



Yes! You can lose weight

Combine Thich Nhat Hahn's mindfulness teachings with Lilian Cheung's scientific expertise and what you get is a powerful, no-nonsense weight management approach

Participant in a mindfulness retreat:

"I have been struggling with my weight all my life. I know I have to lose weight. I do not like the way I look and feel. I have gone on diets, tried diligently to exercise, lost the weight, and had it all come back in no time. I've lost count of how many times I have gone through this yo-yo cycle of loss and gain, I am totally frustrated, ashamed of myself, anxious and overwhelmed about my weight. I am tired of carrying this extra weight around. Every day is a struggle for me. Every night is a nightmare. I have diabetes now, and I am really worried. I fear that I will not be around to see my children grow up. I am here because I do not want to give up. There must be a way out of this suffering."

This woman is not alone. Everywhere you turn—from television, magazines, and web sites to newspapers and radio—you see, read, or hear stories about people's frustrating struggle to lose weight.

We are surrounded by societal forces that drive us to eat more and move less. And the natural result is weight gain, obesity and the myriad health and emotional

problems that go along with them. Yes, it's ultimately a personal decision to eat more than one needs and to not exercise enough, but it's also nearly impossible to escape the pressures around us that lead to unhealthy behaviours.

Bombarded by unhealthy outside influences, we easily become dissociated from what our bodies truly need and want. Just think of the food court at the shopping mall. You see and smell foods that are savory as well as those that are sweet—steak sizzling in teriyaki sauce, oven-fresh pizza, hot cinnamon buns drizzled with snow-white icing, rich coffee confections infused with sugar syrup and topped with cream. The abundance of aromas, colours, and sounds awaken your palate and your urge to eat. In and of itself this isn't necessarily a bad thing—who doesn't love the look and smell of delicious food?—but it often spurs us to eat automatically whether we're actually hungry or not. Before we know it, we've eaten a supersized meal that has two-thirds of the calories we need in one day—and we weren't even



Thich Nhat Hanh is one of the best-known and most-respected Zen masters in the world. A poet, and peace and human rights activist, he has led an extraordinary life. Born in central Vietnam in 1926, he joined monkhood at the age of 16. Among Buddhist leaders, Thich Nhat Hanh ranks second only to the Dalai Lama. He lives in Plum Village, in the meditation community he founded in France, where he teaches, writes, and gardens. He leads retreats worldwide on the art of mindful living.



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I DIDN'T EVEN
REALISE I'VE
BECOME FAT!

hungry to begin with. When this happens day after day, week after week, what began as one enjoyable moment of eating becomes a weight problem that can affect us the rest of our lives. And this is just one of many examples of the impact our surroundings and social networks can have on our weight and health.

There is no place that is off-limits for eating and drinking: we eat and drink in our cars and at our desks, as we sit in meetings and as we stroll through the shopping malls. It is no wonder that we often find ourselves eating and drinking beyond what we need to satisfy our true physiological hunger. We have created a culture of constant snacking.

Now, think of our social norms around physical activity. From the Industrial Revolution in the early 1800s up to our current Information Technology revolution, we have become increasingly sedentary as we rely more and more on machines and gadgets, and automobiles to do our work and get around. We have drastically diminished the amount of energy we burn every day through bodily movements and the use of our muscles. Together, all these societal forces push us towards eating more calories each day than we expend, and without us being aware of it. Over time these extra calories build up, and before we even realize it we've put on a good deal of weight. And it doesn't take too much for this to happen. Over the course of one year, 100 extra calories each day—the equivalent of eating one small cookie or of driving a mile instead of walking it—could end up packing 10 pounds of extra fat on our bodies.

Given the huge burden these social influences place on us, how can we get back in touch with our bodies and relieve ourselves of the burden and suffering that arise from being overweight? How can each of us reach our healthier weight?

Is there a permanent solution to this?

Thousands of fad-diet books and weight-loss plans come and go. Yet these nearly always fail people over time. You can lose weight on any diet, but there is no scientific evidence that rigid dieting will help you achieve weight loss in the long run. The difficult truth is that the basic law of thermodynamics still holds: When we eat more calories than we expend, we gain weight.

When we burn more energy through physical activity or exercise than we take in from food and drinks, we lose weight. Though this sounds basic and simple, the fact that so many of us are overweight points to the complexity of the situation. For anyone who has tried many times to lose weight, the thought of trying again may feel like an overwhelming and daunting task. Is it truly possible to change one's habits of eating and moving, especially in the face of a society that pushes us so hard

in the wrong direction? How can one begin to make these changes?

The Buddha teaches that change requires insight, and insight cannot begin until we stop and focus our attention on what is happening right in front of us. This stopping, or *shamatha*, allows us to rest the body and the mind. When we have calmed ourselves, we can then go on to look deeply into our current situation. We need to stop, rest, and reflect on a constructive way forward that will end the habits that have led to our current weight issues. We need to be fully aware of what is going on in our daily living.

Changing your habit energy

There is a Zen story about a man and a horse. The horse is galloping quickly, and it appears that the rider is urgently heading somewhere important. A bystander along the road calls out, "Where are you going?" and the rider replies, "I don't know! Ask the horse!"

This is also our life story. Many of us are riding a horse, but we don't know where we are going, and we can't stop. The horse is our "habit energy," the relentless force of habit that pulls us along, that we are often unaware of and feel powerless to change.

We are always running, even during our sleep—the time that we are supposed to rest and regenerate our bodies. We are our worst enemies, in conflict with ourselves, and therefore we can easily start conflict with others.

When a strong emotion arises within us like a storm, we are in great turmoil. Many of us try to pacify the storm by watching television or eating comfort foods. But the storm does not calm down after hours of watching TV. The storm does not go away after a bag of chips or a bowl of ice cream. We hate ourselves afterward for eating the chips and the ice cream. We dread stepping on the scale the next day. We vow to never do it again. But time after time, we do. Why? Because our habit energy pushes us to.

Be like an oak tree

How can we stop this state of turmoil? How can we stop our fear, our despair, our anger, and our cravings? We have to learn to become solid and stable like an oak tree, and not be blown from side to side by the emotional storm. We have to learn to live fully in the present moment. We need to practice breathing in and breathing out with all our awareness. We have to learn to become mindful.

IMPULSIVE EMOTIONAL
EATING MAKES YOU
FEEL WORSE LATER



Mindfulness allows us to acknowledge our habit energy every time it pops up: “Hello, my habit energy. I know you are there.” If you just mindfully smile to your habit energy, it will lose much of its strength. The chips stay in the cupboard, the ice cream in the freezer, the storm passes by, and we watch, breathing in and breathing out all the while.

After we become calmer, we can recognise our weight problem more clearly and acknowledge it instead of denying it. This may not be easy for you to do. You may feel angry, frustrated, or fed up about your weight. Do not suppress these feelings.

Instead, as the Buddha has taught us, accept and embrace these difficult feelings, like a mother cradling her crying baby. The crying baby needs the mother’s loving care. In a similar manner, your negative emotions and turmoil are crying out loud, trying to get your attention. Your negative emotions also need your tender, loving care. By embracing your negative feelings whenever they arise, you can prevent yourself from being swept away by your emotional storm, and you can calm yourself. When you are calmer, you are more able to see that you already have within yourself the power and the tools to begin to change.

The Four Noble Truths of healthy weight

The Buddha offered many teachings to help people end their suffering, the first and most important being the Four Noble Truths.

The First Noble Truth is that all of us have suffering in our lives. None of us can escape from it.

The Second Noble Truth is that we can identify the causes of our suffering.

The Third Noble Truth is that we can put an end to our suffering and that healing is possible.

Finally, the Fourth Noble Truth is that there are paths to free us from our suffering.

We can cultivate our well-being by concretely applying mindfulness to our daily living. A simple example from the field of medicine can help illustrate the Four Noble Truths. Let’s say you are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes [First Noble Truth], which was likely brought on by eating a poor diet and becoming very overweight [Second Noble Truth]. Your doctor tells you the situation does not need to be like that and can be controlled [confirming the Third Noble Truth]. You follow the doctor’s prescription—taking your medicine, eating healthier, and exercising more—which is your route to healing [Fourth Noble Truth]

These teachings of the Buddha originate from a time when suffering was more likely to be caused by a lack of food rather than too much, or by a body overburdened with physical labour rather than one grown ill from lack

of use. Yet they apply to all forms of suffering, including those related to being overweight.

Now, let’s reflect upon the Four Noble Truths and how they relate to achieving your healthy weight. The self-exploration that begins here and continues throughout this book will help you navigate through all the important factors in your life that affect your weight. And through your own awareness, you can discover and decide for yourself what is beneficial and what is not beneficial for your body and wellbeing. Through the process, you will realise whether your weight has affected you physically and emotionally. You can become more in touch with the way you have been eating and drinking, the amount of exercise you have been doing or not doing. You can recognise the amount and type of effort you have been spending to control your weight.

The First Noble Truth: Being overweight is suffering

When we are overweight, every part of the body may feel the burden. Our knees may ache, carrying too much weight, becoming swollen and stiff with arthritis. Our heart may labour harder, our blood pressure may rise, and harmful plaque may build up inside the lining of the arteries, heightening the risk of heart attack and stroke. Our breathing itself may become a problem around the clock as the risk of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and sleep apnea increases.

Many of these increased health risks exist in people who are merely overweight, not just among those who are obese. Diabetes, an insidious disease with disabling and deadly complications, is 2 – 4 times more likely to strike someone who is overweight than someone who is at a healthy weight, and it is 5 – 12 times more likely to strike someone who is obese. The risk of cancer in several parts of the body—breast, colon, esophagus, kidney, pancreas, and uterus—is higher in people who carry excess body fat than in people who do not. So is the risk of having gallstones that require the gallbladder to be removed. The risk of infertility, cataracts, and perhaps even dementia may be higher in people who are obese than in those who are at a healthy weight. Given the toll that excess weight takes on all areas of the body, it is no surprise that being overweight or obese in midlife increases the chances of dying early. Even people who are not overweight but have gained more than 20 pounds since the start of college have an increased risk of dying early. Those who are overweight and obese suffer in countless other ways as well, due to the pervasive stigma associated with weight. As children they may owing to their weight, become the target of teasing and bullying from their peers. As adults, they may be less likely to win a job or a promotion, or they may be stereotyped as lazy or less disciplined. Even in the doctor’s office, they

may face prejudice because of their weight.

What type of suffering have you endured because of your weight? Physical pain? Emotional pain? A feeling of shame, insecurity, regret, anger? Identifying and acknowledging the nature and depth of your suffering may be difficult. You may want to suppress it and not deal with it.



OVERWEIGHT PEOPLE
SUFFER IN MANY WAYS
AS THEIR BODIES HAVE
TO WORK MUCH HARDER

However, our first step toward healing and transformation is to recognise the existence of our suffering and not run away from it.

The Second Noble Truth: You can identify the roots of your weight problem

Before you can change your weight, you must have a better understanding of the reasons that you are overweight. Take the time to reflect on the numerous factors that we have described below. Look deeply to see whether they apply to you so that you may understand the true nature of your problem with weight. Looking deeply requires courage. The causes are knowable, and with diligent effort you can get to the bottom of them. With greater insight into the reasons that you are overweight, you can begin to determine what course of action you can take to achieve a healthier weight.

As you begin to look deeply into the roots of your weight problem, take care not to be harsh on yourself. The ‘judge’ inside your head often makes you feel bad about all the ‘shoulds’—you should not have eaten that cheesecake,

you should have spent more time at the gym. You may also be daunted by your past failures and struggles with weight. Perhaps you were following the wrong advice. Perhaps you were able to lose some weight initially on one diet or another, but the diets were too restrictive, your cravings took hold, and you eventually gave up and gained the weight back. You are not separate from your family and environment. In the past you did not have enough of the right conditions supporting you to maintain a healthy weight.

What were your obstacles? Do not get lost in regret about your past mistakes. Just as you embrace your negative feelings, embrace your weight problem like a mother cradling her crying baby, so that you can transform your fear, despair, anger, frustration, and self-criticism. Mindfulness practice can help you become calmer, so that you can look at your situation without self-condemnation.

This frees you to focus on the solutions rather than dwell on the past or your problems. The Buddha said that if we know how to look deeply into our suffering and recognise what feeds it, we are already on the path of emancipation.

Do your parents have weight problems?

Parental influences on our weight could be due to nature, nurture, or a combination of both. If your mother breast-fed you, it may have lowered your risk of becoming overweight. If your father encouraged you to ‘clean up your plate’ as a habit, you may find it really hard to stop eating today’s supersize portions even though you are full. As you consider the role of parental influences on your weight, keep in mind that your genetics are not your destiny—and genetics alone cannot explain the rapid rise in obesity. Even if your parents were overweight, you can still achieve a healthy weight by following a healthy lifestyle.

Do you drink too much sugary soda?

The calories from soda are often ‘invisible.’ When you drink your calories rather than eat them, you may not cut back on other foods to compensate for the liquid calories. As you consider the role of sweetened drinks on your weight, notice whether you feel hungrier after you drink a sugary soda. If you have already cut back on sugary drinks and substituted diet ones, notice whether drinking the intensely sweet sugar substitutes has conditioned your palate to expect, crave, and seek supersweet foods.

Do you get less than a half hour of exercise or physical activity each day?

There’s strong evidence that getting enough physical activity can help prevent weight gain and, when combined with a lower-calorie eating plan, can help promote weight loss. How much is enough? It depends on how fit you are. For some people, taking a brisk half-hour walk five days a week would be enough. For others, taking a high-intensity spinning class for 75 minutes a week would be enough. For people who are very inactive, just getting moving is a start. Reflect on whether you get enough physical activity. If not, why not?

Do you watch more than one hour of television a day?

Sitting around and watching television may take the place of more physically demanding activities. As you reflect on your TV-watching habits, think about why you spend as much time as you do watching television. Do you watch a lot of television to avoid boredom? To avoid communicat-

ing with your family members? Or to cope with stress?

What other activities might you do instead?

Do you get enough sleep?

Sleep deprivation may shift the balance of key hormones that control appetite, making sleep-deprived people hungrier than people who get enough sleep.

If you are not getting enough sleep, think about why. Are you lying awake at night filled with anxiety? Do you stay up too late watching television? Do you notice that you are hungrier on days when you have not gotten as good a night’s sleep?

Do you eat mindlessly?

How much we eat is often driven by external cues—the size of the bowl, the size of the plate, the portion size of the food itself. In a classic experiment, people at a movie theater were served fresh or stale popcorn in different-size containers. Moviegoers who were given stale popcorn said the taste was ‘unfavorable.’ Yet when they were served stale popcorn in a large container, they ate 61 per cent more popcorn than they did when it was served in a small container while they were watching the movie—and they underestimated the amount of popcorn they ate. In another experiment, graduate students at a Super Bowl party who served themselves from large bowls ate 56 per cent more snack food than students who served themselves from smaller bowls.

The larger the portion size, the less able we are to estimate how many calories we are eating. Practising mindfulness can help us avoid the external cues that trap us, avoid mindless eating, and focus in on the practices that keep us healthy.

Do you live or work in an environment that makes it difficult to eat healthfully and keep moving?

If healthy choices are not available in your workplace or neighborhood, it makes it very difficult for you to eat well, no matter how knowledgeable or determined you are. If your neighbourhood is not safe enough for you to walk, jog, or ride a bike in, it will deter you from staying active. Pay attention to your surrounding environment, and take note of the various barriers to active living and healthy eating. What prevents you from following your good intentions? Are your sincere efforts being sabotaged by family or friends? Does your job or what you do on a daily basis prevent you from staying on course with healthy eating and active living?

As you start to clear your mind of distractions, these barriers will become clearer to you, and you will start to work on ways around them as well as ways to work with people in your community to make a healthier environment for everyone.

The Third Noble Truth: Reaching a healthy weight is possible

You can put an end to your weight problem. You have already taken the first step: by spending energy to understand the roots of the problem, you have stopped running away from it. When you direct your attention to your excess weight and the suffering associated with it, you can see the potential for wellness. You also understand that it is possible to reach your goal of a healthy weight when you take the right actions. Remember, there was a time before you became overweight when your weight was normal. It is easy to forget that.

Ask yourself where you are in this healthy weight journey. Focus on whether or not you aspire to be a different person, to feel better about yourself, to be able to function better, to be happier. Ask yourself what this extra weight means to you, and ask yourself whether you are truly ready to let it go.

To be successful, it is important for you to believe that you can achieve a healthy weight. Believing in yourself, having the faith that you can change the habits that do not serve you well, and adopting science-based wisdom are important for successful transformation of our behaviour. According to psychologist Albert Bandura, “perceived self-efficacy” is essential for any behaviour change.” Self-efficacy is simply the belief that one can carry out a behaviour necessary to produce a desired outcome. What we believe can significantly affect what we can achieve.

People who believe that they can reach a healthier weight through healthy eating and active living set relevant goals that they perceive to be important for the desired change. They believe that those goals are attainable, and they believe that they have the ability to carry them out. What are your current beliefs? Are they real, or are they shadowed with illusions from your past experiences, failures, and disappointments? Do not let your past experiences hold you back. Focus on the present. When you focus on the present, you do not give any power to your past actions.

Recognise that losing weight is possible and that you can do it. It will not be as easy as popping a pill and watching the pounds melt away, but it will be a journey—sometimes hard—that will be well worth taking. Learn to listen to your body with compassion. You are more capable of helping yourself if you treat yourself with compassion and a loving heart. Your guilt and hopelessness will diminish, and you will be more accepting of yourself. Don't judge yourself harshly. Love yourself, and affirm that you can reach a healthy weight. You are losing the weight for yourself, not to please anyone else.



BELIEVING
THAT YOU CAN
DO IT IS MOST
IMPORTANT
WHEN TRYING
TO LOSE
WEIGHT

As you start to recognise your innate capacity to be more mindful, you will become calmer, and it will be easier to find solutions to the problems you face. Allow yourself to truly feel what your life would be like if you could maintain a healthier weight. Affirm to yourself that reaching a healthier weight is possible when you pay attention to and take care of your weight. When you take care of an orchid plant, the plant needs your focused attention, to be watered and nurtured on a regular basis. Without such care, the flowers will wither and die prematurely and you cannot enjoy their beauty. You are just like the orchid plant. You need tender loving care for your ideal to be realised. When we look at all beings, including ourselves, with eyes of love and compassion, we can take care of ourselves better. With mindfulness, we can nurture ourselves with greater ease and interest, and our efforts will come more naturally.

Even if you have been burdened and tormented by your weight throughout the years, there are seeds of wellbeing inside you. But you may have lost sight of this because the discomfort of your overweight is overpowering. When you have a toothache, you call your dentist and ask for an emergency appointment to relieve your pain. You know deeply at that point that not having a toothache is happiness. Yet later, when you don't have a toothache, you forget and do not treasure your non-toothache.

Practicing mindfulness helps us appreciate the wellbeing that is already there and realize that further wellbeing is possible if we take the right actions.

We need to water the seeds of joy in ourselves in order to realise wellbeing, including the wellbeing that comes from being at a healthier weight. Please ask yourself, “What nourishes joy in me? What nourishes joy in others? Do I appreciate the many reasons for joy that are already in my life? Or have I been living in forgetfulness, taking many things for granted?”

It is wonderful to sit with a pen and paper and write down all the conditions for happiness that are already there, already available to you right in this moment.

When you do this, you have a firm foundation from which to better embrace and transform your suffering. Transforming our suffering is like becoming an organic gardener, one who does not discard the unwanted scraps from the kitchen or the yard. Instead, the gardener composts these scraps so that they can nourish the flower. You can transform the unwanted garbage in you—your depression, fear, despair, or anger—into the nourishing energy of peace and joy. Don't throw away or deny your suffering. Face it directly, and transformation is within your reach.

Negative habits can be changed. You can begin anew. Try to be fully aware of your motivations for wanting to reach your healthy weight. Your intention to reach

The 7 practices of a mindful eater

One way to incorporate mindfulness into your meals is to simply use the breath. Before eating, make a practice of pausing. Breathe in and out a few times so that you can be one with the food you are about to eat.

- 1. Honour the food:** Start the meal with whatever traditional grace or prayer to express gratitude. In Vietnam, it is a custom to never chastise anyone while eating, so as to not disturb their eating or digestion. We can learn from this very common sense wisdom.
- 2. Engage all six senses:** As you serve and eat your meal. Notice the sounds, colours, smells and textures as well as your mind's response to them, not just the taste. When you put the first bite of food in your mouth, pause briefly before chewing and notice its taste as though it was the first time you had ever tasted it.
- 3. Serve in modest portions:** Moderation is an essential component of mindful eating. Using a small dinner plate, no larger than nine inches across, and filling it only once can help you eat more moderately.
- 4. Savour small bites and chew thoroughly:** Con-

sciously choosing smaller bites and chewing them well can help you slow down your meal as well as allow you to fully experience the taste of your food.

- 5. Eat slowly to avoid overeating:** One way to slow down is to consciously put your eating utensils down in between bites. Be aware of your body as you eat. There is no rush to attend to other tasks; there is no hurry.
- 6. Don't skip meals:** Skipping meals can make it harder to make mindful choices. When hunger consumes us, the strong forces of habit energy may lead us to grab whatever foods are close at hand—be they from a vending machine or a fast-food restaurant—and these foods may not further our healthy eating or weight loss goals.
- 7. Eat a plant-based diet, for your health and for the planet:** When mindful eaters look deeply at the meal they are about to eat, they see far beyond the rim of the plate. They see the dangerous toll that eating some types of animal foods can take on their bodies and they see the equally dangerous and destructive toll that meat production and dairy farming take on our environment.



a healthy weight has to come from you—and from nobody else.

The Fourth Noble Truth: You can follow a mindful path to a healthy weight

The mindful path to a healthy weight is not a diet that you go on and off. It does not rely on any pills or potions. All it takes is your belief and affirmation that you can follow a mindful path, and your willingness to commit to this path. Following a mindful path means creating your own goals for healthy eating and physical activity, that you believe you can live with, day after day.

Appreciate the lessons that your excess weight is offering you. Your excess weight is like a bell whose sound reminds you that your past actions and way of living, did not serve you well. You can liberate yourself from the imprisonment, struggle, and burden of your weight. Though you are not solely responsible for your current state, YOU are the only one who is able to change it. You must act for yourself. No one else can do this for you. The first step is to be aware that you are choosing to change.

Bear in mind that everything is impermanent, including your extra weight. The mindful path to healthy weight is to start living with mindfulness, which will help you be more conscious of what you are thinking, seeing, hearing, feeling, eating, and doing throughout the day.

Take small steps towards this change. Do not aim for unrealistic goals that require a quantum leap. This usually sets you up for a vicious cycle of failure. By accomplishing little steps, you start to have a taste of what you can do. You begin to have a taste of success. Every day, allow yourself to witness that it is possible for you to make changes in the right direction, no matter how small. Success breeds success. It is contagious. Set a realistic goal for weight loss. For most of us, this means losing 1–2 pounds a week. Losing weight steadily allows your new, healthy habits to be firmly rooted. When you lose weight quickly with fad diets, you usually regain the lost weight in a short time.

There is a National Weight Control Registry of more than 5000 women and men who have each lost more than 30 pounds and kept it off for at least a year. Most of them lost the weight on their own. How did they do it? They exercised and burned an average of 400 calories a day, which is about 60 minutes of brisk walking. They ate less, keeping to about 1,400 calories a day. Plus, they watched less television and limited their visits to fast-food restaurants.

Learning what to do to lose weight is not difficult. Putting that knowledge effectively into practice, though, is the key challenge.

So, what can help you begin to make healthy behaviour changes and keep them up over time?

Mindfulness. Mindfulness is a way of living that has been practiced over 2,600 years by millions of people to help them transform their suffering into peace and joy. Consider mindfulness as your ally to help you get out of your own way, change your habits that are counterproductive, and overcome the obstacles that led you to be overweight.

Start first with practicing mindful breathing, mindful eating, and mindful walking every day. We are already breathing as long as we are alive, and we are eating and walking every day. Mindfulness is simply a different way of breathing, eating, and walking.

Don't be discouraged if you find yourself not being able to follow your plan 100 per cent. As long as you are heading in the right direction, you are making progress. Be patient with yourself. Even if you change only one unhealthy habit a week, you will be making twenty-six changes in six months and fifty-two changes in one year.

Besides your own will and action, you also need support at home, at work, and throughout your community to be able to eat well and stay active. It is extremely challenging to change on your own. Build a support community or *sangha* around you to help you stay on track. The support system can be made up of people you meet with in person or online. How about using the Web and other tools to remind you to eat, move, and live mindfully?

You may also want to have a digital watch or cell phone that you can program to beep at regular intervals, say, every hour. The beep can be a reminder for you to stop whatever you are doing and breathe deeply three times.

In all the practice centers in the tradition of Plum Village [Thich Nhat Hanh's monastery in France], whenever the phone rings or the clock chimes in the dining hall, people stop everything they are doing and breathe consciously, releasing all thinking and any tension.

Ending your struggle with weight

The path begins here

Make a pledge to yourself. Begin writing a healthy-weight mission statement. This statement is a symbol and reminder of your commitment and can help you see more clearly what you intend to achieve. Return to your mission statement periodically to help you get inspired, and stay on track. You may also like to post it where you can read it often.

Your mission statement for healthy weight and wellbeing should be made up of concrete, achievable goals. Mission statements are works in progress, just

like ourselves. While the overall goal of your mission statement will likely stay constant over time, the smaller goals will change and be revised as you gain experience and figure out what you've been successful with and what you still need to work on.

By combining science-based advice with the practice of mindfulness, we have the tools to transform the unhealthy habits that have led to our current weight. Our mindfulness will lead us to adopt lifestyle choices that are not only good for ourselves but also good for our planet. We will realise that we cannot attain wellbeing all by ourselves. Our wellbeing is intimately dependent on the wellbeing of others. Our health is dependent on the health of our planet, and the health of our planet depends on us. We all need to consume and act in such a way that the health of our planet is preserved for our children, our grandchildren, and all future generations. Each of us can contribute by mindfully taking care of ourselves and our home, planet Earth—for our generation and for generations to come.



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For example: My Mission Statement for Healthy Weight and WellBeing

Through being more mindful and paying better attention to my health and wellbeing, I will lose 25 pounds by ___ [date] _____

and keep it off over the following year and beyond.

Beginning Goals, ___ [date] _____

I will practice some level of mindfulness every day.

I will walk at least 5,000 steps [measured by pedometer] or half an hour every day, and slowly increase this each week until I reach 10,000 steps or one hour per day.

I will buy more fruits and vegetables.

I will not buy any sugary sodas.

Revised Goals, ___ [date] _____

I will work on being mindful for at least two hours a day,

I will walk at least 10,000 steps every day.

I will buy more fruits and vegetables.

I will avoid all fast food.

I will not buy any sugary sodas.

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