



Why 'The Biggest Loser' is a BAD thing...

I was recently surfing the web and came across an interesting article that outlined all the reasons why shows like The Biggest Loser are 'a good thing'. For sure I believe in healthy living and I think it's important for people who are living unhealthy lifestyles to step up and change their bad habits.

It is clear that these shows are all very popular as people like to identify with 'real people' who have similar struggles to theirs and prove that anything is possible with regards to meeting weight loss and fitness goals. And while it may be interesting and entertaining to follow the highs and lows of the contestants while witnessing their massive progress, I believe The Biggest Loser and similar TV shows are on the whole, a BAD thing. Here's why...

- 1) **Unrealistic expectations** – The people on those shows are in general exceptionally obese and unfit. It is therefore much easier for them to drop large amounts of weight in a shorter time frame. This is not normal and is UNSAFE for the average person.
- 2) **Obsession with the scale** – Shows like this can reinforce our debilitating obsession with measuring everything in numbers (our clothing size, our weight, our grades, etc.) and allowing those numbers to affect our self worth. The scale does not measure health. Period.
- 3) **Short term results** – These programs only show a snippet of time which emphasizes short-term gains. What happens after the show? A small percentage of contestants use their new found health as a spring board to stay healthy and inspire others to do the same but most slowly gain the weight back as they slip back into old eating and inactivity patterns. How many of those contestants will keep up that strict diet and hard-core exercising for the rest of their lives? NONE.
- 4) **Addressing the symptom, not the cause** – This is one of the other major reasons why contestants revert back to their old habits once they are off the set; more often than not, the actual cause of their problem is not addressed. Over eating is usually a symptom of deeper issues and without addressing and fixing those issues, permanent change is virtually impossible.
- 5) **Extrinsic motivation** – Studies have shown that extrinsic motivation (such as money, prizes, or any other reward coming from an outside source) decreases intrinsic motivation (or the motivation that comes from within – such as wanting to feel healthier or changing habits for

self-satisfaction). Those reality shows offer big prizes to those who are successful. If the motivation to drop weight is extrinsic (doing it for money, fame, or prizes), then what happens when that stimulus is removed? You guessed it, motivation DECREASES. However, what most people fail to consider is the most unfortunate part: having been exposed to and motivated by extrinsic rewards, also decreases any intrinsic motivation that person may have had to become healthier as well.

Consequently, shows like the Biggest Loser do nothing more than to glamorize rapid weight loss. Success stories of people overcoming adversity to achieve great things are inspiring but only if those changes are permanent and properly motivated.

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