

learning to say no

Mindless eating had sabotaged my efforts for years. Then I discovered the simple trick to retraining my brain. BY JENNIFER BARNETT

My evenings have always been pretty predictable: After putting our son to bed, my husband and I head to the couch, turn on the TV, and start snacking on cereal, chips, and crackers. I don't stop eating until the show is over—and I add hundreds of calories to my daily intake. According to Janice Taylor, my life coach, my nighttime noshing has become a conditioned behavior, or something I do without thinking. Fortunately, she says, just because I've gotten used to acting a certain way doesn't mean I can't change.

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Switching the channel

To break the automatic connection between snacking and the sofa, Janice said I needed to make a firm rule that prohibits eating anywhere but in the kitchen. She assured me that after a few weeks of reprogramming my brain, I'd stop getting the urge to swing by the cupboard on my way to the couch. Just like I'd never think to take cookies to the bathroom, it simply won't cross my mind to bring them into the living room.

To help cement my new plan, I wrote it down and read it over a few times. But then, a few nights later, I found myself settling in to watch *Glee* with some cottage cheese and fruit. My husband gently reminded me of my no-eating-in-the-

living-room resolution, so I hit pause on the DVR and returned to the kitchen. This wasn't going to be easy!

Janice told me that for some deeply ingrained behaviors, I'll need a more obvious visual cue. She suggested taping a piece of paper that says “no food zone” to the door leading out of the kitchen. It seemed silly, but since posting the sign, I haven't lapsed once. Seeing my vow helps me stay focused on my goal: to get slim and healthy.

Words to live by

Janice has shown me that by refusing to give myself wiggle room, I can be more in control of my actions. My success has even inspired me to make some other hard-and-fast rules, like saying no to treats at the office, not feasting on food right out of the bag, and leaving my son's leftovers alone. I can't change these habits overnight, but I know I've taken an important first step toward tackling them in the long run.

WEIGHING IN



Month 1
Height 5'7"
Weight 166 lbs.
Body fat 35.4%
VO₂ max 33.1 mL/kg/min.
Aerobic fitness good
Resting blood pressure 112/70 (normal)
Cholesterol 172 (normal)



Month 3
Weight 151 lbs.
Pounds lost 15
Body fat 30.2%
Body fat lost 5.2%

STAY TUNED

Next month Jennifer learns how to eat less all day long.

*VO₂ max testing performed at Sport & Spine Rehab in Fairfax, Virginia. For more info, go to sportandspinerehab.com.

KATE REEDER: HAIR AND MAKEUP; KATHY ARAGONY: ARTISTS BY TIMOTHY PRIANO FOR MAKE UP FOR EVER



MONTH 4

Weight 143 lbs.
Pounds lost 23
Body fat 29.6%
Body fat lost 5.8%
VO₂ max* 31 mL/kg/min.
Aerobic fitness fair
Resting blood pressure 108/62 (normal)
Cholesterol 193 (normal)

online bonus! Find out how well Jennifer stuck to her new rules at shape.com/weightlossdiary.