



Healthy Weight Challenge Steps for Success

Whether you're running an employee wellness program at your company or offering weight loss support groups to the public, check out these ideas from Hannaford supermarket RD Pat Hunter, who has used this approach with her store's employees. From planning to promotion to prizes, these tried-and-true tips will help you run a successful healthy weight challenge.

Supermarkets are a beehive of activity. Time is short and our job as RDs is to grab the attention of employees with take home messages that improve their health and well being. Not only will an employee reap the health benefits but they will also share simple strategies that they have learned from the Supermarket Dietitian with customers. Brilliant! A true win win! The challenge is to find a way to create a program that's worthwhile to the employee and also easy and manageable.

Initial Planning:

- 1) Does a budget exist, for simple incentives or prizes?
- 2) Will the program focus on healthy habits, weight loss or exercise habits?
- 3) What audience do you want to reach and where do they meet? Work with the Associate Relations Manager to generate interest.
- 4) When is the best time to kick the program off and how long will it be offered for best success? (8 to 12 weeks?)
- 5) How will the program be advertised?

Program Ideas...

Advertise - Clip a message to employees' paychecks or post a message by time clocks a few weeks ahead of time. See sample promotional sheet below.

Sign up Huddle - Hold a huddle with staff a week before the start of the program to generate interest and commitment. Each employee receives a small food log notebook and a pen with a string attached with the words "Track for Success."

Tracking - As we know, tracking is a powerful activity. Employees who bring in their food log for the RD to look at will be given a small incentive such as a coupon for healthy food. Another idea is to pass out Healthy Challenge cards; each time they talk to the Dietitian with a question they receive a punch. When they have achieved 10 visits they receive a prize .

Weigh in - If you choose to add this to your program keep it simple and optional. Weigh in at the start, middle and end of the program. Some employees may not be interested in weight loss but a body fat assessment may be a very good incentive for them to start an exercise program. In twelve weeks they will see the difference!



Huddles with a Focus

Periodically throughout the program hold informal support group meetings to educate your team members.



Snacks that energize: Set up 4 or 5 snacks that add up to \$2.00 or less. Perhaps a yogurt and fruit, a bag of chips etc. Ask employees what do these have in common? It may take them some time to come up with the answer while you tout the benefits of the nutrients in the various snacks.



What is in your lunch bag? – Set up 4 brown lunch bags (2 good choices and 2 average choices) and hand them out to employees. Ask them what they have in common? Do they compare to MyPlate? How many calories? Would the lunches all keep you energized for a busy day? How much fiber is in the bag?



Portion Control – Display various portions of cereal, pasta, etc., and ask how many calories are in each. Discuss ways to evaluate the portion of foods on your plate by comparing them to household objects (tennis balls, baseballs, etc.).



Exercise – Have them track exercise using forms or wearing a pedometer.



Eating & Emotions – Discuss topic and perhaps have a mindful 2 to 3 minute activity discussing speed of eating and taking time to enjoy food.

Other Ideas to Reach the Group



Recipe Contest – Have a contest for the best quick meal idea or favorite snack or appetizer. Rate the items based on 1) Ingredients used 2) Simplicity 3) Taste. Have a blind taste test if possible and post winner and recipes in the break room.



Employee Bulletin Board – Set up weekly visuals illustrating nutrient density with take-home sheets that coordinate to the theme. Another idea is “How to rate your plate” (adding handouts that coordinate the message with simple recipes.)



Simple Games – such as crossword puzzles, word scrambles, breakfasts around the world matching game or “spices & health: simple additions with benefits.”

On the following page is an example of a promotional sheet for employees. Email deborah@oldwayspt.org if you'd like this Promo Sheet in Word format for easy customization.



5 to 10% Weight Loss Challenge!

What: Join in the fun with your coworkers while we strive to make small simple changes that help us all lose a few pounds! Huddles on related topics will help you succeed.

When: _____ Sign-up dates, times and place.

Each employee that signs up will receive a get-started package to help you reach your goal.

(Each associate will be given an ID number for tracking weight loss and goals so it is kept confidential).

How: Look each week on the nutrition bulletin board for copies of materials handed out at these huddles. This challenge will last ____ weeks. Successful weight is about building healthy habits. You're going to look and feel great!

Why: Did you know that a 5 to 10% weight loss has been shown to dramatically improve blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, arthritis/joint pain symptoms, and stress among other things? Our goal is to help you lose this weight or more and learn to keep it off through dietary and physical activity changes.

Prizes: Prizes will be based on percent of weight loss to keep it fair no matter what your size. Participants receive a prize for signing up by the start date (late entries are ok, but may not receive the sign-up prize). Optional body fat measurement at program start week & final weigh-in.
Sign up Today!

