

5 Clues that Your WLS Honeymoon is Over And What To Do About It!

By Colleen M. Cook, WLS Patient 1995, President, Speaker, Author

Even at 22 years post op, I still clearly remember that fateful day when I reached the "End of Invincible" That fateful moment when the honeymoon phase ended and the real work began. I am anxious to share with you what I have learned about the top 5 ways to recognize that your personal WLS honeymoon is over and what to do about it.



1 YOU START 'FREEWHEELING'

We are so careful early on. We are committed and sure we will become the most compliant patient ever! We measure our food and water, use a shopping list at the store, prepare meals in advance and eat what we plan, exercise, weigh weekly and take our vitamins. Then, one day it seems that we can forego one or more of these good habits and still lose weight. "Hmm, this is awesome! This surgical tool is my answer, hooray!" If you find yourself boasting about how you ate... or how you don't exercise... or how get away with things you were warned not to do. BEWARE! I promise it will catch up to you.

Our Success Habits Research clearly shows exactly what successful long term patients do to reach and maintain their weight. Learn what they know and do what they did. It is important to realize that you will not be the exception to the rule and while you may feel invincible now - know that it is easy to be lulled into a false sense of security. There is a reason it is called the 'honeymoon phase.' When it ends, if you have not used the time to commit to, implement and own your Success Habits, you will be in find yourself struggling to learn how to maintain your weight. Commit once to a specific set of daily habits and stick with them. All of them!

#2 PEOPLE STOP RAVING ABOUT HOW YOU LOOK

Boy, do I remember this. Of course I would, it was all about me! Like many of you enjoyed months and months of friends, family neighbors, work associates and even strangers, raving about how great I looked. One of my favorite comments was "Look at you, you are going to blow away!" Loved it!

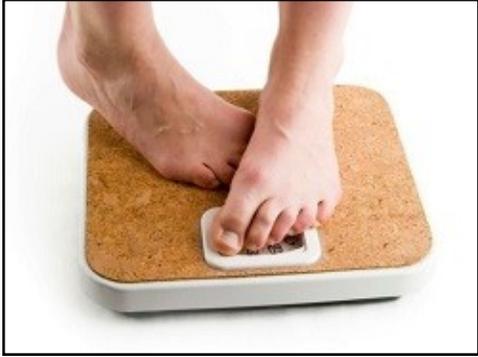
I think I even walked a little taller, and had a new strut and swagger as I showcased my success. When I knew would be seen by someone who didn't know about the new me, I was ecstatic! Then over time, people started to get used to my new size. I slowly began to fade into normal, the newness wore off and all of the attention nearly stopped. I missed the rave reviews, I kept wondering to myself, "Do I look fat?" Am I gaining weight?" "Why doesn't someone say something!" Messed with my mind to be sure.



If that has not happened to you yet, trust me, it will. And it is important to be prepared for the emotional and mental grief it may cause. When it does, it will be a good time to do a little evaluating of your true motives for choosing weight loss surgery. Ask yourself why you made this decision in the first place. Did you do this for someone else? To look feel better for yourself? For revenge? To improve your health? This is a time to reconnect to your personal why. Remind yourself of what motivated you in the first place. Pat yourself on the back and learn to improve your 'self-talk.'

Then, move on. Rather than having it be all about you, now is a great time to turn and support those coming along behind you. Opportunities abound for successful patients who want to give back by paying it forward. Motivate, encourage and support new and prospective WLS patients. Help with an event or patient celebration, work as a hospital volunteer, share your story or become a [Support Group Leader](#). Share your successes online and participate in one or more of the many Facebook Group discussions. You look great – now be great by helping others.

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#3 THE SCALE STARTS TO GO IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

Perhaps like me, you spent many years not knowing what you weighed. I hated the scale and would avoid it at all costs. But, I loved nothing more than weighing myself during the first year after my surgery. It seemed as though I could weigh in the morning and lose even more weight by the time I returned home in the evening! Talk about motivating. For the first time in almost forever, the scales were tipping in my favor and it was exciting!

As many do, I reached a plateau a time or two on my way down to my goal. So, perhaps you too have plateaued along the way, but this time, you sense it is different. You have reached your goal, stayed there and celebrated your success, but then, your weight starts to climb back up. Panic sets in and you know that glory days are over. Thoughts like, "I was afraid this was too good to be true." or "I knew this couldn't last." keep surfacing. Self-doubt sets in and you worry that like so many times in your life, you lose, then gain. (And often with a bonus). You hoped it would be different with a surgical intervention, you hoped it would be easy. And in some respects, it has been but now reality hits and you know it's time to pay attention.

At this critical juncture, it is time to ensure that you have put into place the Success Habits you must rely upon every day for the rest of your life in order to maintain your weight. We all know how to lose weight, we have spent so many years on diets, off diets, thinking about a diet, researching a new diet, cursing diets, getting on and falling off diets. But learning how to maintain weight is a completely different mindset. Take this time as you transition from losing to maintaining to remind yourself that obesity is a disease. And one that you will struggle with for your entire life; surgery or not. You have a remarkable surgical tool to help you manage it as long as you learn to use it properly. Commit the time and effort to learn about your own personal metabolism, your triggers, and your relationship with food. It is up to you to evaluate your behaviors, stop doing what you might have gotten away with during the rapid weight loss phase and focus on everything you have learned. Memorize and internalize Success Habits of Weight Loss Surgery Patients.

#4 YOU REALIZE YOU SHOULD HAVE PAID MORE ATTENTION TO YOUR BARIATRIC TEAM

It seems that through the years the bariatric medical community has made great progress in ensuring that prospective patients are better educated and more prepared for surgery. As many of you know, there is a long checklist of todo's prior to surgery. Consultations, evaluations, exams, tests, support groups and the list goes on and on.

An interesting thing happens though. When surgery is imminent, our focus is primarily on the details surrounding the actual procedure, hospital stay, pain management, how it will feel, etc. The classes and information are helpful, but unfortunately, we are not really listening. We are trying; we nod our heads at what our dieticians, nurses, mental health and exercise professionals are telling us. We commit to being compliant, eat right, exercise, take our vitamins and attend our follow up visits. But are we really listening? Are we learning? Perhaps not.



Following surgery, it's "Whew, I am alive!" And once we are released from the hospital we begin our journey, sticking closely to what we have been advised. We start to really pay attention. Then, something magical happens. Our surgical tool starts to work, just like we had hoped. The weight starts to fall off! But, then we learn that no matter what we do, whether we follow the rules or not, the weight still continues to fall off. A dangerous realization. You see, once we think of ourselves as invincible – we stop listening.

Sadly, we see that it is only when people reach a plateau or heaven forbid, begin to gain weight that they are really ready to listen and learn. We are told so often, surgery is a tool, it's a tool, it's a tool. Again, we nod our heads. Now that our honeymoon is over we must be ready to learn. I mean really ready to learn. (Read more...)

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We have “graduated” or have been “released” from our bariatric clinic and may wonder if we missed our shot to learn. Surgery was a success; we have lost weight and now we need to learn how to maintain. Wishing we would have paid more attention earlier on, we might wonder where can turn.

For me, I turned to all of the successful patients I could find, to learn what they knew and do what they did. As I expected, there are very particular habits that those most successful have made part of their lives. In fact, I have spent the last 22 years seeking out the most successful wls patients, identifying their habits, learning from these long term losers and sharing my research all over the globe. Learn more about [The Success Habits of Weight Loss Surgery Patients](#).

So often, we hear struggling patients comment that they did not learn these important principles during their initial weight loss. If that is the case with you, it is not too late. Read the book, take a class, participate online. Remember your surgical tool will serve you well for a lifetime as long as you learn to use it properly. Learn what you might have missed, learn what successful patient have to teach you, learn all you need to know about your own body, metabolism and food addictions. It's never too late.

Then, move on. Rather than having it be all about you, now is a great time to turn and support those coming along behind you. Opportunities abound for successful patients who want to give back by paying it forward. Motivate, encourage and support new and prospective WLS patients. Help with an event or patient celebration, work as a hospital volunteer, become a Support Group Leader. Share your successes online and participate in one or more of the many Facebook Group discussions. You look great – now be great by helping others.

#5 YOU STOP ATTENDING SUPPORT GROUPS THINKING THEY ARE FOR NEWBIES



We always suspected that those who regularly attend support groups after weight loss surgery are more successful than those who don't. Thanks to our collaboration with Stanford University Medical Center, we now have the hard data to prove it. Put simply, “Successful WLS patients are 3 times more likely to participate in support groups than their less successful counterparts.”

Unfortunately, sometimes we find that support groups focus on and cater to the newbies, leaving the veteran patients bored, un-motivated and less likely come back. If the topics in support group are not of interest to you, suggest some that would be. Work to be part of the solution. Perhaps offer to do some research, share your experiences or even prepare and teach a lesson. If you have found that

you have lost interest in your support group, please consider that if you don't need the support group, perhaps the support group needs you.

I, for one am so very grateful to the two WLS patients who at 10 years post op volunteered month after month to share their story, coach, encourage and teach those of us coming along behind them. Perhaps it's time to give a little back by paying it forward. Consider becoming a [BSCI Certified Support Group Leader](#). There is nothing more motivating than having people look up to you, learn from you and help keep you on track as a good example.

For many, support groups go way beyond, “What is the topic?” People view support group attendance as a commitment to themselves to stay connected and accountable. Support groups offer opportunities to connect a network of like-minded people who understand your journey as many do not. So many life-long friendships are established at support groups.

Make support group attendance a must do on your calendar to help you stay on track and accountable. If you are unable to attend a live group, web-based forums, Facebook groups and telephonic groups are easily found. BSCI's DreamTeam of educators host free telephonic support groups every week. Fun, easy and a great way to stay connected. [Telephonic Support Group Schedule](#)