

## HEALTHY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT SCRIPT

### SESSION 1:

#### **I. Introduction (5 min)**

*LEADER: Thanks for joining us. All of you decided to participate in these groups because of your body image concerns – an issue very common among girls/women.*

Introduce self and co-facilitator.

*This intervention is based on a study performed at UT suggesting that a class that helped women/girls develop a lasting healthy life-style resulted in marked improvements in body acceptance, as well as attainment of a healthier weight.*

*Although these initial results were promising, this program has not been evaluated in a large-scale study. Our goal is to provide such a definitive test for this intervention.*

*Let's get to know each other better. Can each of you tell us your name, where you're from and something unique about you? Facilitator starts [use to learn peoples' names]*

#### **II. Voluntary commitment and overview (5 min)**

*LEADER: The central idea behind this intervention is that we can fine-tune our energy balance on a permanent basis and develop a better relationship to food and body image. The goal is to reach a homeostasis that will permit you to stop obsessing about food and dieting, and achieve a lasting healthy weight. We will use proven behavioral principles to achieve this aim because many people find it difficult to change these types of behavior. This make you feel better about your body and result in improved health.*

*This intervention is also based on the idea that by committing to these healthy lifestyle changes, you gain greater control over body shape, which should also make you feel better about your body.*

*Finally, we deliver this intervention in a group format so that you can provide support for each other regarding body image issues – something that is very important.*

*Are you willing to do this? Get public commitment.*

*During the three sessions we will:*

- 1. Differentiate the healthy-ideal from the thin-ideal*
- 2. Introduce the concept of reaching an energy balance homeostasis*
- 3. Work with each of you to fine-tune your energy balance so you can achieve body satisfaction and lasting weight control.*

*Experience indicates that people get the most out of these groups if they attend all three meetings, participate verbally, and complete all of the between meeting exercises. Can you commit to this? Get public commitment.*

*We would also like to ask that everything that is said in these groups stays confidential.*

### III. The Healthy-Ideal (10 mins)

*First, we would like to make a distinction between the thin-ideal and the healthy-ideal.*

*What are the characteristics of the ultra-slender ideal espoused by the fashion industry?*  
Extremely thin. Spend no more than a min on this to avoid thin-ideal bashing.

*How does this contrast to what might be termed the healthy ideal?*

Healthy ideal is a reasonably slender body, but one that has muscles and fat as well. Each is natural and serves important functions.

*Many women have body image concerns that are rooted in a pursuit of the thin-ideal, which is unrealistic and is not even healthy.*

*What are some of the advantages of aspiring to a healthy-ideal? Spend most time here.*

- Health benefits (longer life, less illness [e.g., cancer], fewer injuries; higher quality of life, easier to get pregnant, fewer birth complications)
- Social benefits (more social acceptance, easier to find dates, higher marriage rates, easier to get jobs, higher salaries, higher social class)
- Emotional benefits (less obsessions about weight and eating, lower rates of depression, higher self-esteem and self-confidence, feeling better in general, more energy, greater productivity)

### IV. Attaining the Healthy Ideal (10 mins)

*Many people find it difficult to reach the healthy ideal because of an incomplete understanding of the causes of weight gain and because of a lack of tools to help implement lasting behavior change. An improved understanding of these factors will help you achieve a healthier weight, which will give you more energy, self-confidence, and greater body acceptance. This group will help you learn to make these behavioral changes, and will also provide a source of support.*

#### A. Energy Balance Equation

*Body weight is a direct function of caloric intake and output. If you consume more calories than you use, you gain weight, if you consume less than you use, you lose weight. If you want to maintain weight, you need to balance this equation. Thus, healthy weight attainment is simply a function of turning down your intake of the highest fat foods and turning up your caloric expenditure. This is the premise of this intervention and we will focus on how to fine-tune your energy balance. You simply need to consume enough calories to meet your needs and not more.*

*Genetic influences are immutable and therefore are something you simply have to work with. They play a limited role – behavior is far more important determinant of weight change (much of the early research was based on incorrect assumptions). You simply must find an intake and output balance that helps you attain a healthy weight given your metabolic parameters.*

*Thus, we'll spend time examining your caloric intake and output, with the goal of making slight alterations that will allow you to reach and maintain a healthy body weight.*

*It is important to note that these changes will be individualized to each of you. Some of you will need to reduce your consumption of high fat foods, others will need to increase their intake of fruits and*

vegetables, and others may be asked to increase their consumption of high energy foods, such as complex carbohydrates.

## B. Energy homeostasis versus dieting

*It's important to note that what we are not suggesting you diet. Dieting refers to time-limited constraints on caloric intake intended to counteract the effects of overeating. Many diets involve deprivation and people typically go "on" and "off" diets. Although diets are popular, most people regain the lost weight.*

*In contrast, we suggest you make permanent alterations to your caloric intake and output that you maintain for the rest of your life. Thus, this program of healthy weight management is a lifestyle commitment. This involves making healthy habits a part of day-to-day life. Can you commit to this lifestyle approach?*

*By definition the energy balance approach ensures that you are not deprived, rather you are simply trying to find a more appropriate level of caloric intake. Note that you will lose weight even if you eat the number of calories that you need to maintain a healthy body size. This is because you need more energy to keep an overweight body warm and innervated with blood.*

## V. Input (10 min)

*What is a calorie?*

- *The calorie is a measure of energy - refers to both the energy potential in a food and how much energy your body takes to function. (one calorie is the energy needed to raise the temperature of one gram of water one degree centigrade)*
- *When your basic energy requirements are met, the body stores excess calories as fat.*

*What are some ways to decrease high calorie intake?*

- *Replace high calorie foods with low calorie alternatives (i.e. skim vs. whole or 2% milk, margarine vs. butter, mustard or low-fat mayonnaise vs. regular, etc.). But don't use this as an opportunity to eat more just because it is lower fat!*
- *Fill up on low calorie foods (i.e. drink water with a meal, increase amount of vegetables with meals, etc.)*
- *Eat more frequent, smaller meals throughout the day so there are no periods of intense hunger that may drive overeating - frequency of eating predicts decreased weight gain.*
- *Ask parents/room mates not to buy unhealthy high-fat/sugar foods*
- *Reduce alcohol consumption*

*Because intake is important we need to look at what we eat and determine what needs to be reduced or eliminated to balance your energy intake. Think about the most calorically dense parts of your diet. Most people don't like to do this or even to admit eating high-fat foods.*

*Can each of you name what you suspect is the highest fat part of your weekly diet? I'll start, so we are all disclosing. I enjoy eating ... (pick your own examples).*

*Can each of you mention two high-fat items in your diet and how you can change your intake over the next week to make your diet healthier? Make sure to get public commitment.*

*For your first homework assignment, we're asking you to record what you eat over a 24-hour period for 2 weekdays and one weekend day so that we can have a better idea about what might be best to omit or*

*reduce in your diet. We are not calling for radical alterations in your diets – we only want to fine-tune your energy balance. For example, we may suggest that you substitute frozen yogurt for ice cream.*

*It's important to distinguish deprivation from balanced. If you have slowly been gaining weight over time you have been taking in an excess of calories and you should balance the energy equation. This is different than being deprived, which is eating less than your body needs. What we are asking you to do is cut out excess intake.*

## **VI. Output (10 min)**

*The other side of the energy equation is output – exercise. Exercise can involve lifestyle behaviors, such as biking to school/work and using the stairs. Exercise can also involve more formal exercise such as running, playing volleyball, or aerobics. Not only does regular exercise help balance the energy equation by using more calories, but it also increases your metabolism.*

*Changes in physical activity will also be individualized to each of you. Some will be asked to begin exercising on a regular basis, whereas others may be asked to cross-train to minimize the risk of injury, and others may be encouraged to decrease their overall exercise level if it is excessive.*

*Can each of you commit to one increase in your physical activity that you can maintain? It may be as simple as taking the dog for a 20 min walk each day or may be more ambitious such as jogging around Town Lake every other day.*

*What will each of you do to turn up your output? Go around the room getting one alternation from each participant. Get public commitment.*

*For your second homework assignment we would like you to keep an exercise log. Please write down every time you exercise for at least 20 min and record the other lifestyle behaviors that you engaged in regularly.*

*This is an individually tailored program – it all comes down to what will work for you. On this note, it is important to consider your weight gain trajectory of your current input/output level. If you are slowly inching up the scale, only slight alterations are necessary. If you are gaining weight rapidly, more intense alterations are required.*

*It is important to point out that the only way that this approach will work is if you are candid about your eating and exercise. There is clear evidence that some people vastly under-report caloric intake and over-report exercise levels.*

## **VII. Homework (2 minutes)**

*Please keep a food record for 2 weekdays and 1 weekend day. Record everything you eat and provide a general index of portion size, as well as the general time of day each was eaten. Try to record after every eating episode, because we forget otherwise. Please bring these forms next time because we will need them to make the tailored alterations to your intake.*

*Hand out Food Record Form (exercise #1).*

*For your second homework assignment we would like you to keep an exercise log. Please write down every time you exercise for at least 20 min and record the other lifestyle behaviors in which you engaged. Please bring these forms to our next session because we will need them to make the tailored alterations to your output.*

*Hand out Exercise Record Form (exercise #2).*

**VIII. Survey (8 minutes)**

*Now we will take a few minutes to fill out a brief survey. You will be completing a number of brief assessments throughout the study. This is important for us to determine how the program is working and how to improve it further. Please complete it carefully.*

Remind them that they need to attend each session and complete all assessments in order to get the full \$150 compensation. Attendance is very important.

Handout survey

Get email addresses and phone numbers as people hand in their surveys, so that you can remind people about the homework and importance of attending each group.

*Thanks again for coming tonight. We are looking forward to seeing you next week.*

## **SESSION 2:**

### **I. Motivational component (5 min)**

*Last week we spoke of the benefits of achieving the healthy-ideal. I want to reiterate these benefits before we begin. Can any of you remember what they were?*

- Health benefits (longer life, less illness [e.g., cancer], fewer injuries; higher quality of life, easier to get pregnant, fewer birth complications)
- Social benefits (more acceptance, higher marriage rates, easier to get jobs, higher salaries, higher social class)
- Emotional benefits (less obsessions about weight and eating, lower rates of depression, greater self-confidence, feeling better in general, more energy, greater productivity)

*Can each of you voice the most important benefit of achieving the healthy-ideal for you?*

*Again, this intervention is based on the following ideas:*

- 1. Using behavioral techniques to fine tune our energy balance through healthy lifestyle changes will result in better body acceptance. These changes will be individual in nature.*
- 2. Committing to these healthy lifestyle changes will make you feel more in control of your body, which will make you feel better about it.*
- 3. The group will serve as an important source of support for each of you.*

### **II. Intake alterations (10 min)**

*Last week we discussed the importance of making slight decreases in your caloric intake to achieve a better balance between caloric input and output.*

*Where you able to make that one adjustment to your intake? Did you encounter any problems?*

Go around the room, trouble shoot as necessary.

Let group members provide input for each other!

Apply principles of behavior modification when possible. For example, make it easier on yourself by not purchasing the high fat food you wanted to cut out of your diet. Make sure lower fat snack foods such as pretzels are on hand so you reach for them instead.

*I wanted to handout this Health Eating Tips sheet that may help you think of ways to further alter your energy intake.*

Handout "Usual Suspects" sheet

### **A. Review of Food Record (10 min)**

*We also asked you to keep a food record so that we can see how we might best balance your energy equation. Based on your food records, is there a second change you can make to so that your diet is healthier? Get public commitment.*

*We want to reiterate that you should not go long periods without eating. Such caloric deprivation often precipitates overeating and is thus self-defeating.*

*We also want to encourage you to focus on shape rather than weight. Weight is just a proxy measure of shape and one that does not differentiate increases in muscle (which weighs more) from increases in fat. You may be moving towards a healthy ideal but show slight increases in weight. Use your clothes to provide you with feedback instead.*

*It is also important to note that you should not engage in radical weight control efforts, such as vomiting or laxative use. These behaviors are not effective in producing weight loss, can cause medical problems, and have been found to predict onset of obesity.*

### **III. Output alterations (10 min)**

*Last week we also talked about the importance of increasing your exercise level to help you achieve a better balance between your intake and output.*

*Where you able to make that one adjustment to your exercise? Did you encounter any problems?*

Go around the room, trouble shoot as necessary.

Let group members provide input for each other!

Apply principles of behavior modification when possible. For example, make exercise a social event – take a walk around Town Lake with a friend. See if you can get a roommate to commit to doing this on a regular basis with you. Make enjoyed activities contingent on exercise (e.g., you can only watch your favorite TV show if you exercised that day).

*I want to talk a little more about exercise. What are some of the benefits of exercise?*

- heart and lung endurance (H)
- muscular strength and endurance (H)
- increased flexibility (H)
- decreased heart rate and blood pressure (H)
- improved circulation (H)
- decreased risk of osteoporosis (H)
- burns calories
- increases metabolic rate
  
- stress management (E)
- generally increased feeling of well-being (E)
- hormone boost which can improve mood (E)
  
- opportunities to meet people (at the gym, jogging partner) (S)

*What are some possible ways for you to incorporate regular exercise into your schedule?*

- ride a bike to campus vs. driving
- make regular plans to go to the gym at specific times and stick to it
- get an exercise partner to help get you going and keep you motivated
- don't view exercise as having to be done in one big chunk; can split it up into smaller pieces

*I wanted to handout this Exercise Tips sheet that may help you think of ways to further alter your energy output. Hand out "Exercise Tips"*

**A. Exercise Record (10 min)**

*We also asked you to keep an exercise log so that we can take a closer look at your output to see how we might best help balance your energy equation. Can each of you think of one way to further improve exercise plan? Try to get participants to make the suggestions, but leader can do it if necessary. Get public commitment.*

**IV. Homework (3 minutes)**

*The first homework assignment for next week is to list 10 reasons to pursue the healthy ideal that are particularly meaningful to you.*

Hand out Top 10 Reasons to Pursue Healthy-Ideal (exercise #3).

*We would also like to ask you to keep a food and exercise record over the next week – like you did last week. Be sure to note barriers to making healthy changes.*

Hand out Food Record Form II (exercise #4).

Hand out Exercise Record Form II (exercise #5).

**V. Conclusion (2 min)**

*Next meeting, we will continue to develop out tailored healthy lifestyle development plan intended to balance your energy equation. We will also discuss how best to respond to future barriers to maintaining this healthy lifestyle that we can anticipate.*

**VI. Survey (10 min)**

*Now we will take a few minutes to fill out another brief survey. Again, these surveys are necessary for us to assess how the program is working and how we can further improve it.*

Also reiterate the need to attend each session and complete all assessments in order to get the full \$150 compensation for completing the surveys. Attendance is very important.

Hand out survey.

Get email addresses and phone numbers you are missing.

*Thanks again for coming tonight. We are looking forward to seeing you next week.*

## **SESSION 3:**

### **I. Motivational component (10 min)**

*We have discussed the benefits of attaining a healthy ideal, which includes longer life, decreased injury and illness, greater social acceptance, improved employment options, higher salary, elevated marriage rates, and greater self-confidence.*

*Are people willing to read the top two personal reasons for pursuing the healthy ideal that they generated for homework assignment?*

*Have people begun to notice any improvements in your own life yet? Do you feel better about your relationship with food and your body? Do you feel more self-assured? Do you feel better about your bodies?*

Review principles of intervention detailed in the session two script if you think they are not clear to the group.

### **II. Improvements to Dietary Intake (15 min)**

*Last week we asked you to make a second improvement to your dietary intake.*

*Where you able to make those changes? Did you encounter any problems?*

Go around the room, trouble shoot as necessary.

*Are there additional ways that people can make their diet healthier? Consult your food record for ideas. And are you willing to continue these changes in intake for the next 6 months?*

### **III. Output alterations (15 min)**

*Last week we also talked about improving your exercise habits to help you achieve a better balance between your intake and output.*

*Where you able to make those changes to your exercise? Did you encounter any problems?*

Go around the room, trouble shoot as necessary.

*Are there additional ways that people can make their exercise habits healthier? Consult your exercise record for ideas. And are you willing to continue these changes in intake for the next 6 months? If you don't see a benefit by then, you can desist, but I suspect you will be very happy with the changes!*

### **IV. Relapse prevention (10 min)**

*Can people anticipate things that will make it difficult to continue these healthy behaviors? Consider how best healthy lifestyle changes have stopped for clues. More importantly, how are you going to respond to these challenges? Go around the room so that everyone talks.*

*We should note that sometimes people “slip” and eat something high in fat or blow-off a planned workout. Often people use this as an excuse to go back to their old unhealthy lifestyle. Don’t do it. Stay committed to a healthy lifestyle and realize that sometimes you will slip – but the important this is to view these slips as opportunities to learn how not slip next time.*

## **V. What were the reasons you signed up for this class? (10 min)**

*As we come to the end of our sessions, it may be helpful to share the reasons you were interested in this group and get some input from the group.*

Have group members share as much as they are comfortable with. Lead this discussion into ways that they can further improve their diet and exercise to approximate their goals.

## **VI. Exit Homework**

*We would like to ask you to email us in 1-week to tell us how your lifestyle alteration is going. Email them to remind them as necessary.*

*Thank you very much for participating in this group. I have been very impressed with your thoughtful comments and participation.*

## **VI. Survey (10 mins)**

*Now we will take a few minutes to fill out another brief survey. Again, these surveys are necessary for us to assess how the program is working and how we can further improve it.*

Again, they need to complete all assessments in order to get the full \$150 compensation.

Handout survey

Get emails and phone numbers you are missing. Ask people if they are planning on moving in the next 3 months – if so, get a permanent address.

*Once again, thanks again for participating in this group.*

*We will be contacting you via email and phone in three months to complete the next assessment.*

[Hand out survey.]

Make sure that all participants have completed a Participant Contact sheet and that you have all the participants’ current addresses, phone numbers, and emails in order to contact them, as well as the addresses and phone numbers of 2 people who will always know where they are.