

## Developing and Maintaining Commitment

### **The Importance of Commitment**

Your commitment is a pledge or promise you make to yourself to achieve and maintain your ideal weight. *It is the single most important factor in your weight management plan.* While the Food For Life Weight Management Program supports your commitment and teaches you the skills you need to build and maintain that commitment, it cannot give you the commitment. Only you can do that. You have just developed your weight loss goal. The question now is: how important is that goal to you? If you view your goal as desirable, but not of major importance in your life, you're in trouble before you even begin. You must have a strong desire to reach your goal and the willingness to make a few simple changes in your eating behavior.

How you feel about keeping commitment in everyday life has important implications for the success of your weight loss program. To help you evaluate your general level of commitment, complete the following self-evaluation quiz.

### **General Commitment Level**

Read each sentence carefully. If you feel that the sentence describes you, place a check mark in the appropriate box.

- ? I am usually on time for appointments.
- ? I rarely cancel a plan to meet a friend.
- ? If I sign up for a six-week program, I will attend every meeting.
- ? If I were working on a project due in the morning, I would stay late to finish it.
- ? When it's my turn at anything, I almost never need to be reminded.
- ? If I am going to be late for a scheduled event, I call ahead to let people know.
- ? I am generally described as a reliable person.
- ? I have strong beliefs on social issues.
- ? If I knowingly let someone down, I apologize without delay.
- ? If I promise myself I will do something later, I always do it.

Add the total number of check marks in the boxes and enter the total below.

**My Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

If your score is 8 or more, you tend to place a high priority on keeping commitments. If your score was 3 or less, you have a low priority for keeping commitments. If your score was between 4 and 7, then your attitude towards commitments is about average. Don't be too concerned if you had a low or average score. It only means that you will have to work a little harder on the exercises for reinforcing commitment.

### **Commitment and Your Reason for Losing Weight**

Reasons for losing weight can be directly linked to your level of commitment and your ability to sustain that commitment. The following self-quiz will help you examine your own personal reasons for losing weight.

## Reasons for Losing Weight

The most important reasons for me to lose weight are: (Place a check mark in front of each phrase that applies to you.)

- |                      |                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| ? Better self-image  | ? More attractive to others |
| ? Improved health    | ? Social pressure           |
| ? Feeling of control | ? Prove a point             |
| ? More energy        | ? Work related              |
| ? Personal pride     | ? Please family or friends  |

Add the total number of checks in each column and enter the total below that column.

**Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_      **Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

If your total score in the left column is higher than the right column, your reasons for losing weight are primarily personal and depend very little on the influence of others around you. This means that it will be much easier for you to resist social pressures and stay on track with your program. If your total score in the right column is higher than the left column, your reasons for losing weight are greatly influenced by outside forces. This can present a problem because you may find your commitment is severely tested when you are done. In this case it is very much in your own self-interest to re-examine your reasons for losing weight and to place more emphasis on personal values. The more emphasis focused on yourself and your own internal values, the easier it will be for you to build and maintain your commitment.

## Building Your Commitment

You can think of commitment as existing on three levels. Each is like a building block building on its predecessor to increase your power to stay committed. These three levels are: commitments that we mentally make to ourselves, commitments that we make to ourselves in writing and commitments that we make to others.

**Mental commitments** are the most easily broken because when commitment is threatened you need only rationalize the change of commitment in your mind. Alone they are not enough; however, they are important because they establish a beginning point and the foundation for higher levels of commitment.

**Commitments that you put in writing** are a much higher level of commitment. Studies have shown that commitments put into written form are kept more often than promises you make to yourself, by a factor of ten to one. While we don't totally understand the scientific basis for this result, there is believed to be a linkage of motor skills and thought processes, which leaves a stronger imprint in your mind. That is why your Food For Life Counselor asked you to sign the Commitment Pledge on your Goal Sheet and asked you to place it where you can look at it daily.

**The most powerful form of commitment is one you express to others.** To reach maximum commitment it is important that you share your goal with at least one person a

day. It can be your Counselor, your spouse, your friend or others you meet through your Counselor who are on the Control For Life Program. When you filled out your Goal Sheet, you also filled out a Friendship List. Your Friendship List contains the names of positive people you have chosen to support you during your weight-management program. By sharing your goal with them, you strengthen your commitment and gain genuine allies who can help you if you feel your commitment weakening.

In addition to sharing your goal, ask the members of your support team to follow three simple rules:

1. Do not be a source of temptation.
2. Do not be critical if a “bad day” occurs.
3. Provide positive feedback as progress is made.

To obtain the maximum benefit from shared commitment you must develop the ability to be supportable. Being supportable means being open with others and letting go of defensive feelings. Not everyone feels comfortable sharing their goal with friends or loved ones. Usually this is out of fear of rejection. If you feel this way, try to overcome the feeling and share your goal with at least one person. Later, as you begin to experience positive results, you'll feel like sharing with more. Sharing with at least one other person is critical to your success and you'll be amazed at how much stronger your commitment will be.

### **Motivation and Commitment**

Motivation and commitment are often confused. While they are closely related, they are in fact quite different. Commitment is a pledge or promise that you make regarding your goals for the future. Motivation is the positive inducement or incentive that you use daily to help maintain your commitment. Simply defined, motivation is a reward system. It keeps you in a state of action, moving towards your goal and staying on track once you've reached it. We all tend to respond differently to motivation, particularly self-motivation. To help you determine your own orientation toward self-motivation, complete the following self-quiz.

### **Level of Self-Motivation**

Read each sentence carefully. If you feel the sentence describes you, place a check mark in the appropriate box.

- ? I have one exercise activity I engage in at least three times per week.
- ? I am considered by others to be a self-starter.
- ? I usually complete the projects I begin.
- ? I feel really good about myself.
- ? Others are inspired by my actions.
- ? I can set realistic goals.
- ? When I do something well, I reward myself.
- ? I'll try most things at least once.
- ? I can “psych myself up” to keep going when I lose steam.

- ? I am very competitive.
- ? When I see something I want, I go for it!
- ? Role models are important to me.
- ? I consider myself persistent.
- ? I am open to new ideas.
- ? If I plan an activity with someone who cancels, I am comfortable attending alone.

Add the total number of check marks in the boxes and enter the total below.

**My Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

If your score was 10 or above, you have a high orientation toward self-motivation and using a reward system should be a very important part of your efforts to maintain commitment. If your score was between 5 and 9 you have an average orientation and a reward system would be very helpful, but don't become frustrated if it doesn't work every time. If your score was 3 or less, you have a low orientation and your reward system should be set up with very desirable rewards and used in conjunction with other techniques to maintain motivation and commitment.

### **How to Start a Self-Motivation Program**

Begin the motivation process by accepting the fact that you deserve rewards. In other words, your efforts are worthy of reward. Then, develop your own unique list of rewards that you find motivational. They can be anything, as long as they aren't food-related. Most important, choose a specific goal to which you wish to attach a reward. Your goals should be such that they can be measured on a daily basis and they do not necessarily need to be pounds lost. Two examples are: maintaining positive thoughts for the day, or engaging in daily exercise. The most important thing is to choose goals that are realistic, attainable and within your control. The following is a list of suggested rewards that you can use to help you get started.

### **List of Suggested Rewards**

1. Making positive statements about yourself.
2. Going to a movie.
3. Purchasing something new.
4. Buying a book you wanted and giving yourself time to read it.
5. Enjoying a long, luxurious bubble bath.
6. Taking a class you've always wanted to take.
7. Giving yourself one hour of relaxation.
8. Buying a bouquet of flowers.
9. Calling a loved one long distance and sharing your positive feelings.
10. Getting a manicure or facial.
11. Treating yourself to a massage.
12. Buying yourself a new pen set.
13. Writing yourself a congratulatory note.
14. Asking someone to take a picture of you.
15. Enjoying taking "two inches" off your belt.

16. Patting yourself on the back and saying, “Nice job!”

Set at least one goal every day and select a reward to match it. You’ll find that, before long, the goal/reward process will really help you maintain a high level of commitment. And, remember, you deserve it!