, MPH has been helping clients lose weight and get off medications with Optimal Eating, even when exercise isn't possible, for the last decade. She currently runs a weight-loss and health improvement coaching program, online, where 95% of her program graduates have lost on average, 1-3 pounds a week without eating less or counting calories. She's published scientific papers in the *Journal of Geriatric Cardiology*, *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, and *Health Promotion Practice*. She was the Lead Nutritionist for a dietary inflammation management study at the University of South Carolina, worked on a Diabetes Team for the Native American Rehabilitation Association, a Nutrition Educator for the Food Trust and received a Masters of Public Health Nutrition from the University of Eastern Finland. For fun, she's a competitive pole dancer and won a gold medal in her first Pole Sport Organization competition in Philadelphia, PA. You can learn more about Trish at www.TrishaMandes.com.

