

3 Reasons Dieting with Your Sweetheart Pays

A couple is sitting on a rocky cliff overlooking a valley. The man is wearing a grey hoodie and a grey cap, and the woman is wearing a white hoodie and red shorts. They are both looking out over the valley. The background shows a vast landscape with green hills and a river winding through the valley. The sky is clear and blue.

BY MERILEE KERN

It's been well-proven that “social dieting” makes weight loss more fun and successful —especially with programs that include elements like competition, teamwork, encouragement and, of course, gentle peer pressure. Programs like the cash-and-camaraderie-fueled challenges that couples can partake in with HealthyWage are not only a powerful and effective weight loss method, but also an exciting means to bring couples closer together and even subsidize their date night outings with monetary rewards realized for pound shedding success.

Below, HealthyWage offers 3 reasons why it's a sweet idea to “diet-for-dollars” with your loved one:

1. Teamwork makes weight loss more fun, accountable and successful.

Some financially incentivized diet contests leverage the power of “social norms feedback” and other key behavioral economics principles — being strategically designed to help couples and other team-based participants stay engaged in the positive new behaviors. In addition to making a couple's weight loss effort more successful, it also makes it a lot more fun as they work together toward a common goal! In fact, not only can losing weight with a loved one in a competition format make weight loss easier, but also more likely since there is more accountability — one has a

direct stake in the other's success. The result is an elevated incidence of support and positive peer pressure. The desire to win both money and bragging rights adds to the exhilaration and motivation in a contest where cash prizes are at stake.

A Brown University study supports this paradigm, having concluded that social networks and teamwork play a significant role in enhancing weight loss outcomes in weight loss interventions. The study found that team-based weight loss competitions significantly influenced each other's weight loss, further substantiating the connection between social networks and health behaviors — particularly related to diet and exercise.

2. The money motivation model can sweeten the deal for both parties.

Leading academics have repeatedly found that money enhances weight loss success, making dieters significantly more likely to lose weight. You'd think health and vanity alone would be strong enough motivators for weight loss, but financial incentives provide additional benefits that are critical to success. Those financial winnings can ultimately benefit both participants. Cash-based challenges are powerful tools that help couples not only

commit to a specific starting point — eliminating pre-diet procrastination — but also avoid quitting before goals have been accomplished.

In fact, a widely cited study published by the Journal of the American Medical Association found those who have a financial incentive to lose weight were almost five times more likely to reach their target than dieters with no money at stake. In this study, it was further established that the “double-incentivization model” is highly effective. You are more likely to succeed if both dynamics are at play.

3. Studies show weight gain – and loss – is contagious.

In a Harvard study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, researchers found that social networks play a significant role in the incidence of obesity, including both its proliferation and its remediation. In other words, people with obese partners or other family members are more likely to be obese themselves. The researchers concluded that social networks are closely tied to obesity. They also examined the reasons why social networks affect people’s weight, including the fact that people “are influenced by

the evident appearance and behaviors of those around them” and because “social contacts might change a person’s tolerance for being obese or might influence his or her adoption of specific behaviors.” The researchers also found that “weight-loss interventions that provide peer support — that is, that modify the person’s social network — are more successful than those that do not. People are connected, and so their health is connected.”

Ultimately, couples working together in a weight-loss gamification scenario can proffer many benefits. This includes each participant’s individual health, of course, but also the well-being of a relationship at large because emotional bonds like respect, admiration, pride and appreciation are made stronger through the process. Making hard work into a game tends to make participants more engaged and successful, and programs like HealthyWage, which follow academic and industry research on gamification, provide users with thrilling challenges that remove pre-diet procrastination and helps prevent co-dieters from giving up.

