

The Dimmer Switch

It is safe to say that the majority of overweight clients we see treat their overweight condition based on whether they are "on" or "off" a diet. Usually, the switch flips when an individual says to themselves that they have to do something about their weight and so they go "on" a diet. They would then proceed to do all the things that are on the "diet on" list (i.e. drink their water, exercise and of course, follow the diet exactly).

This is great, but sooner or later they have a slip. They now say to themselves that I'm "off" the diet and proceed to return to doing all the things they usually do while they are "off" the diet (i.e. eating junk food, stop drinking water, stop exercising etc.) This type of thinking actually sets one up for failure, because the only way to be always "on" is to be always perfect.

Since no one can be perfect all the time we'll actually be "off" more than "on". This type of thinking is called "Light Bulb Thinking" because a light bulb is either on or off.

To help combat this problem we encourage clients to stop thinking about whether they are on or off a diet and start thinking of "weight control" as a dimmer switch. Try get into the habit of analysing a meal, a day, a weekend, a wedding or a party or a stressful event based on how much control you had versus whether or not you were "on" or "off" your diet. If we picture a light on a dimmer switch, excellent control would be a very bright light and poor control would be a much fainter light. Keep in mind, however, that any light, no matter how faint, is considered control and therefore would demonstrate success. The key is to never turn the light off completely.

A Wedding

Take a wedding as an example. Instead of saying that you are going to give yourself the day off your diet at the wedding on Saturday night, put the "Dimmer Switch" theory into practice. You start off at the wedding by having a couple of drinks and the light begins to fade (but doesn't go off like the on-off theory). You catch yourself and pass on some of the canapes instead of taking one from every tray. (The light brightens and you begin to feel positive).

You make various choices from the menu causing the light to oscillate back and forth. You dance a lot (exercise) causing a bright light tempered by a few more drinks (with diet mixer) causing the dimmer switch continually to go back and forth. At the end of the evening, you summarise the wedding by visualising how the light flickered. Just think what would have happened if, after your first drink, the dimmer switch went all the way to off and the light went out. Anytime we shut the light off, just think about the power it takes to get the light going again. This is what actually would have happened to our mental powers and motivation when in the past, we practiced the "on-off" diet approach.

In summary, remember the "Dimmer Switch" and think "Weight Control" versus on or off a diet. Play with your internal dimmer switch for a few weeks, analysing your day, weekend, happy event (wedding) or a painful, stressful event such as a funeral, and remind yourself that as long as there is light shining from the chandelier, you have been successful in controlling your weight.