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**Feel Great, Lose Weight: Long  
term, simple habits for lasting  
and sustainable weight loss**

Made by Blinkist



These key insights in blinks were written by a team of experts at Blinkist. We screen the world of nonfiction to choose the very best books. Then, we read them deeply and transform them into this concise format that brings you the most inspiring ideas from the text.

Maybe these blinks will inspire you to dig deeper, or maybe they're enough to start you thinking and then on to something new. However you read blinks, we hope they help you become an even brighter you.

## What's in it for me? A guilt-free guide to losing weight.

You've cut out the extra carbs. You've banished fats. You've subjected yourself to grueling 6:00 a.m. workouts. In short, you've tried it all – but the weight remains, or it comes roaring back faster than you can shed it. Sound familiar? If so, and if you're ready for change, then you're in the right place.

You're about to discover why you tend to carry extra weight – reasons that you may not even be aware of. And they all point to the same conclusion: It's not your fault. Your body is just doing what it's designed for.

But it *is* possible to work with your biological systems to reset your health and lose weight. In these blinks, we'll explore the science behind weight loss. More importantly, you'll discover a path

to feeling great and living your life with more energy and ease.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- what car mechanics have to do with your health;
- that we burn as many calories as ancient hunter-gatherers; and
- why exercising too much could be working against you.



**The biological signals controlling our eating habits can sometimes get out of whack.**

If a car is running low on fuel, what happens? A light appears on the dashboard, indicating that it's time to refuel. If the driver ignores the light, the car will run out of gas – or electricity – and die. It's as simple as that.

The human body is similar. But, instead of gas or electricity, it needs food. And instead of displaying a low-fuel light, it feels hunger, signaling to you that it's time to eat.

Unfortunately, things can sometimes go awry under the hood. The body's signals can break down, telling us to eat when we don't need to or to store fat when it isn't necessary.

**The key message in this blink is: The biological signals controlling our eating**

## habits can sometimes get out of whack.

The first step on the path to sustainable weight loss is getting familiar with these signals. There are four in particular that we'll keep coming back to.

We've already touched on hunger, the first of these signals. So let's move to the second – the full signal, which tells us when to stop eating. People feel full when a chemical called leptin is released by fat cells. This tells the body that no more fuel is needed. You know how a gas pump will click off when your car's tank is full? It's sort of like that. If this signal malfunctions, then you'll be prone to overeating.

Third is the store-fat signal. This one is controlled by a hormone called insulin, which is released within moments of eating. The presence of insulin tells your body to stop breaking down fat, and instead burn the food you just consumed

– sort of like a hybrid car that changes seamlessly between gas and electricity.

And fourth, we have the weight point. This is the weight your brain believes is ideal for you. As soon as you start losing weight, your body will adjust things like metabolism and hunger to keep you at your weight point. Anyone carrying excess fat likely has the weight point set too high. It would be like a small car that thinks it has the fuel tank of an SUV.

All four of these signals can be reset. In the blinks that follow, you'll learn how to become the mechanic of your own health and work with the signals your body is sending.



**Real foods keep your signals working. Processed “blissy” foods can throw them off.**

Ah, donuts. Who doesn't love them, be they filled with cream or drizzled with chocolate? The moment your teeth sink in, you're carried down a river of decadent bliss. But then – uh-oh. The bliss begins to disappear, and soon you've returned to boring, sugar-free reality. So you reach for the box. Just *one* more.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with the occasional indulgence. But what you may not realize is that bliss-inducing foods like donuts can throw your body's signals into chaos.

**The key message here is: Real foods keep your signals working. Processed “blissy” foods can throw them off.**

So what exactly is *real* food? Well, a good rule of thumb is that real foods only have one ingredient. Things like fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and fish are all good examples. The less processed and the closer to their natural state, the better.

Try to make up as much of your diet as possible with these real foods. They curb hunger, and they help your body to automatically manage your weight. They also keep cravings for highly processed, unhealthy, blissy foods at bay.

What's a blissy food? Anything that's loaded with refined sugars and industrial oils. They tend to come in packages with long ingredient lists. We're talking chips, pastries, chocolate bars, and processed meats, to name a few. They're hard to resist – and the people manufacturing them know it.

See, your brain is wired to respond to particular properties in food, things like

fat, sugar, salt, and certain carbs. When you eat them, you're rewarded with a flood of dopamine, teaching you to eat them again. And again. And again.

Blissy foods make it harder to pay attention to leptin, the body's full signal. First, in order to break down the highly refined carbs and oils, your body releases lots of insulin, which in large doses will crowd out the leptin in your brain. Second, blissy foods throw your immune system into overdrive. In other words, they cause inflammation, which draws your body's attention away from the leptin signal.

It may feel like your body is working against you. But it's only trying to help! For most of human evolution, these calorie-dense blissy foods were hard to come by, and we needed to store enough energy to make it through winter. The problem is that, today, they're found everywhere.

But don't despair. In addition to eating lots of fresh, real foods, you're going to learn some other strategies to keep your signals under control.



**When we eat is often as important as what we eat.**

Meet Alan, a father and general practitioner. He struggled to lose weight for years. During the day, he'd be fine: a berry smoothie for breakfast, a healthy soup for lunch. But after a hectic day at the office, he'd give in to his hunger: helping himself to a second serving, indulging in dessert, and capping it off with chips in front of the TV.

The author suggested Alan eat more for breakfast and less for dinner. Reluctantly, Alan switched to an omelet in the morning and leftovers for lunch. And it worked! He found he was no longer starving at the dinner table, often joining his family with just a salad. Over several months, Alan watched the weight fall off.

**The key message in this blink is: *When we eat is often as important as what we eat.***

Alan's experience is backed by research. In one study, two groups were given the same amount of calories, but at different times. The first group ate most of their calories in the first half of the day, and lost significantly more weight than the group that ate their calories in the second half of the day.

So, if you want to keep the weight off, try eating most of your calories before 3:00 p.m. and then have a lighter dinner.

In addition to eating too late, eating too *frequently* can also hinder weight loss, even if you eat healthily. To understand why, let's return to that familiar hormone, insulin. You'll remember that insulin instructs the body to stop breaking down fat and instead turn to the fuel we've just consumed.

If you eat and snack constantly, your body will remain stuck in store-fat mode. That's why it's best to stick to three

meals per day and leave time in-between for your digestion to rest.

But if three meals per day doesn't work for you, there's another approach: time-restricted eating.

The average person consumes food over the course of 15 hours. But that doesn't give your body much rest from digestion. So try reducing your eating window to ten or even eight hours, say between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. If that sounds too difficult, even a 12-hour eating window has proved effective.

Our bodies process food differently at different times. Work with your body's daily rhythm by eating most of your calories earlier, in fewer meals, and in a shorter window of time each day.



**Focusing on movement rather than exercise will help you feel great and lose weight.**

Our hunter-gatherer ancestors moved a lot. Running, walking, bending, climbing: hunting game and foraging for berries involves tons of movement. All this moving around must have consumed a great deal of energy, right? Well, as it turns out, they burned roughly the same number of calories that we modern humans burn, even though they spent their days exercising and we tend to spend ours glued to a chair.

We've been led to believe that the key to weight loss is burning more calories than we consume. This calories-in/calories-out idea has helped fuel a fitness craze.

While it may hold some truth, it's also overly simplistic and doesn't take into account the complexity of the body's signals.

**The key message in this blink is: Focusing on movement rather than exercise will help you feel great and lose weight.**

So how did those early humans manage to burn so few calories despite all their movement? It comes back to the weight-point signal. As we know, when it's set correctly, the body adjusts how much energy it burns and stores to keep you at a healthy weight.

Consider something scientists call *non-exercise activity thermogenesis*, or NEAT. If your body thinks you've taken on too many calories, it'll start fidgeting or toe-tapping to burn excess energy. You likely don't even realize it's happening.

Your body uses similar strategies to compensate after a grueling workout, like making you tired and slow, or ramping up the hunger signal. Prolonged exercise can also increase production of the stress hormone, cortisol. In this state, your body thinks it needs to hold

onto fuel in anticipation of hard times, so it dials up the store-fat signal.

It may be time to ditch those 6:00 a.m. workouts. Instead, focus on movement. Movement is fundamental to being human; it should make you feel good. And it's also a fine substitute for grueling exercise. Here are a few ideas for incorporating movement into your day:

Add it to activities you already do. For example, walk everywhere, when possible. Build movement into your commute by getting off the bus a few stops early, or parking a few blocks from the office. Walking can also be relaxing. Aim for 10,000 steps per day.

You can also keep a few weights in the kitchen and do some simple lifts while your coffee brews. Most importantly, make it fun. Find activities you enjoy, like dancing in the living room to your favorite tunes.



## **Good sleep is essential for losing weight.**

Your alarm goes off at 6:30 a.m. and you drag yourself out of bed. As you shuffle through your morning, you feel groggy and half-awake. You meant to go to sleep earlier last night but found yourself scrolling through social media before realizing how late it got.

Sound familiar? We all know we should get more sleep, but it's hard to prioritize in our busy lives. For many, those few hours before bed is the only me-time available. But insufficient sleep makes it much harder to lose weight.

**The key message in this blink is: Good sleep is essential for losing weight.**

The science is impressively clear that sleep deprivation makes weight gain much more likely. One study found that people eat about 300 extra calories the day after a terrible night's sleep. By now,

you can probably guess it has something to do with your biological signals.

In addition to making you crave blissy foods, sleep deprivation decreases your ability to burn fat and ramps up the stress hormone cortisol. This, in turn, sets off the store-fat signal. But it gets worse. If you diet while sleep deprived, up to 70 percent of the weight you shed will come from muscle rather than fat.

If you've been in a constant battle with your weight, sleep should be one of the first things to look at. Start by trying to get at least seven or eight hours of shut-eye each night, and maintain a consistent bedtime.

You may also want to cut the coffee and alcohol. Caffeine lingers in your system long after you've consumed it. That 3:00 p.m. latte? Half its caffeine will still be with you at 9:00 p.m. And despite alcohol's sedating properties, it actually

interferes with your brainwaves,  
decreasing your sleep quality.

But one of the biggest culprits is light. Your body was designed to take its cue from the sun. As it sets in the evening, a hormone called melatonin tells your body to start winding down. But today we get 10,000 times more light at night than someone did living in the 1800s. No wonder our sleep cycles are out of whack. Especially bad are the blue wavelengths that electronics emit.

So don't undo all your hard work by sacrificing a good night's sleep. Instead, scroll less and snooze more.



**Stress and emotions are common causes of overeating.**

Emily was in her mid-thirties and feeling particularly worthless after years of dieting without success. She'd recently moved to a new city for a job, which she was finding stressful. Far from family and friends, Emily spent her evenings in the company of pizza and chocolate bars.

Emily's story is common. When feeling down, we often turn to blissy foods – not because our bodies are energy-starved, but because we're love-starved. We're not after nourishment; we're after dopamine.

**The key message in this blink is: Stress and emotions are common causes of overeating.**

The connection between emotions and eating is highlighted in an incredible study by Dr. Vincent Felitti. It

demonstrated a strong correlation between obesity and adverse childhood experiences, showing that many people learn to seek emotional security from food, starting as early as childhood.

And, more often than not, struggling with weight carries the extra emotional baggage of shame and low self-esteem. But remember: You're not defined by your body shape. No one says, "I am cancer." So why is it so common to say, "I am fat"?

A simple but effective technique to break the shame is to say three kind things about yourself in the mirror each morning, like "I'm a good person," "I care for others," and "I deserve the best in life."

But no matter how successful you are in learning to feel good about yourself, there's still the stress and pressures of life. And it can take a toll on your weight.

See, your body operates in two settings: an action state that gets your body ready for challenges, and a rest state for normal life. In action mode, your heart pumps hard, and your brain goes into overdrive.

In your busy, high-pressured life, you spend way more time in the action state than you were designed to. And as you've already seen, it turns your store-fat signal to high. One study from 2019 found that when we're stressed out, we gain more weight from the same high-calorie foods than when we're not stressed.

In addition, research has found that almost half of us eat too many calories when we're stressed. That's because we get caught in the cycle of trigger-eat-reward, which is very similar to the dopamine cycle of blissy foods.

That's one reason why it's so important to eat in a rest state, which we'll explore in the next blink.



**Changing how you eat can help you lose weight, and improve your relationship with food.**

When you think of someone in Paris enjoying her lunch, what image comes to mind? Maybe she's seated on a green lawn with friends. There's definitely some Camembert and a crusty baguette – possibly a bottle of wine as well.

French cuisine is some of the world's finest. Yet, despite all the cheese and cream sauce, the French tend to be much thinner than their American counterparts. It's puzzled weight-loss scientists for a long time. While the French paradox is far from solved, it could have something to do with that image of the Paris picnic – that is, with *how* they eat.

**The key message in this blink is:  
Changing how you eat can help you lose**

**weight, and improve your relationship with food.**

Let's face it, modern eating practices leave much to be desired. Do you ever eat your meals in front of a screen? Or take lunch at your desk while continuing to work?

All this distraction can actually be harmful. You're likely to eat faster and consume more food when you're preoccupied. And if your focus is elsewhere, you may not hear your body saying it's full. On the other hand, eating slowly and chewing gives the full signal time to kick in. As an added bonus, real foods like fruit, vegetables, and meat tend to take longer to eat.

The Japanese have a wonderful custom called *hara hachi bu*, which essentially means eating until you're about 80 percent full. Of course, it's hard to be exact, but that's the point. There are many states between starving and

stuffed, and it takes practice to differentiate them.

The importance of mindful eating really can't be overstated. So, for the sake of your health, put the screens aside. Eat away from where you work, ideally at a table or in a space you find peaceful. Then take the time to notice every bite.

And whenever possible, eat with others. Sadly, one study found that 50 percent of meals in the United Kingdom were eaten alone. Connecting to each other over a meal isn't only relaxing; it can do wonders for your mental health and relationships.

So far in these blinks, you've learned what, when, why, and how to eat, in order to reset your body's biological signals. In the next blink, you'll find out how to put it all together to design a weight-loss plan that's best suited to you.



## Design a sustainable weight-loss plan that works for you and your body.

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to losing weight. It's important to pick the tools and strategies that resonate most with you. It takes practice to fine-tune your body's signals. But, in time, you can become the mechanic of your own health.

**The key message in this blink is: Design a sustainable weight-loss plan that works for you and your body.**

Here are some ideas to get you started:

First, consider these three core foundations, not only for weight loss but also lifelong health.

**Eat real food:** Think one-ingredient foods like fruit, vegetables, legumes, grains, and fish. Real foods keep your body's signals in balance without leaving you hungry.

**Prioritize sleep:** A poor night's sleep makes you hungrier and crave blissy foods. It also throws your signals into chaos.

**Always choose to walk:** It's a fundamental movement for the body and it just feels good. Incorporate walking into daily routines, like your commute or running errands.

Now let's look at three daily habits you can put into practice right away. The goal is to make them habitual, like brushing your teeth.

**Lift something:** Five minutes each day is enough. Keep weights in your kitchen and make lifting part of your morning routine. Try simple exercises like bicep curls.

**Connect with another human:** It could be as simple as a nice conversation with a coworker at lunch, or a phone call to a friend at night.

## **Make time to reflect on your progress:**

Find a few minutes to ask yourself what went well today. And to reflect on what you can learn and change going forward.

These final three boosters aren't essential to focus on right away. But they're worth experimenting with once you're ready.

**Emotions and stress:** Working through the underlying causes of excess weight may not be easy, but it's one of the best things you can do to improve your health.

**Food timing:** Eat earlier in the day, and limit your snacking. Also, try eating within a 12-hour window, and then see if you can get it down to ten or even eight hours.

**Paying attention:** If you take the time to notice your food, you'll slow down and hear your body's signals. Eat with others,

not devices, and really enjoy the experience.



## Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

If you're carrying extra weight, it's not your fault. Your body is doing exactly what it was designed to do: responding to its environment. It evolved to crave blissy foods, and today they're everywhere. But when all the signals are working, your body is incredibly good at regulating its energy needs. You can reset these signals if they go off-course by eating real foods, prioritizing sleep and movement, reducing stress, and changing your emotional relationship with food.

Actionable advice:

### **Feel, feed, and find.**

The next time you're hit with an intense craving, try this strategy. Just remember the three F's: feel, feed, and find. First,

take a moment to feel whatever you're feeling. Then grab a pen and paper and write down how food helps you feed that emotion. Lastly, find an alternative to food. For example, try a minute of intense activity, breathe deeply, drink a glass of water, or call a friend.

## **Got feedback?**

We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to [remember@blinkist.com](mailto:remember@blinkist.com) with *Feel Great, Lose Weight* as the subject line and share your thoughts!



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