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## Healthy Living

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### How to Banish the Scale Forever -- And Still Get Skinny!

Posted by [Jennifer L. Nelson](#) on November 5, 2010 at 8:02 AM

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The holidays are upon us, and if you're anything like me, you're already dreaming of the **ideal weight** you'd like to be when you welcome family into your home, embark on your holiday travels, or hit the town on New Year's Eve.

It's the time of year when we reunite with relatives who don't see us every day, and who are thus more likely to notice a little extra muffin on a muffin top ... and aren't afraid to say so. In front of everyone.

While it's great to **set weight loss goals to keep yourself** on track amidst the plethora of pumpkin pie in the coming weeks, I implore you to **reconsider setting any that require you to lose** X number of pounds by Thanksgiving, to weigh X pounds by the first night of Hanukkah, or to wear a size X on board your New Year's cruise.

Better yet, **toss your scale out the window** and start setting other healthy lifestyle goals that have nothing to do with a three-digit number or a date on the calendar.

In my experience, **setting timed scale goals does nothing but monkey with your mojo**. Sometimes despite our best efforts, the scale just doesn't cooperate -- and there's nothing worse than failing to meet your own expectations. Take it from the person who planned to reach 100 pounds lost by my 24th birthday. And then by my 25th. Yet these 10 stubborn pounds are still clinging to my body for dear life, and I've had to find other sources of motivation to keep on keepin' on in the form of something I like to call NSVs: non-scale victories.

Setting concrete **goals can keep us focused, but if they're unrealistic** or -- worse -- unsafe, then they're a **recipe for disaster**. I've encountered many folks who announce they're going to lose 50 pounds in six months, or to be a certain weight in time for their high school reunion ... in six weeks. Then when they don't meet their goal, they get discouraged and stop trying. I, too, have done it over and over again, only to feel like a failure and ultimately quit until my next round of dieting: I wanted to wear a single-digit size to my senior prom (didn't happen), shed 50 pounds before my European study abroad trip (not even close), and weigh less than 200 pounds for my college graduation (nope).

I've **been a victim of scale obsession** for far too many years, and the fact that I've lost weight on weeks where I've eaten nothing but take-out, but gained a pound on weeks where I spent hours with the elliptical and religiously counted my **Weight Watchers POINTS**, proves that the scale isn't always the best representation of our efforts. We can't always control what that stupid plastic box is going to tell us because it captures just one moment in time, and that moment can be affected by a long list of factors: what you ate the night before, the time of day, where you are in your menstrual cycle, the kind of pants you're wearing now, the temperature outdoors, the color of your nail polish ... you get the idea. But we *can* control what we eat, how often we exercise, and our attitude about the times when life gets in the way of our weight loss efforts.

So, now that your bathroom scale is shattered in the driveway (you did chuck it out the window like I asked, right?), I have a few suggestions for some other ways to continue your **journey towards a healthier lifestyle** and keep tabs on your success. I promise that once you stop agonizing over numbers and self-imposed deadlines, you'll tune into a whole host of your amazing accomplishments

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and NSVs.

**1. Pile on the exercise minutes.** Adding just 10 more minutes to your gym session or an extra mile to your afternoon jog. Vow to master the moves in your Zumba class, or wear a pedometer and try to take 10,000 steps per day. When you're ready, you can sign up for a 5K or invest in some personal training sessions to boost your fitness level even further. Most gyms are already rolling out their holiday promotions, so take advantage of them!

**2. Spend some time in front of the mirror.** Do your abs look tighter? Are those push-ups paying off? Is your face slimming down? When we're busy obsessing over a number on the scale and racing the clock, it's all too easy to miss the subtle changes to our bodies as we shed pounds. Embrace the new you by setting a slightly narcissistic goal: to take a few moments each week to stare at yourself in the mirror and recognize improvements to your appearance, even if it's just that your complexion is clearer from all that water you've been drinking. I, for one, was beyond thrilled when I saw my collar bones for the first time!

**3. Try a new healthy recipe each week.** There's nothing wrong with dining out, but these days you're probably spending less time at the drive-thru and more time in front of the stove. So give yourself kudos when the kids compliment your balsamic chicken or your husband -- hater of all things healthy -- devours every last bite. Set a goal to try one new healthy recipe each week, search for more complex creations, or to experiment with ways to turn your favorite dieting disasters (green bean casserole, anyone?) into healthier holiday fare with simple swaps and substitutions, like using low-fat dairy or doubling up on veggies.

**4. Don't underestimate the power of loose jeans.** I love seeing a smaller number on the scale as much as anyone, but is there anything more exciting than having to buy a belt to keep your pants up, or asking a tailor to take in your dress before a special occasion? When you hit the mall to start your holiday shopping this month, vow to spend 15 minutes in your favorite clothing store and revel in trying on smaller sizes. If you're not quite there yet, experiment with styles you usually assume will be unflattering. You might just surprise yourself -- even five or ten pounds can make a difference in how the latest trends fit your figure.

**5. Smile and say thank you.** You know those compliments you've been getting lately? The ones where friends and family openly ask if you're losing weight, and casual acquaintances stare at you and ask if you're wearing a new outfit or doing something different with your hair? Make it a goal not to squirm or turn five shades of red when a co-worker (or, heck, the Starbucks barista) tells you how slim you're looking lately. Believe it or not, it took me 40 pounds before people started commenting on my weight loss -- and if I spent a little less time feeling uncomfortable with all the attention, and a little more time channeling those compliments into motivation to look even better, who knows where I'd be now?

**6. Take frequent progress photos.** Sometimes it's difficult to physically see your own weight loss, so make the decision to start taking progress photos once a month or for every five or 10 pounds lost. It's incredibly empowering to check out my old photos from when I was down 20 pounds, or 50 pounds, and compare them to how I look today. How could you possibly be discouraged by lackluster scale results when you can actually see for yourself how far you've come? Ask your hubby or your kids to be your photographer if you don't have a self-timer on your camera, and strike a pose!

**7. Look for other measures of success.** Okay, okay, so technically your dress size and waist circumference are numbers. And this post promises to give you ideas for setting healthy living goals and recognizing your weight loss success without them. But I know from experience that even when the scale doesn't show significant losses for a few weeks, I've usually lost at least an inch or two around my waist, thighs, or arms, or I may even be ready to entertain the idea of smaller jeans. So break out that tape measure (proceed with caution, though -- it can be as addictive as the scale), or keep a pair of your "skinny" jeans in sight to try on from time to time. Better yet, take into consideration some other very important numbers next time you visit your doctor: even just a 10 percent decrease in body weight can translate to improvements in cholesterol and blood pressure readings, and help ward off future weight-related maladies.

**What are some ways you set goals and track your "NSVs" without setting foot on the scale?**

Image via [AlanCleaver/Flickr](#)

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I find that when we (my family and I) take the fifteen minutes or so to sit down and plan our dinners for the month, I'm saner, less stressed, and more apt to eat more healthy food. I can even say that some months, it's helped me lose a little (I'm at the beginning of that 100 lb battle). But knowing what's on the menu for the evening - even if it's the hot dogs or chicken nuggets requested by my little guy - allows me to sanely plan my eating for the rest of the day. On "junk-food nights" (which include dinners out - I assume the worst, then try to order the best), I go for more filling, lower calorie foods (grape nuts for breakfast, salad for lunch), than I might when we've got "big salad" or "grilled chicken" on the menu. Overall, it helps me balance out my calorie intake.

Also? It helps me plan ahead (less stress) and saves me money, which is always a bonus.

*PonyChaser*, Nov 5, 2010 at 10:00 AM



Great article, great tips!

I have one pair of goin'-out jeans that only love me when I'm at a certain size - otherwise they oink and laugh at me. I put them on twice a month, even if I'm not goin' out, just to keep myself honest. They tend to do a lot of laughing this time of year....

*hoticedcoffee*, Nov 5, 2010 at 11:09 AM



YES!!! Awesome. The scale is evil, and programs (cough - Weight Watchers - cough) that use it as the main measure of success are very problematic for women's emotional/mental well-being while trying to get down to a healthy weight. After all, they're all inter-related.

*MaressaSB*, Nov 5, 2010 at 12:14 PM



I agree with you, let me tell you some another amazing news. Last week, I find my favorite shop, in this shop, you can find huge selection of chanel belt (<http://www.bagsbeauty.com>), I believe you will also have interest.



I judge by the way my clothes fit me

**Carey2006** , Nov 6, 2010 at 11:53 AM



yepp I go by my clothes too. I get on the scale at work sometimes but dont have one at home

**ChEMOM** , Nov 6, 2010 at 10:10 PM



I try to sneak in as much exercise throughout the day as I can.I park farther away,if I am standing still at work I sway back and forth.I also substitute beans,mushrooms,ground chicken for alot of other less healthy things when cooking.So far I have lost quite a bit I think,because I havent weighed myself

**fryshannon34** , Nov 7, 2010 at 11:12 AM



Pretty much everything you've suggested are things I do....I don't have a scale in my house, though even after reading this, I still WANT one.

Looking at yourself in the mirror and taking "progress" photos is a huge bonus for those weeks the scale says you didn't lose anything...a lot of times, the redistribution of fat and muscle gained will give you a better picture VISUALLY of your progress than a scale.

Great post!

**mainmusicmaker** , Nov 8, 2010 at 5:20 AM



You have to set realistic goals for yourself. I measure myself in a few places so I still see the loss if it isn't on the scale.

**tazdvl** , Nov 26, 2010 at 10:47 AM

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