

Identity: Who Am I Without the Weight-Loss Goal?

A weight-loss journey can occupy enormous mental space. When progress becomes established, some people discover that the goal that organised their days is no longer enough to organise their identity.

Why the emotional side matters

Medicines used for weight management can change appetite, eating patterns, body size and everyday routines. Those changes can interact with self-esteem, identity, relationships and previous experiences with food or weight. NICE guidance recognises the importance of behavioural support and counselling alongside weight-management medicines, and recommends referral for mental-health or eating-disorder support when needed.

You may notice

- wondering 'what now?'
- feeling defined by before-and-after thinking
- difficulty enjoying progress without chasing more
- needing a broader sense of purpose

Something to try

Begin shifting from a body project to a life project. Choose goals connected with relationships, learning, work, creativity, movement, travel, rest or anything that makes life feel meaningful.

A message from Maggie

If this experience feels more emotional than you expected, please give yourself permission to acknowledge that. A weight-loss injection changes more than appetite for some people. It can change routines, how you are seen, how you see yourself and the relationship you have had with food for many years. You do not have to feel grateful or positive every minute simply because the medication is helping physically. I would encourage you to keep checking in with the whole of you — your emotional wellbeing, nourishment, relationships, energy and sense of self — rather than measuring success only by weight.

Therapy approaches that may help

- Person-centred therapy can offer a non-judgemental place to make sense of mixed feelings without assuming weight loss should feel entirely positive.
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) can help move attention from numbers and appearance towards personal values and the life you want to build.
- Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) may help when shame, self-criticism, comparison or fear of regain become strong.

- CBT can be useful for rigid beliefs, checking patterns, anxiety and all-or-nothing thinking. Eating-disorder-informed support is important if restriction, compulsive exercise or fear around food is increasing.

Book recommendations

- **The Body Is Not an Apology — Sonya Renee Taylor** — useful for exploring body image, self-worth and a kinder relationship with yourself.
- **More Than a Body — Lexie Kite & Lindsay Kite** — useful for exploring body image, self-worth and a kinder relationship with yourself.
- **Self-Compassion — Kristin Neff** — useful for exploring body image, self-worth and a kinder relationship with yourself.

When to seek additional support

Speak with your prescriber, GP or another appropriate healthcare professional if side effects are troubling you, your mood is deteriorating, you are struggling to eat or drink adequately, or thoughts about weight, food, exercise or body checking are becoming increasingly rigid or consuming. If an eating disorder is suspected, NICE recommends assessment and appropriate specialist referral; BMI alone should not determine access to eating-disorder treatment.

Important

This resource is for emotional support and education and does not replace medical advice. Do not change the dose, pause or stop prescribed medication without discussing this with the clinician responsible for your treatment.