

When “experts” lecture us on weight loss, it's usually all about exercise, calories and carbs. That's good information, but from one “experienced” compulsive eater to another, I've provided some other tips that don't usually make the diet books. They will require some effort, but I have found them to be essential to proper self-care and weight loss.

10 Self-Care Secrets for Slimming Down

1. **Sleep:** It's so easy to overeat when we're tired. We reach for more food to keep us going, thinking it will bring us energy. Just the opposite happens. When we overeat we feel heavy and lethargic. And we're still tired! Work on going to bed earlier. Late night nibbling happens when we're tired and should be in bed. Take care of yourself by retiring to bed with a book, and then turn the lights out before your tummy starts to growl. Even if it's growling, go to bed, you won't hear it when you're asleep. It feels so good to wake up in the morning with a clear conscience!
2. **Vitamins:** So many times our overeating is caused by nutritional deficiencies. We seek the vitamins and minerals our bodies crave in excess food. Unfortunately, this is a vicious cycle because usually the food we overeat is devoid of any real nutrition, so it leaves us further depleted. As a first step, begin taking a good multivitamin, preferably one made from whole food. (If you go to a health food store, they'll offer “whole food” supplements, not just synthetic ones.) Next, strive to eat organic foods whose soil isn't stripped of vital minerals like the soil of chemical-sprayed fruits and vegetables. Eating organic will make you feel better, and feel better about yourself...because you're making an effort to be good to your body. Lastly, stick with foods that have as little processing as possible. For example, cook a free-range turkey instead of eating cold-cuts. The more whole and natural, the more nutritionally sound.
3. **Bring lunch:** It's easy to order take-out with your other bored co-workers, but that only makes weight loss harder. Be deliberate about taking care of yourself. Think ahead and shop for foods that you can use to make a healthy salad for yourself. Buy some colorful Tupperware for your packed lunches. Put some care into making a fruit salad for yourself with various yummy fruits. You'll be amazed how good about yourself you'll feel and how good for you it is to bring your own lunch to work and avoid the greasy, starchy alternatives your coworkers are devouring.
4. **Don't skip meals:** Skipping meals is a trap! We always end up making up for the meals we skip...and then some! Make a point to eat three meals a day, and don't nibble in between. Would you skip feeding your children? Of course not. Then why do we think it's OK to skip our own meals? If you make a point to feed

yourself on a schedule of three meals a day, you will be more balanced emotionally, a necessity for sustainable weight loss and a better quality of life.

5. **Stay Hydrated:** The fact is that when we're dehydrated, we eat more. This is because it's easy to disguise thirst for hunger. We eat, looking to hydrate ourselves, when drinking a few glasses of water would easily quiet those hunger pangs. So next time you're SURE that you need to eat more, try a tall glass of water and wait 10 minutes. Be sure to drink AT LEAST 8 glasses of water a day. Here's another tip: make it easy by bringing a bottle of water with you wherever you go.
6. **BYOF:** That's bring your own food! Don't put your health in others' hands...they don't feel the pain when your jeans don't fit! Is the party you'll be attending only going to have greasy and starchy finger foods? (You can call ahead and ask the host what she/he's serving--mention that you have some special dietary needs.) To be safe, bring a veggie platter with low-fat dip! That way you get what you need and you don't feel left out. Don't want to drink alcohol? Bring along a few bottles of seltzer. I do this to take care of myself and nobody minds. Don't leave your health to chance. Remember the adage: "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail."
7. **Don't eat diet food:** How do diet food companies keep us shelling out dough for more diet food? They put chemicals and addictive ingredients in them that make us hooked! I'm talking about ingredients like MSG and many forms of addictive sugars like corn syrup. Even NutraSweet has been proven to be a neurostimulant linked to stimulating appetite. Also, studies prove that people who eat "diet" food they feel like they can get away with eating more and end up overeating!
8. **Avoid Sugar:** The average American now consumes approximately 115 lbs. of sugar per year. Sugar is extremely addictive...there's no such thing as having only a little (have you noticed?! If you like things sweet, like I do, try a truly healthy substitute: Stevia. Stevia Extract comes from the *Stevia Rebaudiana* plant and has been used traditionally for hundreds of years. It's sugar free and calorie free, and has no bitter aftertaste. It even comes in packets, just like Equal or Splenda (both of which have unhealthy side effects.) You can get Stevia at any health food store. I buy it in liquid form with a dropper. Just a few drops in my herbal tea or yogurt and I'm happy!
9. **Go Raw:** I could write pages on the benefits of eating raw foods (fresh green beans instead of cooked or canned; raw, uncooked almonds instead of Blue Diamond Smokehouse Almonds). Besides the obvious nutritional benefits, another good reason to go is that your body has to work harder to process raw

foods, thus burning more calories. In addition, raw foods have far more nutrients than cooked foods. Raw foods often take longer to eat so your body has time to feel satiated: try a spinach salad instead of creamed spinach with your meal.

10. **Don't go too long without eating:** This is self-care 101! You listen to your children when they're hungry, why not yourself? The fact is, when you wait too long to eat your next meal, you are causing your adrenal glands to panic, believing your body is in starvation mode. Then when you do eat, they don't get the message when you've had enough—they are still attempting to save your life by causing you to believe you need to eat more. So the best weight loss advice is...eat!

Tricia Greaves is the founder of Be Totally Free!, a non-profit organization helping others overcome emotional eating, eating disorders and various addictions. She is also a "Self-Care" coach, for those desiring maximum weight loss results with "self-care" instead of self-control. For a free 20 minute consultation, email tricia@betotallyfree.com or call 310-281-8831.