

SESSION 17: When Weight Loss Stalls



Welcome and Review (10 minutes)

SAY: Welcome back, everyone!

Today, we are going to talk about how to handle times when weight loss stalls.

Before we start, let's spend a few minutes going over what we discussed last time. I will try to answer any questions you may have.

DO: Briefly summarize previous session.

DISCUSS: What questions do you have about our last session?

SAY: Let's talk about how things went with the action plan you made last time.

DISCUSS: What went well? What didn't go so well?

SAY: Now let's talk about how things went with the other things you tried at home.

DISCUSS: What went well? What didn't go so well?

Objectives (2 minutes)

SAY: Taking action when your weight loss stalls can help you continue to lose weight. Today we will talk about:

- Why weight loss can stall
- How to start losing weight again

Finally, you will make a new action plan.

Why Weight Loss Can Stall (10 minutes)

SAY: Many people who make healthy lifestyle changes find that the pounds come off quickly at first. Then, all of a sudden, they start to have trouble losing weight. Their weight loss slows down, or even stalls. It's normal to have these periods of slow weight loss.

Let's look at an example. Please turn to "Roxanne's Story" in this module's handouts.

DO: Read (or ask a volunteer to read) the first two paragraphs of the story.

DISCUSS: Does this sound familiar to any of you?

SAY: If your weight loss stalls, the first step is to figure out why.

One reason your weight loss may stall is that you're not consistent in meeting your eating and fitness goals.

ASK: How can you find out if you're meeting these goals?

ANSWER:

- Track your activity.
- Track what you eat and drink.

DO: Explain as needed.

SAY: Your weight loss may also stall because you've lost weight. And you haven't changed your eating and fitness goals to match your lower weight.

ASK: Why do you need to change your eating and fitness goals when you lose weight?

ANSWER: The less you weigh, the less calories you need just to maintain your weight. So in order to lose weight, you need to either take in fewer calories, or burn more calories. That means you need to change your eating and fitness goals.

SAY: Your weight loss may also slow down if some of the weight you've lost is muscle.

ASK: Why might losing muscle cause weight loss to stall?

ANSWER: Muscle burns calories, even at rest. So when you lose muscle, you don't burn as many calories.

SAY: Finally, your weight loss may slow down once you're no longer in the early stages of lifestyle change. When you first start cutting calories to lose weight, your body loses some water. For most people, weight loss slows down once they stop losing water. When you cut calories, your body at first burns stores of glycogen—a type of carbohydrate that contains water. Only after you stop losing this "water weight" do you start losing body fat

NOTE: Participants may want to review handouts from sessions on tracking diet and physical activity and also from "Burn more calories than you take in".

How to Start Losing Weight Again (28 minutes)

SAY: Once you know why your weight loss has stalled, the next step is to make a plan to start losing weight again.

Let's say you find that your weight loss has stalled because you're not consistently meeting your eating and fitness goals. Remember: It's normal to get off track with these goals from time to time. The important thing is to get back on track and prevent similar lapses in the future.

ASK: How can you get back on track?

ANSWER: To get back on track, stay positive and use the five steps of problem solving to figure out what is throwing you off and how to get back on track:

1. Describe the problems that got you off track.
2. Come up with options for solving these problems.
3. Choose the best options.
4. Make an action plan.
5. Try it.

SAY: Let's say you find that your weight loss has stalled because you've lost weight. And you haven't changed your eating and fitness goals to match your lower weight. Before you can set new eating and fitness goals, you'll need to find out how much your daily calorie needs have changed since you started this program.

ASK: What are daily calorie needs?

ANSWER: The calories you need to maintain your weight. Your daily calorie needs are based on your age, sex, height, build, and weight.

ASK: How can you find out your daily calorie needs?

ANSWER:

- Ask your healthcare provider.
- Use a smart phone or computer app.
- Use an online tool.

NOTE: Here are some options you could share during the session. They are also in the patient materials:

- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/weight-loss/in-depth/calorie-calculator/itt-20402304>
- <https://www.inchcalculator.com/mifflin-st-jeor-calculator/>

DO: Explain as needed.

SAY: Let's turn to "Roxanne's Weight Loss". Take a look at the graph.

ASK: What has happened to Roxanne's weight lately?

ANSWER: It has leveled off.

SAY: Now let's look at the chart called "Roxanne's Daily Calorie Needs" on the same page.

ASK: What were Roxanne's daily calorie needs before she lost weight?

ANSWER: 1,750 calories

ASK: And what are Roxanne's daily calorie needs now?

ANSWER: 1,650 calories

ASK: So what is the change in Roxanne's daily calorie needs?

ANSWER: 100 calories

SAY: Since Roxanne's daily calorie needs have changed, she decides to set new eating and fitness goals. She makes small changes in her lifestyle to cut an extra 100 calories each day.

Keep in mind: This is Roxanne's goal. Your goal may be different.

ASK: How could Roxanne cut those 100 calories?

ANSWER: She could:

- Take in 100 fewer calories each day
- Burn 100 more calories each day
- Do a mixture of the two

DO: Explain as needed.

DISCUSS: What are some ways to take in fewer calories?

To take in fewer calories, you could:

- Choose drinks that have low or no calories
- Control portion sizes
- Use less fat

And what are some ways to burn more calories?

To burn more calories, you could walk farther, faster, or up steeper hills.

SAY: Let's say you find that your weight loss has stalled because some of the weight you've lost is muscle.

DISCUSS: How could you build muscle?

To build muscle, you could:

- Do wall push-ups
- Lift weights or do online strength-training videos
- Use resistance bands
- Do pilates or other exercise classes

Setting goals: Plan for Success (5 minutes)

SAY: Please turn to your Action Plan Journal. Review the concept of SMART goals (only if needed).

SMART goals are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound

Decide:

Specific: What will you do and where will you do it

Measurable: How will you know that you met your goal

Achievable: Is this something you can do between now and the next session

Relevant: Does this relate to your overall goals

Time-bound: When, how long and how often will you do it

Give people about 5 minutes to think about and write down SMART goals for diet, physical activity, and stress management/self-care.

ASK: Does anyone feel comfortable sharing one of their SMART goals? Then identify each component of SMART or encourage additional editing if components are missing (i.e. if the person says "I will walk three times this week" encourage them to add the where and how long to this to make it more specific and time-bound.

Summary and Closing (5 minutes)

SAY: It's a good idea to keep an eye on your Weight Log. It can help you spot trends. If you ever think your weight loss has stalled, please tell me. I'll help you figure out why so that you can start losing weight again.

DO: If you'd like, share apps and online tools for graphing changes in weight.

SAY: Between now and the next session, please read "25 Snacks Under 100 Calories". See if any of these snacks sound good to you!

I'd also like you to complete "Ways to Take in Fewer Calories" and "Ways to Burn 100 Calories". Check off each idea you try.

We have come to the end of our meeting. Today, we discussed how taking action when your weight loss stalls can help you continue to lose weight or maintain weight loss. We talked about:

- Why weight loss can stall
- How to start losing weight again

DISCUSS: Do you have questions about anything we talked about today?

SAY: Next time, we'll talk about the things you tried at home, including your action plan. We'll also talk about _____.

Thank you for coming to this session. Remember to bring your Participant Notebook to the next session.