



To Lose Weight Successfully - Hang Your Husband on a Clothesline

Attention: Women Losing Weight, with Men in Their Lives

OK. So you don't have a clothesline. But your mother did, so you know what I'm talking about.

Perhaps the man (or partner) in your life shouldn't really be hung on a clothesline. But let me explain the sentiment I hear so often...

"Men don't get it."

Men don't get it

I hear that repeatedly, in various forms and sizes, but it is a recurring theme. "Men don't get it."

Perhaps it's not their fault. It is rooted in their genes. Men gain weight slower than women. They lose it faster. And when they do get overweight, who cares? He certainly doesn't.

Women, on the other hand, have a rocky time with their weight. It goes on too easily. Comes off very reluctantly.



Photo: Courtesy Visual Photos

When you, a woman, get overweight, people notice. You notice. You care.

It is not a sex-balanced equation. We all know that, of course, but the reality can often hide resentments, jealousies, passive competition, and even sabotage. Some of it coming from you.

We love our mates, we really do. And we know they love us. But **when it comes to weight loss, things can get quietly difficult.**

Men and women really do see things differently when it comes to excess weight.

And it is rooted in more than biology. It is also driven by our still-dominant male culture. That makes it difficult for both men and women to steer towards a better way to handle weight control issues for women.

For women, attempting to lose a lot of weight can be an emotional and frustrating battle. Self esteem can be at stake. Not the kind of self esteem issues that boil on the surface of your everyday life. But, the quiet, inner doubts that silently grow. In time, it affects your outlook on your dreams and desires for the future.

It can also have a sexual context to it, as you try to work out intimacy issues for yourself – trying to give more, even as you feel less able to receive.

Intimacy issues

None of this happens overnight, of course. None of it dawns on you all at once. These are hidden, accumulating things that build over the course of years. Even when weight loss becomes successful, the emotional load can stay very much alive, and linger in unexpected ways.

When you and your partner gain weight together over the years, **it can get to the point when you both realize you need to do something about it** – again together. In the most supportive of ways, you can be a team to find solutions. But, if you are like most couples, that kind of teamwork breaks down all too quickly.

Because of the genetics of men's bodies, they can lose weight faster than women (usually at the rate of 2 pounds for men, to 1 pound for women – it's unfair, I know).

Men seemingly can do less and still lose weight faster. They can "cheat" on your new diet, and it still doesn't seem to affect their weight loss as much as it would you.

A partnership to lose weight?

That is where your "partnership" can break down. **Unless you are both fully aware of the differences in biology, your teamwork can falter...**

- He may feel you are not doing as much as him
- You feel it is an unfair accusation
- He thinks you must not be dedicated to really losing weight
- You feel it is not fair that somehow he is making better progress than you

So, you end up working at it harder than him.

He can start criticizing the things you eat. **You can start feeling those judgmental looks.** You start to eat differently than him to force your weight down faster – and you usually much less than him (or skipping meals) – to "catch-up" to his weight loss.

He may not see the thousands of things you need to do daily to keep the family running and the house chores done...things that impinge on your time for the kind of exercise, and stress release, and sleep your body needs to get in shape. He has more freedom to exercise as he wants.

Things can be difficult if you try to lose weight together. Unless you are both massively open to the differences your bodies require, it can drive a wedge between you.

Going it alone. Giving up. And Why I Started Writing about Weight Loss Motivation

If you are the only one dedicated to losing serious weight in the family unit, there is no free ride. The problems only multiply.

Years ago I owned a large suburban fitness center – the kind with lots of moms and kids, and where spandex and tights were not the stuff of club attire. This is the same club where the beginnings of the ScaleDown Weight Loss Education Program began (it's no longer available). ScaleDown was teamed up with some custom exercise programs put together by our resident exercise physiologist, and threw in a healthy dash of consultation with a registered dietitian. **It was the perfect, well-rounded weight loss program. Or so we thought.**

Several weeks into a group's use of the program, they were making great progress, individually and as a group. Six weeks in (half way through the 12 week program), we had one of those "congratulations for your success" type of mini-celebrations. We

wanted our "weight-losers" to be recognized for all their hard work and success. And that marked the beginning of their problems. Problems we had not anticipated – nor had they. (Which began my journey into observing, investigating, and writing about Weight Loss Motivation.)

By our tenth week (of the 12), many of our best "weight losers" had dropped out. What? **Our biggest losers had quit? It didn't make sense.**

Our best "weight losers" gave up free trips to Las Vegas

We were exceptionally puzzled because this group had a special incentive to make it to COMPLETING the entire 12 weeks. The "deal" we had made with them when they signed up was that if they made it to 12 weeks, no matter their progress, they would get three days and nights in Las Vegas. FREE. All they had to do was stick it out for 12 weeks.

The puzzle was **why would our best "weight losers" drop out so near their goal?** Give up on a much deserved, and needed, FREE vacation to Las Vegas?

Perplexed, we called the dropouts (remember, they were the more successful ones) and asked them to come in. Our concerns turned to dismay.

It took some prodding. And careful questioning. Had we done something wrong? Wasn't the program working for them any more? What could we do to make things better for them? Turned out, these were the wrong questions.

The answers to those pivotal questions, we found out, were not about the program itself, or what was happening at the club. **It was what was happening in their homes.**

These women had taken to eating different food than what they were preparing for their families. An added cost.

They were spending less time at home... not a lot less time, but less time nonetheless.

These women were spending more time at the club, working out and going to our classes. Plus taking time after class to just chat with the other women in the program. They were in this together and had found common bond with their classmates. **They were taking time to share life, and challenges, before going home.**

These women were reading more at night, to learn more about what they needed to do. And to just **catch-up on making a slice of time for themselves personally.**

All this – added costs – less time at home – taking time for themselves at home – was taking an increasing toll on their relationships. While they were losing weight, they were also losing inches. Their contours were just starting to resemble something closer to how they looked when they first got married.

Just the beginnings of **getting their figures back to normal was what had gotten them into trouble...** Accusations.

Love Daggers

"Are you out to get somebody else?" "Do you already have somebody else?" "**Why are you so happy?**" Then the cruelest words, meant as a dagger: "**You act like you are in love, again.**"

Wow. We didn't see any of that coming. Nor did they.

Faced with this stark dilemma, they chose their family (once again) over their individual needs. They quit the program – they quit scaling down.

Separately, not knowing other women were facing the same contradictions, they dropped out. **Alone. Confused. Hurt. They went back to the old food.** The lack of exercise. Less time for themselves. And more weight.

Hearing all this, overwhelmed emotionally, heartbroken, we all cried together.

A few years later I ran into Stella, one of the class dropouts, at the supermarket. She was a bit smaller than when she had started the program, but not anything like the slimmed-down woman I had last seen at the club that evening we all talked.

"I had no choice," she said. "I still don't." "**It was my marriage, or losing weight.**"

Men don't get it.

Hang your husband on a clothesline

It may not really be his fault. Genes and male-culture are on his side. But, some day (several months, more likely) you need a break from it all. You need some time-out.

With love and compassion for the confusion he may be experiencing, explain to him the new journey you are on. That you need his unlimited support. Tell him. **Then hang him on the proverbial clothesline for a month or two or three or four (or more),** as

you re-calibrate who you are – who you are becoming – and how you want to refocus your life for the future.

Just leave him hanging there in time-out while you work out what you are doing, and why, and how much, and when. He can take it. He's strong (or at least he says he is, right?) With care and sensitivity, let him know how important it is to you to keep him hanging there. And it's his job as a supportive spouse, as a person who loves you (and you love him, too) to just hang tight until you are ready. Got that?

There is more at stake here than weight. More at risk than a different dress size.

You – who you really believe you are – need to come out of the muddled mix of daily living. **You – a fully realized woman – need to emerge with your hopes and dreams and aspirations (and real personality) intact.** Because, in the end, successful weight loss is about you being you. Radiantly you. And projecting that to all the world. Most importantly of all, experiencing you, yourself.

Weight loss or not, isn't that what your life is about – about being why you were created, for you to live all of your unique roles in life? For us all. For him. For the kids...

Whether the man in your life gets it or not, you are losing weight... especially – most especially – **you are losing weight for you to live out your unique role in life.** Isn't that the most important thing...isn't that "real you" the keystone that ties ALL the other parts of your life together?

Now, go out and see if he is ready to come down. If he's not, keep him hanging there. Okay?



– Boyd Jentzsch

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