

## 29. What I Learned from Oprah

I happened to be watching TV one day when Oprah Winfrey had a group of very heavy women on her program. The subject was the heartbreak that comes when diets don't work.

Each of the women had lost more than one hundred pounds, only to gain at least that much back again. They didn't want to gain the weight back, of course, but none of them had been able to avoid it. They described it as a mystery, and lamented that they were powerless to stop it. No one was happy – including Oprah.

Statistics show that Oprah's guests aren't the only people in that spot. Numerous studies show that when people lose that much weight, they frequently gain it back again.

However, in the tearful descriptions of their roller coaster weight loss and uncontrollable gain, I noticed that each person clearly but unconsciously explained her mistake, and yet not one person mentioned it, including Oprah.

Each of the women got off their diet.

Each person explained something to the effect of, "I lost the weight and quit going to the support group meetings." Or "I stopped being so strict about food." Or "I quit checking in with my counselor and quit getting weighed every day."

In short, what I saw was that this was a group of people who had something that was naturally hard for them to do without help (eat right and exercise), which they'd then handled beautifully using systems, rules, and external motivation.

But here's the insanity: After all this "help" worked, they dropped their programs like hot potatoes (without the sour cream, bacon, and chives), even though every weight loss program triples in effectiveness when the participant checks in with a coach.

**Here's my question:** Why didn't one – and I mean just one – person on that stage say, “I know that I'll need systems, rules, and external motivation the rest of my life. Staying in my skinny jeans (or whatever their motivation) is worth it to me. I'll NEVER quit my program!”

But this isn't a chapter about weight loss. Have you ever heard this one?

“I used to spend marketing time to get new patients, but I quit.”

Why did you quit?

“Because it worked.”

That's just as crazy.

Even crazier is this: Every year I speak to doctors desperate to grow their practices. Invariably, their best-ever years in practice were with the ones where they worked with this or that practice coach.

Why did you quit? I ask.

It's always the same response: “I learned everything that coach could teach me.”

In other words, “because it worked.”

They're missing the point. Let's go back to the weight loss parallel. Is there anyone who doesn't know that eating less and exercising more will make you lose weight? Yet when it comes to success in anything it isn't what you *know* – it's what you *do with what you know*, and the fact is that you do your best success work when you use successful systems, rules, and external motivation like seminars, coaching calls, and networking with special interest groups.

The simple knowledge that someone is going to check in with you about your practice, help you process new information, and offer a better perspective and encouragement helps you focus on success.

Don't make friends with mediocrity. Hire the right coach, and then do everything they say with all your intensity and passion. Unlike the dieters on TV, stay in the system, do the program, and stay in touch with your coach even after you discover success.

Because once you succeed, you can look for the next level of success, and then the next and the next.

I gained thirty pounds right after I got married,. I found out how much I gained using a talking scale in a crowded store. How stupid was that?

Here's what happened: I kicked the button on the scale as we were walking by and heard a robotic voice say, "Get on the scale. Get on the scale." So I obediently stepped on, only to hear, "Hey you guys, one at a time!"

No, I didn't hear that, but I think it's funny. What I did hear was a number that was my high school weight plus thirty pounds.

I looked at my wife in horror. She was laughing. In a matter of days, I was sitting with a counselor in a commercial weight loss program. learning everything I could about how to lose weight. I love systems and formulas, and I was back to high school weight in few short months, and then I stepped into maintenance.

That was more than twenty-five years ago, and I still check in with that group from time to time, just to keep in touch.

Best advice? Get coached. Stay coached.