



BEYOND BELIEF NETWORK

Beyond Belief Network Guides: Losing Weight through Team Support

Getting in shape is a goal that many individuals often pledge to accomplish, but seldom follow through successfully. However, who says that anyone has to undergo such a project alone? [Research shows that individuals lose more weight as part of a team than on their own.](#) You can use this guide for group fitness event ideas and to encourage participants within and outside of your team.

Importance of Exercise and Healthy Eating

While weight loss is a good proxy indicator of healthy changes, the overall focus should be on promoting fitness and healthy eating habits in an individual's lifestyle. Everyone can benefit from both activities, regardless of age, background, or ability. It's never too late to make positive changes, especially when those changes can act as healthy preventative measures.

As the [President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition](#) notes, physical activity -30 minutes for adults and 60 minutes for children – coupled with a healthy diet can make a great difference in an individual's overall health. In addition to losing weight, regular exercise and eating nutritious foods can:

1. Reduce the risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and stroke.
2. Promote strong muscle, bone, and joint development.
3. Reduce fat.
4. Increase energy and self-esteem.
5. Increase your chance of living longer.

Tips to Get Started

1. Spring into action. When planning an event of this nature, timing is important. For the most responses, schedule it for late winter or early spring. Individuals trying to keep their New Year's resolution or getting ready for swimsuit season are motivated to engage in a weight loss event. Remember, this event will involve tracking weight loss progress over a period of months.
2. Figure it out. Choose a location for the weigh-in that's accessible. For the purposes of registration, decide whether your event will allow people participating to compete as individuals or as teams. If you allow the latter, figure out the team composition (number of members and designated leaders). Don't forget to include these details in your promotion materials.
3. Make it fair. When scoring weight loss, it's better to base it on the percentage of body weight loss rather than the number of pounds lost. Appoint someone who is not a participant as support personnel. Having this individual perform weigh-ins and record the results will avoid any accusations of cheating or team/individual favoritism.
4. We want you...to lose with us. If you decide to make this event open to members of your community, promotion will help draw participants. Use social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Meetup as an advertising tool. Post flyers at your local gym, community center, work, or other public place. Ask member to recruit people via word-of-mouth. Don't be afraid to be creative with your promotion.

5. What a prize! Use any fees you collect to purchase weekly, monthly, or end-of-the month prizes. Keep with the spirit of your event and make them fitness oriented. This can include giving away items of exercise gear, a gift certificate to a sporting goods store, a trip to a health spa, or a membership at a local fitness center. You can also pool the cash and present it to the winner(s). Although you can allow teams/individuals to participate in your event for free, if they want to be eligible for prizes request a reasonable fee.

Maintaining Support

Once your team has created the event's rules, found participants, and/or purchased prizes, don't forget to offer encouragement. This event not only teaches important weight-loss strategies, but also provides emotional support during a challenging process. Some ways in which to engage participants outside of weigh-ins include:

1. Signing up for charity events such as walk-a-thons, 5K, or 10K race.
2. Attending health lectures or programs as a group.
3. Hosting healthy potluck dinners or meeting at a restaurant that offers healthy food choices.

You can also create challenges that encourage a healthy competitive spirit. Potential suggestions include:

1. Seeing who can do the most push-ups or sit-ups.
2. Competing on a fitness course or relay race.
3. Offering recognition for the most hours exercised each week, the number of steps walked or the number of miles people have walked, run or biked.

Online Resources

These websites offer weight-loss competitions that a team can utilize for their event or on their own:

1. <http://www.dietbetter.com/>
2. <http://www.skinnyo.com/>
3. <https://www.healthywage.com/>

These websites track fitness goals via online and/or mobile application:

1. <http://www.mapmyfitness.com/>
2. <http://www.myfitnesspal.com/>
3. <http://www.sparkpeople.com/>
4. <http://www.oobafit.com/>