

Module 2, Lesson 9 Handout: **Obesity Counseling Guide**

Your clients look up to you and count on you to help them make changes. As their counselor, coach and cheerleader, you're the person who's going to help your clients be the best versions of themselves, improve their health and live their most Nutritious Lives. It can be challenging to think of where to begin when counseling your clients, especially when they are obese and/or have large amounts of weight to lose. The most simple place to start is one you already know very well. Use the pillars of a Nutritious Life to structure your behavior change recommendations with your clients.

Sleep Deep

You know how important sleep is, so make this pillar a priority for your clients since they may not understand the importance. Ask your clients if they're snoring, or experiencing any unusual sleep disturbances or symptoms that may relate to obstructive sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome or obesity hypoventilation syndrome. As a reminder, some of those symptoms may be excessive daytime fatigue, difficulty concentrating and morning headaches.

Ask for the details about their sleep environments and sleep hygiene. Do they nap often? Do they take any sleep aids? Have you educated them on which foods can aid sleep and which can disrupt sleep? Have you created a sleep hygiene routine together? Often explaining the science behind the recommendations for good sleep hygiene helps your clients understand the why of it all and motivates them to implement changes.

One of the most simple changes your clients can make to Sleep Deep is to put technology away 30 minutes to 2 hours before bedtime. At night, light throws the body's circadian rhythm out of whack by delaying the release of melatonin. Research shows that this may contribute to the causation of cancer, diabetes, heart disease and obesity. On the flip side, exposure to lots of bright light during the day can actually boost a person's ability to sleep at night (and can also improve mood and alertness during the day.) Though the research on blue light (that's the light from electronics) isn't as clear cut as we once thought, it's still a healthful idea to shut down tech before bed.

Discuss the sleep environment with your client to make it more conducive to better sleep. Blocking out light with proper blinds or using a noise machine and/or aromatherapy diffuser are some small adjustments that can have a big impact. Also, temperature of the bedroom is also an important factor to quality of sleep. The ideal temperature being between 60 and 67 degrees fahrenheit.

Drink Up

Teach your clients how weight gain is not just related to food, but also what we drink. You know this well. Many obese clients may not be “counting” their drinking calories and recording them in a food journal. Pay close attention here and do a detailed food intake with your client to see what they drink from day to day to learn where extra calories are coming in. Remind these clients that drinking calories is the easiest way to gain weight. If eliminating completely sugar laden beverages is too overwhelming, start with specific achievable goals to reduce. When offering suggestions for how to reduce calorie and sugar intake through drinks, let your clients tell you what they think will work for them. This way, they’re more likely to stick to their intentions because they’ve set it themselves and it’s realistic for them. They may be extremely set in their ways. Some examples are swapping out a juice that’s high in sugar and adding in an unsweetened iced herbal tea with a few chunks of fruit in it. Setting a goal for the number of water bottles to drink in a day can be a simple but effective goal. Once the client is drinking more water, oftentimes the high sugar drinks reduce without focusing on it. Swapping soda for flavored seltzer works often for the person who craves carbonation. Get creative here!

Live Consciously

Teach your clients how to Live Consciously to work towards their goals by making small changes to their environment. This could be as simple as a bowl of fruit on the counter, using a calendar to plan meals for the week, making a categorized grocery list or organizing the pantry and refrigerator. This is a great pillar to empower changes in so many different aspects of your clients’ lives. Have them walk you through their day and identify areas that are stressful or overwhelming and help them reshape those moments or literally declutter their space. This could be a corner in their house that everything gets piled into, stressful moments during their commute to work or an unorganized work environment. It’s moments and places like these that may inhibit your clients from reaching their full potential and focusing on those healthy weight loss goals.

Nurture Yourself

Small indulgences to Nurture Yourself can be a great reward for your client to look forward to. Help your client come up with a list of small indulgences (other than food!) that they can treat themselves with when they make a behavior change. These rewards can keep your clients on the right path and may motivate them even more. Come up with a feel good activity that they enjoy. It could be a warm shower, a massage, a haircut, a short meditation, sitting down with a book or listening to a

favorite podcast for 20 minutes. These are the types of activities you'll want to brainstorm with your clients when making a list of those small indulgences to push them forward.

Love More

It may be hard for your obese clients to really express love for their body especially if they've experienced fat-shaming or bullying. This can really deter them from feeling healthy and feeling good about the skin they're in. As their cheerleader, it's your job to help them Love More and embrace their body for everything it does for them.

This may be a pillar that you come to when you've developed more rapport and flow with your client so that the conversation about love comes from a true place of love and care. Remind your client that love doesn't only come in the shape of lingerie and candlelit dinners, but simple things like holding hands with someone, petting an animal and cuddling can spark those same feelings. Help your client recognize how GOOD feeling good feels!

Stress Less

Stress comes in all shapes and sizes and it's different for everyone. It can be hard for your obese clients to Stress Less when they are faced with so much more than mental and emotional stressors. Things that you may not think twice about like walking up the stairs in a public area, finding a seat on the bus and shopping with friends are physical stressors your clients are facing everyday.

You may pull in some of their favorite small indulgences from the Nurture Yourself pillar here to help them manage stress, with activities like meditating, listening to a podcast or soothing music, taking 10 deep breaths when they feel stressed and taking a warm bath or shower. Identify what causes stress for your clients and talk them through it. Sometimes even just identifying the things that are causing major stress can take those stress levels down.

Sweat Often

Even though you have so many workout and exercise tricks up your sleeve to really get the blood flowing, your obese clients may not be ready for this intensity - from a physical standpoint and from a health standpoint. Meet your clients where they are at with reasonable goals to Sweat Often. This may be a 5-minute walk each day or climbing 1 flight of stairs. Be sensitive and start small.

Research shows that you burn 33% more calories standing than you do sitting, so a small goal for your client could simply be to stand more throughout the day. Walk them through their day and have them identify where they can stand more - maybe it's while on the phone at work, during commercial breaks or while doing laundry. Think through actionable steps they can take to make standing and moving more doable. Setting up a time to meet with their friend to walk and even smaller tasks like laying out their workout clothes the night before and putting together a motivating playlist to listen to can help them stay accountable with their goals.

Build on these small changes and praise your client for all their hard work. Supporting them in every small effort and success helps motivate them to keep at their long term goal.

Eat Empowered

Of course food is part of this wellness equation to help your obese clients live a more Nutritious Life. You're the expert here, and they're looking to you to help modify their eating habits and help them to Eat Empowered. Just as you talked through your clients' days to identify stressors and moments to Sweat Often, you'll want to learn about the food they're eating every day. Ask questions to get more details about the what, where, when and why of their food choices and honor them while building more healthful habits such as adding in more greens. Swap snacks and beverages for more nutrient dense options. Encourage and empower them to try new foods when they are ready to get more creative.

Work with your clients to build recommendations that they prefer that are still delicious and healthy, to make it easier for them to make these changes. Allow them to embrace indulgences where you see fit and make changes that are comprehensive, understandable and most importantly doable.

Remember, the trick is to start small and begin with what is easiest, and meet your client where they're at. Have confidence in your clients that they will succeed and be patient as they make small steps towards their ultimate goal. It should be fun and rewarding for both of you as your client progresses towards a more Nutritious Life!