

## 8 Lessons from "The Biggest Loser" Advice to Take Away from the Show

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They say that people love a winner. Well, I love losers! In October 2004, NBC introduced the reality show called "The Biggest Loser." Today it is a fan favorite. The show features individuals, couples, and — coming next season — families, who sign on to get fit and lose weight. These individuals are assigned to weight loss teams (and trainers) and then compete to see who can lose the most weight and the title, "The Biggest Loser." Although there's only one winner in the end, all participants change their bodies and their lives and become winners by becoming losers, too.

The transformations that occur on the show are nothing short of extraordinary. The biggest losers of all typically drop more than 100 pounds by the end of the 12-week period and many go on to lose even more. Physically, mentally, and emotionally, these folks morph into totally different people thanks to their newfound lifestyles. As a personal trainer myself, it gives me great satisfaction to see them succeed and to recapture a healthy body, mind and spirit. It is not just a physical transformation, but a mental one as well.

Perhaps one of the greatest things about the show is that it offers so many lessons, whether you're striving to live a healthier lifestyle, make exercise a habit, or reach a healthy weight. Here are eight realizations that I think are worth noting:

**1. You shouldn't go it alone.** Do you think that the contestants would be as successful if they went at it alone? In season five, for example, the Blue Team was a serious force to be reckoned with. Roger, Mark, Jay, and Dan seemed to never lose a challenge or a weigh-in. Did you notice how they supported and encouraged each other to push harder, work out longer, and stick to their diets? The support and camaraderie they exhibited definitely helped them succeed as often as they did.

Lesson: There is strength in numbers. Doing everything by yourself can be lonely and discouraging. But having a buddy — or a team of supporters — can help you to stick to it when the going gets tough. Instead of just going solo on the treadmill or bike, consider taking a group fitness class or joining a team sports league.

**2. Your attitude matters.** The wrong group can drain your motivation and energy. Did you notice the Black Team in season five? Granted, they were fighting an uphill battle and constantly facing the elimination room, but they were so down in the dumps that they often reminded me of a group of Eeyores. That negative energy could have contributed, on some level, to their constant struggles.

Lesson: Surround yourself with positive people. A fitness buddy with a negative attitude isn't fun to hang around, and that can be detrimental to your workouts and your consistency. And if you find that the negative attitude is coming from you, chances are you won't stick with it. Change your perspective and stay positive for good results!

**3. You won't always see results.** It happens every season — some of the participants actually GAIN weight instead of losing. Whenever they'd stand on that scale, only to see the numbers pop up as a "plus" instead of a "negative," I wanted to cry with them! But just like ups and downs are part of the show, they're a reality for the rest of us, too.

Lesson: Losing weight isn't as simple as a mathematical equation. Sure you need to burn more calories than you consume to lose weight, but even when you do everything right, sometimes it just doesn't work out that way. Is it frustrating? You bet! But when it happens, all you can do is accept it and continue on. Trust that your efforts will show eventually. Remember, that even when the scale doesn't budge, your efforts are making a difference. Try to focus on other ways to measure your progress — like how you feel, your health improvements, and how your clothes fit. If all else fails, take steps to bust through your plateau!

**4. You have to train your brain.** Bob and Jillian know that exercise and training will reshape the body. But they are great at training the contestants mentally too. Along the course of the show, they all learn to believe in themselves. Whether they make it to the end or get eliminated along the way, most of the "losers" say the same thing: What they had accomplished on the campus had previously been nothing more than a dream.

Lesson: Believe in yourself! When you're out of shape and overweight, it's easy to beat yourself up and lose confidence. But you don't need Bob or Jillian in your back pocket to change that. With every small step you take towards your goals, your confidence will build. With every goal you achieve, your self-esteem will sky-rocket. The key is to just start. It's always better to try—even if you mess up along the way — than to never try at all.

**5. You have to change your lifestyle.** The participants on the show understand that this is a complete lifestyle overhaul—a total transformation for life, not a diet for a little while. No matter how hard they work or how much weight they lose while on campus, it will come back if they revert back to their old habits at home.

Lesson: There are no quick fixes. Getting healthy and managing your weight is not a temporary thing. It's a series of day-to-day, meal-by-meal choices that you have to stick with for the long haul.

6. **You have to work hard.** Sometimes when I'd watch the Teams work out I'd think, "Their trainers are heartless!" In reality, those trainers know that weight loss takes hard work. You see them exercise when they have nothing left, choose the healthy foods even though they'd rather have their favorite comfort foods, and even leave their families for weeks at a time — these things are not for the faint of heart.

Lesson: It won't always be easy. Lots of people want to lose weight, but most aren't willing to pay the price or make sacrifices to get there. You will not be successful with a half-hearted effort or by looking for shortcuts or the easy way out.

7. **You can have fun!** I always enjoy watching different challenges each week. Although they were often physical, they're not what I'd consider traditional exercise: trying to stay on a moving escalator the longest; running and placing empty soda cans from one bin to another; or traversing a ravine on a zip line.

Lesson: Boredom will kill your exercise routine. Mix it up and keep your body guessing and keep it fun. Instead on going to the gym for a mindless half hour on the stairclimber (more like the "stairmonster"), get outside and do some hiking or biking. Forgo the weight machines one day and head to a playground to swing from the monkey bars, climb, jump, run and LAUGH!

8. **You have to be consistent.** No matter how much the show changes from season to season, one thing is always clear. Those who lose the biggest are consistent. They make healthy eating and exercise part of their daily lives — even after they go home. And even when they encounter setbacks along the way, they don't give up.

Lesson: Consistency is key. No matter how close (or far) you are from your goal — or even if you're there already — the habits you learn along the way have to continue if you're to be successful in the long term.

Who would have thought that watching people sweat, exercise, grimace, and go through the rigors of losing weight could be so fun? Here's to all the losers, and to hoping you can use this advice to be a loser, too!

Editor's Note: SparkPeople.com is not affiliated with "The Biggest Loser" or NBC.

