

## **Nothing Happens Until You Decide!**

Oprah Winfrey writes these words in a recent article from her Oprah Magazine. Her weight story is well known—yo-yoing up and down the scale until “she decided” that her health, size, and fitness level were not changes that she could only wish for. They were changes that she could MAKE HAPPEN by DECIDING to IDENTIFY what was holding her back (BARRIERS) and PLAN the actions that would move her forward.

### **But what does move us forward?**

Students are seen in our office for various health concerns. We routinely check a weight at these visits. Sometimes we notice that weight gain has occurred over time. There may be an elevated blood pressure, back or joint pain, shortness of breath, or lack of energy. Maybe they just have a general feeling that they are not fitting into their clothes or not feeling as healthy or as active as they once were.

One student had all of the listed concerns noted over numerous visits. She was nearing graduation. A review of her chart showed that a 60 pound weight gain had occurred—slowly over the four years, maybe without much notice by her until one day “she decided” that she could do things differently. A review of her daily food choices revealed a ‘junk food junkie’ resided in her body. Maybe the light bulb turned on—the desire to change had hit. Gone from her shopping list were chips, soda, cookies etc. She realized that if these foods were in the house, she would eat them. One barrier to successful weight loss had been found---progress was being made!

### **Have you tried to lose weight in the past? What prevented that from happening?**

Before you can begin change and understand your barriers, it is important to understand certain truths about calories, weight and metabolism.

**Weight is gained by taking in more calories (energy) than are used that day in activity.**

**A pound of body fat equals about 3,500 calories. So in order to lose 1 pound per week, you need to eliminate 500 calories per day.**

**A fad diet may take weight off temporarily, but it is unlikely that you will see permanent change this way. No matter what you eat, a calorie is a calorie. Food is meant to be fuel for our bodies to use as energy, repair cell damage and supply vitamins and minerals needed for the body to function.**

**Genetics and metabolism play a role in body weight, but physical activity and portion control are keys to taking in less and spending more in terms of calories.**

**Muscle tissue burns calories more efficiently than fat cells, so it makes sense to develop and strengthen the muscles we have to use the calories we take in rather than storing them in fat cells. It is easier to burn calories up during the day with activity than to pull them out of storage later.**

