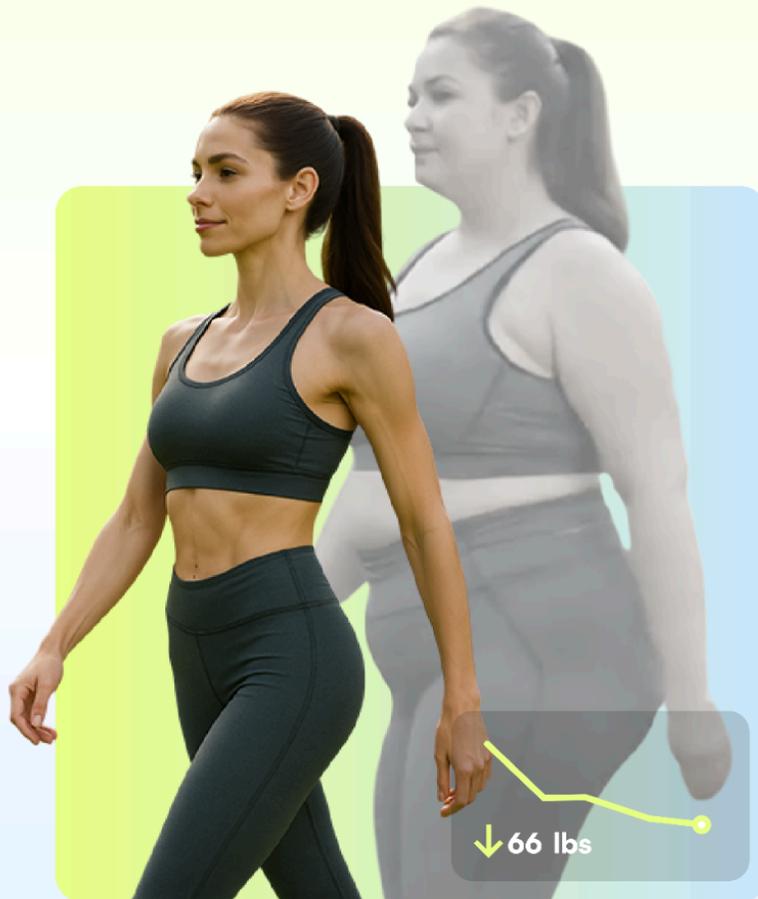


The new*self* **Fat Loss Protocol:** A Simpler Path to Results



**A Complete Guide to Accelerated
Weight Loss with GLP-1 Medications**

By Ray Schwartz, Founder of NewSelf

The NewSelf Fat Loss Protocol: A Simpler Path to Results

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Introduction: The Missing Playbook

When I started building NewSelf, I wasn't looking for a business idea. I was looking for **a real solution**. I didn't need another guru podcast, another restrictive meal plan, or another expensive supplement stack that overpromised and underdelivered. I needed a **straightforward, affordable, repeatable system** that would help me cut fat, keep energy high, and stay consistent in real life.

And I couldn't find it.

So I built it—by testing it myself, alongside my family. My mom. My brother. My wife. We tried it all: calorie tracking, whole-food eating, GLP-1s like Tirzepatide, red light therapy, peptides, gut health resets, strength training, fasting...

And eventually, it clicked. The science wasn't the problem. The tools weren't the problem. The problem was the **lack of structure**. Nobody was showing regular people how to combine the new science with old-school discipline—without turning your life upside down.

This guide is the result of everything that worked. It's what we use inside NewSelf today to help people across America lose fat, stay strong, and finally feel like they're back in control of their bodies.

You don't need a six-figure income. You don't need to be in your 20s. You don't need perfect discipline. You just need a **system you'll actually follow**.

Chapter 1:

**The Game Changer
That Changes Everything**

I remember the exact moment I realized traditional weight loss advice was broken. I was standing in my kitchen at 6 AM, exhausted from another sleepless night, staring at a meal prep container filled with sad, dry chicken breast and steamed broccoli. I'd been following the "eat less, move more" gospel for three months. I was hungry all the time, my workouts felt terrible, and I'd hit a plateau that seemed insurmountable.

That's when I discovered the research that changed everything: **over 80% of people who lose weight through traditional dieting regain it within 5 years**¹. The failure rate wasn't due to lack of willpower—it was biology fighting back.

The Metabolic Prison

Dr. Kevin Hall's research at the National Institutes of Health revealed something shocking about contestants from "The Biggest Loser." Six years after the show, most had regained the weight, but their metabolisms were still dramatically slower—burning up to 700 fewer calories per day than expected³. Their bodies had essentially learned to defend against weight loss by becoming incredibly efficient.

This metabolic adaptation isn't a character flaw—it's evolution. As researcher Dr. Stephan Guyenet explains in "The Hungry Brain," our brains are wired to maintain energy stores. When we diet aggressively, the brain interprets this as starvation and fights back with increased hunger hormones, reduced satiety signals, and a slower metabolism.

But then came GLP-1 medications, and everything changed.

The GLP-1 Revolution

produced average weight losses of **15-25% of body weight over approximately one year**—results that had previously only been achieved when I first heard about semaglutide and tirzepatide, I was skeptical. Another magic pill? But the data was undeniable. In clinical trials, these medications achieved weight loss comparable to that achieved through bariatric surgery.

More importantly, they seemed to solve the biological problem that made traditional dieting so difficult. As Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford from Harvard Medical School notes, "GLP-1 receptor agonists work by targeting the brain's appetite control centers, essentially turning down the volume on food noise."

The medications work by mimicking GLP-1, a hormone naturally produced in your intestines after eating. This hormone:

- Signals satiety to your brain
- Slows gastric emptying, keeping you full longer
- Stabilizes blood sugar levels
- Reduces the reward value of food in the brain

For the first time in my adult life, I wasn't constantly thinking about food. The mental bandwidth that had been consumed by meal planning, craving management, and portion control was suddenly available for other things.

The Synergy Opportunity

But here's what most people miss: GLP-1 medications don't just make weight loss possible—they create an unprecedented opportunity to optimize everything else. When you're not fighting constant hunger and cravings, you can actually implement the strategies that accelerate fat loss and improve overall health.

This is where biohacking principles become incredibly powerful. Techniques that were previously difficult to maintain due to hunger and low energy suddenly become effortless when combined with GLP-1's effects.

Tim Ferriss, author of "The 4-Hour Body," emphasizes this concept: "The minimum effective dose is the smallest dose that will produce a desired outcome." With GLP-1 providing appetite control, we can focus on the minimum effective dose of exercise, fasting, and recovery protocols that multiply our results.

Chapter 2:

**The Walking Revolution
Nobody Talks About**

I used to think cardio meant suffering. Hour-long treadmill sessions, drenched in sweat, counting down the minutes until I could escape. Like most people, I believed the lie that fat loss required punishment.

Then I discovered a 2007 Japanese study that completely changed my perspective on movement. Researchers took middle-aged and older adults and divided them into two groups. One group aimed for 8,000 steps per day of continuous walking. The other group did interval walking—alternating between moderate and fast-paced walking.

After five months, the interval walkers had **greater weight loss, improved blood pressure, increased leg strength, and better overall fitness** compared to the continuous walkers, despite doing less total exercise⁴.

The NEAT Discovery

This study illuminated something exercise scientists call NEAT—Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis. Dr. James Levine, who discovered NEAT at the Mayo Clinic, found that it can vary by up to **2,000 calories per day** between individuals⁵. This variation, more than genetics or metabolism, explains why some people seem to eat anything without gaining weight.

As Levine explains in his research, "NEAT is the calories expended for all activities that are not sleeping, eating, or sports-like exercise." It includes walking, maintaining posture, and even fidgeting. The remarkable thing about NEAT is that it burns calories without triggering the stress response that comes with intense exercise.

The Incline Method

Building on the Japanese study findings, I developed what I call the "Incline Method." Instead of endless flat walking, I started incorporating inclines into my daily walks. The science behind this approach is compelling:

Walking at a 5-10% incline increases calorie burn by **30-50%** compared to flat walking at the same speed⁶. More importantly, incline walking preferentially activates the glutes and hamstrings—your body's largest muscle groups—creating greater energy demand without the joint stress of running.

Dr. John Ivy, exercise physiologist and author of "Nutrient Timing," explains why this matters: "Incline walking keeps you in the optimal fat-burning zone—working hard enough to increase calorie expenditure but not so hard that you shift to primarily burning glucose instead of fat."

My Personal Walking Discovery

When I started the incline method, something remarkable happened. Not only was I burning more calories in less time, but I actually looked forward to my walks. The variety kept it interesting, and I could feel my legs getting stronger each week.

Here's what a typical week looked like:

- **Monday:** 20-minute flat walk (baseline)
- **Tuesday:** 15-minute incline intervals (2 minutes moderate incline, 1 minute steep incline)
- **Wednesday:** 20-minute flat walk
- **Thursday:** 15-minute incline intervals
- **Friday:** Rest or gentle flat walk
- **Weekend:** One longer walk exploring new areas

The key insight came from exercise researcher Dr. Martin Gibala, who found that interval training could provide similar benefits to much longer periods of continuous exercise. As he notes in "The One-Minute Workout," "Brief bursts of intense exercise can be remarkably effective for improving fitness and health."

The Fasted Walking Advantage

One of the most powerful discoveries was combining incline walking with intermittent fasting. When I walked in a fasted state (usually in the morning before eating), the fat-burning effects were dramatically enhanced.

Research published in the British Journal of Nutrition found that exercising in a fasted state increases fat oxidation by up to **20%** compared to exercising after eating⁷. The mechanism is simple: when glycogen stores are lower (as they are after an overnight fast), your body more readily accesses fat stores for energy.

Dave Asprey, founder of Bulletproof and author of "The Bulletproof Diet," has long advocated for fasted cardio: "When you exercise in a fasted state, you're essentially forcing your body to become a fat-burning machine. You're training your metabolism to preferentially use fat for fuel."

The Weighted Vest Discovery

After a few months of consistent incline walking, I wanted to accelerate my results even further. That's when I discovered weighted vest training—a strategy used by military personnel and elite athletes but virtually unknown in mainstream fitness.

A 2018 study published in the Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research found that wearing a weighted vest equal to **10% of body weight** increased calorie burn by approximately **12%** during walking. But the benefits went beyond just burning more calories.

The weighted vest transformed my daily activities into mini-workouts. Walking up stairs, doing household chores, even standing at my desk became more challenging. I was essentially turning my entire day into a fat-burning session.

Dr. Wayne Westcott, exercise science professor and author of numerous fitness research papers, explains: "Weighted vest training increases the workload on your cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems without changing the movement pattern. This makes it an ideal way to progress basic activities like walking."

I started with a 15-pound vest (about 8% of my body weight) and wore it for just 20-30 minutes during my morning walks. Within weeks, I noticed increased strength in my legs and core, and my regular walking pace had naturally increased.

The Compound Effect

The beauty of combining these walking strategies with GLP-1 medication was the compound effect. The medication eliminated the intense hunger that often follows exercise, while the walking enhanced my insulin sensitivity and mood throughout the day.

As metabolic researcher Dr. Ben Bikman notes in "Why We Get Sick," "Exercise, particularly when done in a fasted state, dramatically improves insulin sensitivity. This enhanced insulin sensitivity makes your body more likely to burn fat and less likely to store it."

After six months of implementing these walking strategies, I had not only lost weight but felt stronger and more energetic than I had in years. More importantly, I had discovered a form of movement that I genuinely enjoyed and could maintain long-term.

Chapter 3:

**The Sleep Revelation
That Changed My Metabolism**

I used to wear sleep deprivation like a badge of honor. Five hours a night, multiple cups of coffee, "I'll sleep when I'm dead"—all the toxic productivity mantras that were slowly destroying my health.

Then I discovered research that completely shattered my understanding of sleep's role in weight loss. A landmark study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* took healthy adults and restricted their sleep to 5.5 hours per night for two weeks. Despite eating the same number of calories, **the sleep-deprived group lost 55% less fat** than the group getting 8.5 hours of sleep⁸.

But the most shocking finding was what they lost instead of fat: muscle. The sleep-deprived participants lost more lean muscle mass, even though they were in a calorie deficit that should have promoted fat loss.

The Hormonal Cascade

Dr. Matthew Walker, author of "Why We Sleep," explains the mechanism: "Sleep loss creates a hormonal imbalance that makes weight loss nearly impossible. It increases ghrelin, the hormone that makes you hungry, while decreasing leptin, the hormone that makes you feel full."

The numbers are staggering. Research from the University of Chicago found that people getting only 4 hours of sleep had:

- **18% less leptin** (fullness hormone)
- **28% more ghrelin** (hunger hormone)
- **33% more cortisol** (stress hormone that promotes fat storage)⁹

When I learned this, I realized I had been sabotaging my weight loss efforts every single night. No amount of dieting or exercise could overcome the hormonal chaos created by poor sleep.

My Sleep Transformation

The first change I made was treating sleep like an appointment that couldn't be canceled. I set a non-negotiable bedtime of 10 PM and wake time of 6 AM, giving myself 8 hours of opportunity for sleep.

But duration wasn't enough—I needed to optimize sleep quality. That's when I discovered the work of sleep researcher Dr. Andrew Huberman from Stanford. His research showed that even small changes in sleep environment and habits could dramatically improve sleep depth and recovery.

The Temperature Discovery

The most impactful change was lowering my bedroom temperature to 65°F (18°C). Research published in the journal "Sleep" found that the optimal temperature for deep sleep is between **60-67°F**. Our core body temperature naturally drops as we prepare for sleep, and a cool environment facilitates this process.

I also started taking a hot shower 60-90 minutes before bed. When you step out of hot water, your core temperature drops rapidly, triggering drowsiness. Dr. Shahab Haghayegh's research at UT Health Science Center found that this simple practice could help people **fall asleep 10 minutes faster** and experience deeper sleep.

The Light Manipulation

Dr. Huberman's work on circadian biology revealed something crucial: light exposure is the primary signal that regulates our sleep-wake cycle. I started getting bright light exposure within the first hour of waking—even just 10 minutes of outdoor light on cloudy days provides 1,000+ lux, far more than indoor lighting.

But the evening light management was equally important. Blue light from screens can suppress melatonin production by up to **50%**, even from relatively dim sources. I invested in blue light blocking glasses and used them religiously after 8 PM.

The Breathing Secret

Perhaps the most surprising discovery was the impact of nasal breathing during sleep. Research published in the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine found that mouth taping—gently taping the mouth closed to promote nasal breathing—could **reduce sleep apnea events by 50%** in people with mild sleep apnea.

Dr. James Nestor, author of "Breath," explains why this matters: "Nasal breathing during sleep activates the parasympathetic nervous system, promotes deeper sleep stages, and can even improve oxygen saturation." I started using a small piece of medical tape each night, and the improvement in sleep quality was immediate and dramatic.

The Supplement Stack

While I prefer behavioral changes over supplements, two compounds made a measurable difference in my sleep quality:

Magnesium Glycinate became my evening ritual. Research published in the Journal of Research in Medical Sciences found that magnesium supplementation significantly improved sleep efficiency, sleep time, and morning alertness in older adults. The glycinate form is particularly effective because glycine itself has calming properties.

L-Theanine was the second addition. This amino acid from green tea promotes alpha brain waves associated with relaxation. A study in the Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that L-theanine supplementation improved sleep quality by **reducing anxiety and promoting relaxation** without causing drowsiness.

The GLP-1 Sleep Synergy

The combination of optimized sleep with GLP-1 medication created unexpected benefits. The medication's blood sugar stabilizing effects prevented the 3 AM hunger pangs that used to wake me up. Meanwhile, better sleep enhanced the medication's effectiveness by optimizing the hormones that regulate appetite and metabolism.

Dr. Kristen Knutson, a sleep researcher at Northwestern University, notes: "Good sleep is like a reset button for your appetite hormones. When you sleep well, your body is much better at regulating hunger and satiety signals."

After three months of prioritizing sleep, I noticed changes beyond just feeling more rested. My appetite was more stable throughout the day, my workouts felt easier, and my mood was dramatically improved. Most importantly, the weight loss that had plateaued began moving again.

Sleep optimization became the foundation that made every other healthy habit easier to maintain. When you're well-rested, you have the energy and mental clarity to make better food choices, stick to your exercise routine, and manage stress effectively.

Chapter 4:

**The Protein Discovery
That Changed Everything**

I thought I knew about protein. I'd been tracking it, weighing it, obsessing over it for years. But I was making a fundamental mistake that was sabotaging my results.

Like most people, I was focusing on total daily protein intake while completely ignoring timing and distribution. Then I discovered research that revolutionized my understanding of how the body actually uses protein for fat loss and muscle preservation.

The Muscle Protein Synthesis Revelation

Dr. Donald Layman, a protein researcher at the University of Illinois, conducted a study that changed everything I thought I knew about protein timing. His research found that eating **30 grams of protein at breakfast** stimulated muscle protein synthesis far more effectively than eating the same 30 grams at dinner.

But the most surprising finding was about distribution. People who spread their protein evenly across three meals (30g each) had **25% greater muscle protein synthesis** than those who ate the same total protein but skewed it toward dinner¹⁰.

As Dr. Layman explains, "Muscle protein synthesis has a ceiling effect. Once you hit about 30-40 grams of protein in a meal, additional protein doesn't provide additional benefits for muscle building."

My Protein Distribution Experiment

This research completely changed my approach. Instead of eating a light breakfast and saving most of my protein for dinner, I restructured my entire eating pattern around optimizing muscle protein synthesis throughout the day.

Morning Protein Priority

I started each day with what I call a "protein-first breakfast"—usually 3 whole eggs plus 2 egg whites (about 30 grams of protein) cooked in coconut oil with spinach. The transformation was immediate. I felt more satiated, my energy was stable, and I wasn't thinking about food until well past lunchtime.

Research from the University of Missouri found that eating a **high-protein breakfast reduces food cravings by 60%** and late-night snacking by 50%. The mechanism involves dopamine regulation in the brain's reward centers.

The Leucine Threshold

Dr. Layman's research revealed another crucial factor: leucine content. Leucine is an amino acid that acts like a "switch" for muscle protein synthesis. You need approximately **2.5-3 grams of leucine** to maximally stimulate this process.

Foods high in leucine include:

- Eggs (0.5g per egg)
- Greek yogurt (2.5g per cup)
- Chicken breast (2.5g per 4 oz)
- Whey protein (2.5g per scoop)

This discovery led me to prioritize complete proteins with high leucine content at each meal, rather than just hitting arbitrary protein numbers.

The Thermic Effect Advantage

Dr. Eric Helms, author of "The Muscle and Strength Pyramid," introduced me to the concept of protein's thermic effect. Unlike carbohydrates (8-10% thermic effect) or fats (0-5%), protein has a **thermic effect of 20-30%**.

This means that of the 100 calories from protein you consume, your body burns 20-30 calories just digesting and processing it. Over time, this difference becomes significant. If you eat 150 grams of protein daily, you're burning an extra 120-180 calories per day just from digestion.

The Satiety Revolution

The satiety effects of protein became even more pronounced when combined with GLP-1 medication. Research published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that protein is the most satiating macronutrient, keeping people full **3 times longer** than equivalent calories from carbohydrates.

Dr. Arne Astrup, author of numerous nutrition studies, explains: "Protein affects multiple satiety pathways in the brain. It increases peptide YY and GLP-1 (yes, the same hormone in the medication), while decreasing ghrelin. This creates a powerful satiety signal that far exceeds other macronutrients."

When I increased my protein to 1 gram per pound of goal body weight (about 175 grams daily for me) and distributed it evenly, something remarkable happened. Combined with the GLP-1 medication, I virtually never experienced hunger between meals.

The Muscle Preservation Discovery

The most important benefit became apparent after several months: I was losing fat while maintaining muscle mass. Body composition scans showed that 95% of my weight loss was coming from fat, not muscle—a dramatic improvement from previous dieting attempts.

Research from the University of Illinois compared two groups of women on calorie-restricted diets. One group ate 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight (about 0.75g per pound), while the other ate half that amount. The high-protein group lost **significantly more fat and preserved more muscle mass.**

Dr. Stuart Phillips, a protein researcher at McMaster University, notes: "During weight loss, adequate protein intake is like an insurance policy for your muscle mass. It signals your body to preferentially burn fat while preserving the metabolically active tissue that keeps your metabolism high."

Practical Implementation

Rather than obsessing over exact measurements, I developed simple rules that made high protein intake automatic:

The Protein-First Rule: Every meal starts with a protein source. Before adding anything else to my plate, I ensure there's a substantial protein portion.

The Palm Method: For quick estimation, a palm-sized portion of protein provides roughly 25-30 grams—perfect for triggering muscle protein synthesis.

The Morning Non-Negotiable: My breakfast always includes at least 30 grams of protein, usually from eggs or Greek yogurt.

The Budget-Friendly Approach

Contrary to popular belief, eating adequate protein doesn't have to be expensive. Some of the most cost-effective protein sources include:

- **Eggs:** At \$0.20 per egg (6g protein), eggs provide protein for about \$0.03 per gram
- **Greek yogurt:** Often on sale, providing 20g protein for under \$1
- **Whey protein powder:** Bulk purchases can provide protein for \$0.02-0.04 per gram
- **Canned tuna:** Shelf-stable and providing 25g protein for about \$1

The Compound Effect

The combination of strategic protein intake with GLP-1 medication created a powerful synergy. The medication provided appetite control and blood sugar stability, while the protein provided sustained satiety and muscle preservation.

After six months of implementing this protein strategy, my body composition had transformed. I had lost 28 pounds, but body fat percentage had dropped from 22% to 14%—meaning virtually all the weight loss was fat, not muscle.

More importantly, I had discovered a way of eating that felt sustainable. High protein intake, combined with GLP-1's effects, eliminated the constant food thoughts and cravings that had sabotaged previous attempts at fat loss.

Chapter 5:

**Fasting Mastery - From
Impossible to Effortless**

I used to think intermittent fasting was torture. The hunger pangs, the obsessive clock-watching, the mental fog—I'd tried multiple times and always gave up within a few weeks. The willpower required felt unsustainable.

Then came GLP-1 medication, and everything changed. What had once been an exercise in deprivation became almost effortless. I wasn't fighting hunger—there simply wasn't any.

The Fasting Science Revolution

Dr. Jason Fung, author of "The Complete Guide to Fasting," explains why traditional fasting felt so difficult: "When you're insulin resistant, fasting becomes a battle against your own hormones. High insulin levels trap fat in cells, forcing your body to demand more glucose, which manifests as overwhelming hunger."

GLP-1 medications solve this problem by improving insulin sensitivity and stabilizing blood sugar. When your insulin levels are stable, your body can easily access stored fat for energy during fasting periods.

Research published in Cell Metabolism found that intermittent fasting provides benefits beyond just calorie restriction:

- **Increased autophagy** (cellular cleanup and repair)
- **Enhanced insulin sensitivity**
- **Elevated growth hormone** (up to 5x normal levels)
- **Improved cognitive function**
- **Reduced inflammation markers**

My Fasting Evolution

I started by simply observing my natural hunger patterns on GLP-1. Most mornings, I wasn't hungry until 11 AM or noon—my body was naturally gravitating toward a 16:8 fasting schedule.

The 16:8 Foundation

Instead of forcing breakfast at 7 AM out of habit, I embraced this natural fasting window. My eating window became 12 PM to 8 PM, giving me 16 hours of fasting and 8 hours for meals.

Dr. Satchin Panda, author of "The Circadian Code," explains why this timing works: "Our metabolism is naturally optimized for eating during daylight hours. Eating late at night disrupts circadian rhythms and can impair glucose metabolism."

The Metabolic Switch

The most remarkable discovery was what researchers call the "metabolic switch." After 12-16 hours of fasting, your body shifts from burning glucose to burning ketones—a cleaner, more efficient fuel source.

Dr. Mark Mattson's research at Johns Hopkins found that this metabolic switching provides **neuroprotective benefits**, improved stress resistance, and enhanced fat burning. As he notes, "Intermittent fasting triggers adaptive cellular stress responses that are beneficial for health and longevity."

Advanced Fasting Protocols

Once 16:8 became effortless (usually within 2-3 weeks), I experimented with longer fasting windows.

The 20:4 Protocol

Occasionally, I would extend my fast to 20 hours, eating within a 4-hour window. This typically happened naturally on busy days when I was absorbed in work and simply forgot to eat.

Research from the University of Alabama found that eating within a 6-hour window (compared to a 12-hour window) improved insulin sensitivity, beta cell function, and blood pressure—even without weight loss.

The 24-Hour Reset

Once monthly, I would do a complete 24-hour fast from dinner to dinner the next day. Dr. Valter Longo's research at USC found that periodic longer fasts can **reset immune function** and promote cellular regeneration.

These extended fasts became easier with GLP-1 medication because the normal hunger signals were muted. What would have been unbearable before the medication became merely an interesting experiment in metabolic flexibility.

The Autophagy Activation

One of the most compelling aspects of fasting is autophagy—your body's cellular recycling program. Dr. Yoshinori Ohsumi won the Nobel Prize for discovering this process, which breaks down damaged proteins and organelles.

Research suggests autophagy begins ramping up around 16 hours of fasting and peaks between 24-48 hours. As Dr. David Sinclair notes in "Lifespan," "Autophagy is like a cellular spring cleaning. It removes damaged components and makes room for newer, healthier ones."

Fasted Exercise Synergy

Combining fasting with exercise created powerful synergistic effects.

Research published in the British Journal of Nutrition found that exercising in a fasted state **increases fat oxidation by 20%** compared to exercising after eating.

My morning walks became even more effective when done in a fasted state. The combination of low insulin, depleted glycogen stores, and gentle movement created optimal conditions for fat burning.

Dr. Ben Bikman, author of "Why We Get Sick," explains: "When you exercise in a fasted state, you're essentially training your body to become more metabolically flexible—better at switching between glucose and fat for fuel."

Electrolyte Management

One lesson I learned through experimentation was the importance of electrolyte balance during longer fasts. Dr. Jason Fung emphasizes that many fasting side effects (headaches, fatigue, irritability) are actually symptoms of electrolyte depletion, not hunger.

I started adding a pinch of high-quality sea salt to my water during fasting periods, along with magnesium supplementation. This simple adjustment eliminated most fasting-related discomfort.

The Mental Clarity Phenomenon

Perhaps the most unexpected benefit was the mental clarity that came with fasting. Research shows that ketones (produced during fasting) are a more efficient fuel for the brain than glucose.

Dr. Dom D'Agostino's research at the University of South Florida found that ketone metabolism can **improve cognitive performance** and provide neuroprotective benefits. I found my focus and productivity were actually higher during fasting periods than after meals.

Breaking the Fast Strategically

How you break a fast is just as important as the fast itself. I learned to start with protein and healthy fats rather than carbohydrates to avoid blood sugar spikes that could undo some of the metabolic benefits.

My typical fast-breaking meal became a spinach omelet cooked in coconut oil with avocado—high in protein and healthy fats, moderate in calories, and unlikely to cause a glucose spike.

The Sustainability Factor

The key insight was that fasting with GLP-1 medication felt completely different from fasting without it. There was no white-knuckling through hunger pangs, no obsessive thoughts about food, no energy crashes.

As Dr. Fung notes, "The best fasting protocol is the one you can maintain consistently. It should feel natural, not forced." With GLP-1's appetite suppression, fasting finally felt natural.

After a year of combining GLP-1 medication with strategic fasting, I had not only lost significant weight but gained metabolic flexibility, mental clarity, and a completely transformed relationship with food. What started as a weight loss tool became a lifestyle that enhanced every aspect of my health and well-being.

Chapter 6:

**The Gut Health Connection
That Multiplied My Results**

Six months into my GLP-1 journey, my weight loss had stalled. I was doing everything "right"—eating whole foods, exercising consistently, sleeping well—but the scale wouldn't budge. That's when I discovered research that revealed a hidden saboteur: my gut microbiome.

Dr. Rob Knight, author of "Follow Your Gut," had published fascinating research showing that **gut bacteria could influence weight gain or loss by up to 20%**. People with certain bacterial profiles seemed resistant to weight loss, while others with healthier microbiomes lost weight more easily.

The Microbiome-Weight Connection

The research was eye-opening. A study published in Nature found that obese individuals had a markedly different gut microbiome composition compared to lean individuals. They had:

- **Lower bacterial diversity**
- **More inflammatory bacterial species**
- **Reduced short-chain fatty acid production**
- **Compromised intestinal barrier function**

Dr. Justin Sonnenburg, author of "The Good Gut," explains the mechanism:

"Your gut bacteria essentially act as a second genome, influencing metabolism, inflammation, and even appetite regulation. An unhealthy microbiome can make weight loss extremely difficult, regardless of diet and exercise."

My Gut Health Revelation

I realized that years of stress, antibiotic use, and processed food consumption had likely damaged my gut microbiome. The symptoms were subtle but present: occasional bloating, inconsistent energy levels, and what I now recognized as increased cravings for sugary foods.

The 7-Day Gut Reset

I implemented what I called a "gut reset protocol" based on research from leading gastroenterologists:

Day 1-3: Remove Irritants I eliminated the biggest gut disruptors: artificial sweeteners, processed foods, excess sugar, and inflammatory oils. Research from Weizmann Institute showed that artificial sweeteners could **alter gut bacteria within just 4 days**, potentially promoting glucose intolerance.

Day 4-7: Repair and Restore I added gut-healing nutrients and beneficial bacteria through whole foods rather than expensive supplements.

The L-Glutamine Discovery

Dr. Alessio Fasano's research at Harvard revealed that L-glutamine is the preferred fuel for intestinal cells. His studies showed that glutamine supplementation could **strengthen the intestinal barrier** and reduce "leaky gut" symptoms.

I started taking 5-10 grams of L-glutamine powder mixed in water each morning on an empty stomach. Within a week, the subtle bloating I'd been experiencing disappeared, and my digestion felt more efficient.

Fermented Foods vs. Probiotic Pills

Rather than expensive probiotic supplements, I focused on fermented foods based on research from Stanford University. Dr. Justin Sonnenburg's team found that people consuming **fermented foods daily for 10 weeks** showed increased microbiome diversity and reduced inflammatory markers.

My daily protocol included:

- **Greek yogurt** with live cultures (15-20 billion CFUs)
- **Sauerkraut** or **kimchi** (1-2 tablespoons with meals)
- **Kefir** occasionally (when I could tolerate the dairy)

The key was consistency. These foods provided diverse bacterial strains along with prebiotic fibers that fed beneficial bacteria.

The Fiber Strategy

Dr. Erica Sonnenburg's research revealed that dietary fiber acts as fuel for beneficial gut bacteria, which then produce short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs) like butyrate. These SCFAs provide multiple benefits:

- **Reduce inflammation**
- **Improve insulin sensitivity**
- **Strengthen the gut barrier**
- **Support appetite regulation**

But I had to be strategic about fiber intake. Too much too quickly could cause digestive upset, especially when starting GLP-1 medication.

I gradually increased fiber-rich foods:

- **Leafy greens** (spinach, arugula, kale)
- **Cruciferous vegetables** (broccoli, Brussels sprouts)
- **Berries** (blueberries, raspberries)
- **Avocados**
- **Chia seeds** (1-2 tablespoons daily)

The Polyphenol Connection

Research from King's College London found that **polyphenols—plant compounds found in colorful foods—could significantly improve gut microbiome diversity**. Foods high in polyphenols include dark berries, green tea, extra virgin olive oil, and dark chocolate.

I made it a goal to eat something from each color of the rainbow daily. This wasn't just for Instagram aesthetics—different colored plants contain different polyphenols that feed different beneficial bacteria.

Intermittent Fasting and Gut Health

Dr. Valter Longo's research revealed an unexpected benefit of intermittent fasting: **gut microbiome reset**. Fasting periods allow beneficial bacteria to flourish while potentially reducing harmful bacterial overgrowth.

The combination of IF with GLP-1 medication created a powerful gut-healing synergy. The medication reduced inflammation and slowed gastric emptying

(giving the gut more time to heal), while fasting promoted beneficial bacterial growth.

The Seed Oil Elimination

One of the most impactful changes was eliminating industrial seed oils. Research from the University of California found that **omega-6 fatty acids from processed oils could promote inflammatory gut bacteria** while reducing beneficial species.

I replaced cooking oils with:

- **Extra virgin olive oil** (for low-heat cooking and salads)
- **Coconut oil** (for higher-heat cooking)
- **Avocado oil** (for very high-heat cooking)

The change was dramatic. Within two weeks, I noticed reduced bloating and more stable energy levels throughout the day.

The Stress-Gut Axis

Dr. Emeran Mayer's research in "The Mind-Gut Connection" revealed how chronic stress could damage the gut microbiome. Stress hormones like cortisol can:

- **Reduce beneficial bacteria**
- **Increase intestinal permeability**
- **Promote inflammatory bacteria**
- **Disrupt digestion**

This discovery reinforced the importance of stress management techniques I'd already implemented: breathwork, adequate sleep, and regular walking.

The Compound Results

After implementing the gut health protocol for 30 days, several things happened simultaneously:

1. **Weight loss resumed:** The scale started moving again after months of plateau
2. **Energy stabilized:** No more afternoon crashes or sugar cravings
3. **Digestion improved:** Bloating eliminated, bowel movements became regular
4. **Mood enhanced:** Less anxiety and more stable emotional state
5. **Sleep quality increased:** Deeper sleep and easier morning wake-ups

The GLP-1 Gut Synergy

The combination of gut health optimization with GLP-1 medication created unexpected benefits. Research suggests that **GLP-1 is partially produced by beneficial gut bacteria**. By improving my microbiome health, I was potentially enhancing the medication's natural effects.

Dr. Frank Hu's research at Harvard found that people with healthier gut microbiomes had better responses to weight loss interventions. A diverse, healthy microbiome seemed to amplify the benefits of diet and lifestyle changes.

Long-Term Maintenance

The gut health protocol became a permanent part of my routine. Unlike restrictive diets that felt punitive, focusing on gut health felt nourishing and sustainable. I was eating more variety and flavor than ever before, while supporting the microscopic ecosystem that influenced my metabolism, mood, and overall health.

Six months after implementing these gut health strategies, my body composition had transformed beyond what diet and exercise alone had achieved. More importantly, I felt like I had addressed a root cause rather than just managing symptoms.

The lesson was clear: sustainable weight loss isn't just about calories in and calories out. It's about creating an internal environment—starting with gut health—that supports your body's natural ability to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Chapter 7:

**Recovery Protocols
That Accelerated Everything**

By month eight of my transformation, I had all the fundamentals dialed in: nutrition, exercise, sleep, and gut health. My results were steady and sustainable. But I wanted to see if I could accelerate my progress using some of the recovery protocols I'd been reading about in biohacking literature.

That's when I discovered research showing that **recovery optimization could increase fat loss by 15-25%** while simultaneously improving energy, mood, and performance. The key was understanding that fat loss happens during recovery, not just during exercise.

The Cold Therapy Discovery

My introduction to cold therapy came through reading about Wim Hof's work and subsequent research by Dr. Susanna Soberg. Her studies found that **cold exposure could increase brown fat activation by up to 15%** and boost norepinephrine levels by 530%.

But I didn't need an ice bath or cryotherapy chamber. Dr. Andrew Huberman's research showed that even simple cold exposure could provide significant benefits.

The Cold Face Dunk Protocol

I started each morning with what I called the "polar bear routine"—dunking my face in a bowl of ice water for 15-30 seconds while holding my breath. The science behind this simple practice was compelling:

Research from the University of Virginia found that cold water face immersion triggers the **mammalian dive reflex**, which:

- Activates the vagus nerve
- Lowers heart rate and blood pressure
- Reduces cortisol levels
- Increases alertness without caffeine

The immediate effects were remarkable. Instead of reaching for coffee first thing in the morning, I felt naturally alert and energized. The practice also seemed to reduce the facial puffiness I sometimes experienced.

Heat Therapy Integration

While cold therapy was energizing, I discovered that heat therapy was equally powerful for recovery and fat loss. Dr. Rhonda Patrick's research showed that **sauna use could increase growth hormone by 24x** and improve insulin sensitivity.

Since I didn't have access to a sauna, I created a home protocol using hot baths with Epsom salts.

The Evening Heat Protocol

Every other evening, I would take a 15-20 minute hot bath (as hot as I could comfortably tolerate) with 1-2 cups of Epsom salt, about 60-90 minutes before bedtime.

Research published in Sleep Medicine Reviews found that this practice could:

- **Improve sleep onset by 36%**
- **Increase deep sleep duration**
- **Reduce cortisol levels**
- **Enhance overnight fat burning**

The mechanism involves core body temperature regulation. When you heat your body then cool down, it triggers a natural drowsiness response and promotes deeper sleep stages where growth hormone is released.

Contrast Therapy Experimentation

Inspired by Scandinavian traditions, I began experimenting with contrast therapy—alternating between hot and cold exposure. Research from Finland found that regular sauna use combined with cold plunges could:

- **Reduce all-cause mortality by 40%**
- **Improve cardiovascular health**
- **Enhance immune function**
- **Boost mental resilience**

My home version was simple: end each hot shower with 30-60 seconds of cold water, or alternate between hot bath and cold shower.

Light Therapy Optimization

Dr. Dan Pardi's research on circadian biology revealed that **light exposure timing could influence metabolism by up to 20%**. The key was getting bright light early in the day and minimizing blue light in the evening.

Morning Light Protocol

Within 30 minutes of waking, I would step outside for 10-15 minutes, even on cloudy days. Outdoor light provides 1,000-10,000+ lux compared to typical indoor lighting of 100-300 lux.

Research from Harvard Medical School found that morning light exposure:

- **Advances circadian phase** (makes you sleepy earlier)
- **Improves mood and alertness**
- **Enhances melatonin production at night**
- **Supports healthy cortisol rhythm**

Evening Light Management

Two hours before bedtime, I would put on blue light blocking glasses and dim all lights in my home. Research from the University of Toronto found that blue light blocking could **restore normal melatonin production** even under bright artificial light.

Strategic Supplementation

While I preferred to get nutrients from food, certain supplements showed clear research benefits for recovery and fat loss when combined with GLP-1 medication.

Magnesium Glycinate

Research from the University of Edinburgh found that magnesium deficiency could **impair fat oxidation by up to 15%**. Since magnesium is involved in over

300 enzymatic reactions, deficiency could impact everything from sleep to energy production.

I took 200-400mg of magnesium glycinate about an hour before bed. The glycinate form is well-absorbed and the glycine component has additional calming properties.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Dr. Barry Sears' research found that omega-3 supplementation could **enhance fat burning by improving cellular efficiency**. The anti-inflammatory effects also supported recovery from exercise.

I added 2-3 grams of high-quality fish oil daily, timed with meals to improve absorption.

HRV and Recovery Monitoring

I started using a heart rate variability (HRV) monitor to objectively track my recovery status. Research from the Finnish Olympic Committee found that **HRV could predict overtraining before symptoms appeared**.

My morning routine included a 5-minute HRV measurement. High HRV indicated good recovery and readiness for more intense exercise. Low HRV suggested prioritizing gentle movement and stress reduction.

This data-driven approach prevented me from pushing too hard on days when my body needed recovery, while encouraging more intensity when I was well-recovered.

Breathwork for Recovery

Dr. Elissa Epel's research at UCSF showed that **controlled breathing practices could reduce cortisol by up to 25%** and improve stress resilience. I implemented a simple 5-minute breathwork session during my afternoon slump.

The 4-7-8 Protocol

- Inhale for 4 counts
- Hold for 7 counts
- Exhale for 8 counts
- Repeat 4-8 cycles

This practice activated the parasympathetic nervous system and provided a natural energy boost without caffeine. Research showed it could also improve insulin sensitivity and support fat oxidation.

Red Light Therapy

While not essential, I experimented with a small red light therapy device. Research from NASA and various medical centers found that **specific wavelengths of red and near-infrared light could enhance cellular energy production.**

I used a handheld device for 10-15 minutes each morning, alternating between face (for skin health) and thyroid area (for potential metabolic benefits). While the effects were subtle, some research suggests red light therapy may support thyroid function and overall energy production.

The Compound Recovery Effect

The most remarkable discovery was how these recovery protocols compounded with each other and with the GLP-1 medication. Each intervention supported the others:

- Better sleep enhanced stress resilience
- Cold therapy improved mood and energy
- Heat therapy promoted deeper sleep
- Light optimization supported natural rhythms
- Proper supplementation filled nutritional gaps

Practical Implementation

Rather than trying to implement everything at once, I added one recovery protocol per week:

Week 1: Morning cold face dunk and evening Epsom salt bath

Week 2: Added morning light exposure and blue light blocking

Week 3: Introduced magnesium and omega-3 supplementation

Week 4: Added breathwork and HRV monitoring

The Results

After three months of consistent recovery optimization, the benefits extended far beyond weight loss:

- **Energy levels:** Stable throughout the day without caffeine crashes
- **Sleep quality:** Falling asleep within 10 minutes, waking refreshed
- **Stress resilience:** Remained calm during typically stressful situations
- **Exercise performance:** Faster recovery between workouts
- **Mood stability:** More consistent emotional state throughout the day
- **Body composition:** Continued fat loss while maintaining muscle mass

The lesson was clear: recovery isn't passive rest—it's active optimization of your body's natural healing and regeneration processes. When combined with GLP-1 medication and solid nutrition practices, strategic recovery protocols can significantly accelerate results while improving overall quality of life.

Chapter 8:

**The Transformation -
Putting It All Together**

After twelve months of implementing these strategies, my transformation was complete—but not in the way I had originally envisioned. Yes, I had lost 32 pounds and dramatically improved my body composition. But more importantly, I had completely rewired my relationship with food, exercise, and health.

The person who started this journey was constantly thinking about food, exhausted from ineffective workouts, and frustrated by inconsistent results. The person I became was energized, focused, and operating from a completely different metabolic baseline.

The Synergy Effect

What made this approach different from previous attempts wasn't any single strategy—it was how everything worked together. GLP-1 medication provided the foundation by eliminating food noise and stabilizing blood sugar. But the lifestyle optimizations amplified those effects exponentially.

The Compound Benefits

Dr. Peter Attia, author of "Outlive," emphasizes this concept: "Health interventions are not additive—they're multiplicative. Sleep optimization doesn't just add to the benefits of good nutrition; it multiplies them."

This principle proved true in my experience:

- GLP-1 + strategic fasting = effortless appetite control
- Incline walking + fasted state = enhanced fat burning
- Sleep optimization + stress management = hormonal balance
- Gut health + whole foods = improved nutrient absorption
- Recovery protocols + consistent habits = accelerated results

The Mental Transformation

Perhaps the most profound change was psychological. Food had always been either the enemy (during diet phases) or a source of guilt (during overeating phases). The combination of GLP-1 medication with these evidence-based strategies created something I'd never experienced: food neutrality.

Dr. Stephan Guyenet explains this phenomenon: "When appetite regulation is functioning normally, food becomes fuel rather than obsession. You eat when hungry, stop when satisfied, and don't think about it otherwise."

The Metabolic Flexibility

One unexpected benefit was developing what researchers call "metabolic flexibility"—the ability to efficiently switch between burning glucose and fat for fuel. This showed up in practical ways:

- **Stable energy without frequent meals**
- **Mental clarity during fasting periods**
- **Better exercise performance in various states**
- **Reduced cravings for processed foods**
- **Natural appetite regulation**

Dr. Ben Bikman's research shows that **metabolic flexibility is strongly associated with longevity, disease resistance, and sustained weight management.**

The Sustainability Factor

Traditional weight loss approaches often work temporarily but fail long-term because they're unsustainable. This approach felt different because each component made life easier, not harder:

- **Sleep optimization** → more energy and better mood
- **Strategic walking** → enjoyable movement without exhaustion
- **Protein prioritization** → sustained satiety and stable energy
- **Gut health focus** → better digestion and reduced bloating
- **Recovery protocols** → enhanced stress resilience and sleep quality

Long-Term Maintenance

As I transitioned from active weight loss to maintenance, the principles remained the same but the intensity decreased. I had built a sustainable lifestyle rather than following a temporary diet.

The 80/20 Maintenance Approach

Following the research of food psychologist Dr. Brian Wansink, I adopted an 80/20 approach: consistent with optimized habits 80% of the time, flexible for social situations and life events 20% of the time.

This prevented the all-or-nothing mentality that had sabotaged previous attempts at maintaining weight loss.

The Ripple Effects

The benefits extended far beyond weight loss:

Professional Life: Stable energy and improved focus led to better work performance and productivity.

Relationships: Being less irritable and having more energy improved interactions with family and friends.

Physical Capabilities: Increased strength and endurance opened up new activities and hobbies.

Confidence: The transformation created a positive feedback loop of self-efficacy that influenced other areas of life.

Lessons for Others

Through working with others at NewSelf, I learned that while the principles are universal, the implementation must be individualized:

Start with Foundation: Sleep, stress management, and basic nutrition create the platform for everything else.

Add Gradually: Implementing too many changes at once leads to overwhelm and abandonment.

Use Data Wisely: Track metrics that matter (energy, sleep quality, performance) rather than just weight.

Embrace Flexibility: Perfect adherence isn't required—consistency with key principles is what matters.

Focus on Systems: Build habits and routines that make healthy choices automatic.

The Future of Fat Loss

My experience with GLP-1 medications convinced me that we're entering a new era of weight management. These medications don't just help people lose weight—they provide a window of opportunity to establish sustainable healthy habits.

As Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford notes, "GLP-1 agonists allow people to experience what normal appetite regulation feels like, often for the first time in their adult lives. This creates space to build healthy relationships with food and exercise."

The key is using this opportunity wisely—not just to lose weight, but to completely transform your health foundation.

Beyond Weight Loss

What started as a quest to lose fat became a journey toward optimal health and vitality. The strategies that promoted fat loss also enhanced:

- **Cognitive function and mental clarity**
- **Stress resilience and emotional stability**
- **Physical performance and recovery**
- **Sleep quality and energy levels**
- **Overall life satisfaction and confidence**

This holistic transformation is what distinguishes truly successful health optimization from temporary weight loss.

The Simple Implementation Guide

After sharing my story with hundreds of people, I've learned that the biggest barrier isn't understanding what to do—it's knowing how to start and maintain momentum. Here's the distilled essence of everything that worked, organized for practical implementation.

Week 1-2: Foundation Setting

Primary Focus: Sleep and basic nutrition without overwhelm

Start with just three non-negotiables:

1. **Sleep 7+ hours nightly** with a consistent bedtime
2. **Eat protein at every meal** (aim for palm-sized portions)
3. **Walk 8,000+ steps daily** (track with any smartphone)

These three habits create the foundation for everything else. Don't add anything new until these feel automatic.

Week 3-4: Strategic Addition

Primary Focus: Intermittent fasting and movement optimization

Add two elements:

1. **16:8 intermittent fasting** (eat between 12 PM - 8 PM if natural)
2. **Two incline walks weekly** (15-20 minutes, challenging but sustainable pace)

The GLP-1 medication makes fasting much easier. Follow your body's natural hunger cues rather than forcing arbitrary meal times.

Week 5-8: Optimization

Primary Focus: Gut health and recovery protocols

Implement the gut reset:

1. **Eliminate processed foods and seed oils** for one week
2. **Add one fermented food daily** (Greek yogurt, sauerkraut, or kefir)
3. **Begin evening recovery routine** (Epsom salt bath 3x weekly, magnesium before bed)

Week 9-12: Advanced Integration

Primary Focus: Fine-tuning and personalization

Add biohacking elements that resonate:

1. **Morning cold exposure** (cold face dunk or cold shower finish)
2. **Light optimization** (bright light within 1 hour of waking, blue light blocking after 8 PM)
3. **Breathwork practice** (5 minutes during afternoon energy dip)

Essential Reminders

Progress Over Perfection: Consistency with 80% adherence beats perfect execution that you can't maintain.

Individual Response: Your optimal fasting window, exercise timing, and recovery needs may differ from others.

Sustainable Pace: Building lasting habits takes months, not weeks. Be patient with the process.

Data-Driven Decisions: Track energy levels, sleep quality, and how you feel rather than obsessing over daily weight fluctuations.

Professional Support: Work with healthcare providers familiar with GLP-1 protocols for optimal results and safety.

Final Thoughts: Your Health Revolution Starts Today

The combination of GLP-1 medication with evidence-based lifestyle optimization represents the most effective approach to sustainable fat loss I've ever experienced. But the real value isn't just in the weight lost—it's in the health gained, the energy restored, and the confidence rebuilt.

You now have the roadmap that took me years to develop through trial, error, and extensive research. The strategies in this guide aren't theoretical—they're battle-tested approaches that work synergistically with your medication to accelerate results while building lasting health.

The best time to start was yesterday. The second best time is right now.

Choose one strategy from this guide and implement it today. Your transformation begins with that single decision to prioritize your health and commit to the process.

Remember: You're not just losing weight. You're reclaiming your vitality, optimizing your health, and building the foundation for years of improved quality of life.

The journey starts now. The results will follow.

Quick Start Checklist

Week 1 Essentials:

- Set consistent bedtime for 7-8 hours sleep opportunity
- Include protein source at every meal
- Track daily steps, aim for 8,000+
- Eliminate liquid calories (soda, juice, sugary coffee drinks)
- Take magnesium glycinate 30 minutes before bed

Week 2-3 Additions:

- Observe natural hunger patterns, consider 16:8 fasting if comfortable
- Add 2 incline walking sessions (15-20 minutes each)
- Morning light exposure within 1 hour of waking
- Begin gut reset: eliminate processed foods for 7 days

Week 4+ Optimization:

- Add fermented food daily (Greek yogurt, sauerkraut, kimchi)
- Evening Epsom salt bath 3x weekly
- Cold face dunk each morning
- Blue light blocking glasses 2 hours before bed
- 5-minute breathwork session during afternoon

Success Metrics to Track:

- Energy levels throughout the day
- Sleep quality and wake refreshness
- Hunger patterns and food cravings
- Exercise performance and recovery
- Overall mood and stress levels
- Body composition changes (photos, measurements, how clothes fit)

Disclaimer: This guide is for educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Always consult with your healthcare provider before starting any new nutrition, exercise, or supplementation program, especially when taking prescription medications. Individual results may vary.

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