

*Expert* Support Series: **Mental Health**<sup>+</sup>

# 30-60-90 Mindset Milestones Workbook

Workshopping Your Way to Long-Lasting  
Weight Loss: Thought Exercises Designed  
to Strengthen Your Mindset

Written by Dr. Katie Rickel

# Preface

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Working through these exercises – designed to help you navigate challenges that will arise in the 4 focus areas – will enable you to create a mindset and behavioral repertoire that will support your long-term weight loss success. As you navigate through your first 3 months of this journey, it will be critical to examine your source of motivation, social relationships, habits, and relationship with food. If you do not attend to these areas, chances are that you will quickly slip back into the old patterns and dynamics that caused you to gain weight in the first place...and it will only be a matter of time before the weight finds its way back to you. Certainly, your medication is a powerful tool in the change toolbox; however, losing only the pounds will only go so far in getting you closer to the life that you have always wanted. Nothing changes if nothing changes. You don't just want a smaller body in the same exact life. Give yourself the opportunity to think bigger and brighter.

This time – the last time – with the powerful tool of medication coming along for the ride, you will have the opportunity to make tweaks to your mentality and lifestyle that will facilitate long-term success. We have created a workbook to guide you toward your 30-, 60-, and 90-day milestones. At each milestone, you will be presented with a set of activities and thought exercises in 4 key areas: motivation, your relationship with food, social relationships, and habits & lifestyle. We will also be offering webinars to review the exercises for each of the milestones. We encourage you to attend these interactive events.

Everyone's journey is different, so you are certainly welcome to take what's helpful and leave what's not. However, we believe that taking your mental and emotional health seriously through this process will be the difference between this being yet another diet attempt and this being your forever solution to lasting weight loss.



# 30-Day Milestone:

## Motivation



### Writing a Letter to Your Future Self

The beginning of your weight loss journey is a critical time to establish your “why.” Chances are that you have been struggling for some time, and the negative implications of carrying excess weight are ever-present in your life. In fact, you may have gotten so used to some of these feeling states that they feel like your new normal. Given that you have made the choice to begin treatment, it is possible that you have finally realized that you are sick and tired of being sick and tired. You may even have the thought “I will do anything it takes to feel better.” It is so important to document – now – these reasons that you are so compelled to make a change because they will be good reminders down the road when the going gets tough. It is perfectly normal and natural for motivation to wax and wane over time, so you will do yourself a favor if, at this time of high motivation, you bottle all of your reasons.

One way to capitalize on this time of high motivation is to write a letter to your future self. Perhaps you might imagine you are writing to yourself one year from now. You are at a place in which you feel significantly better in your body, and some of the pain of carrying excess weight has dissipated.

You are watching yourself start to slip into some old habits – habits that you know are a slippery slope. It is natural to take your foot off the gas, so to speak, when you are in a more comfortable place, so it is not unusual to let the complacency to take over.



How do you feel when you wake up in the morning?

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What are the most difficult parts of your day?

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What have you been putting off doing until you are more comfortable in your body, physically and emotionally?

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How has your professional life been impacted by your weight?  
What opportunities have you turned down or not pursued at all  
because of fears related to your weight?

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What kinds of physical sensations (pain, aches, etc.)  
bother you most on a daily basis?

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What are ways in which your weight/health are currently  
negatively impacting the way you show up for your family?

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What activities have you been avoiding because of your weight?

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How have your relationships suffered because of your weight?  
Your romantic relationships? Your friendships?

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What will your life look like one year from now  
if you do not make a change?

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What experiences would you like to have in the next 10 years when you are more comfortable in your body?

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If you'd like to take this exercise a step further, there are a variety of websites that allow you to send an email to yourself at a future date. <https://www.emailyourfutureself.com/email> is one; <https://the-self.club/future-self/> is another.

You can send yourself this very letter, and you just may receive it when you need to hear (from yourself) the most!



# 30-Day Milestone:

## Relationship with Food



### Finding Alternative Ways to Self-Soothe

For many people who struggle with weight, food has become the go-to for dealing with any and all negative emotional states. This association between food and distress starts during our first few days of life and continues into adulthood. In infancy, our cries were soothed with the bottle or the breast. As young children, snacks were often given during long car rides or after we were brave during a scary doctor appointment. As we moved into adulthood, we learned to soothe the pain of heartbreak with a pint of ice cream. It's no wonder that we have learned that food is our comfort in times of distress. It's the most convenient, cheapest, fastest, most socially acceptable way to give ourselves some momentary pleasure when we are faced with the pain of life. Further, sometimes the relief even starts with the planning of and fantasizing about what we will eat. To this end, the entire process of coming up with the idea, procuring the food, planning for eating, the act of eating itself, and then the often described "food fog" that has come over us when we have eaten...it's a powerful elixir that has been effective (at least in the short term) time and time again.

Interestingly, many people find that when taking weight loss medication, food no longer gives them that reward that it always has. People are often very surprised that they are no longer thinking about food around the clock, often have trouble putting their finger on "what sounds good", and then find that they don't have much appetite when it comes time to



consume the food. Because the medication does blunt the pleasurable nature of the entire process of eating, people often find that they are grieving the “loss” of a friend who was always there for them. When we’ve not developed a wider variety of ways to cope and soothe ourselves, it can be difficult to know how to care for ourselves in other ways. Therefore, it makes good sense to come up with some alternative ways to soothe. Read through the list below and circle that appeal to you. Add some of your own!

Note that many of these things will not give the same “bang for your buck” as food once did, but over time, you will re-train your brain to be calmed by these other avenues:

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|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to music                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Reminisce about a favorite vacation  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learn a TikTok dance                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan a vacation or stay-cation   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soften your hands with sweet smelling lotion          | <input type="checkbox"/> Doodle   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light a candle  | <input type="checkbox"/> Allow yourself to cry  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to a podcast                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> People watch at a park or shopping mall  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read a chapter from a favorite book                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Binge a podcast  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Put fresh sheets on your bed   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sit outside in nature                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Blow bubbles   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rub sweet smelling lotion on your hands               | <input type="checkbox"/> Buy a beautiful plant  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drink a glass of very cold water                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Soak your feet in warm water and Epsom salts                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smell an essential oil                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Lie under a weighted blanket   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look back at pictures from childhood                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask a loved one for a hug  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call a friend to whom you’ve not spoken in many years | <input type="checkbox"/> Make a playlist of your favorite songs   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a bubble bath                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Search YouTube for a guided meditation   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Put a cool towel on your forehead                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Re-read old emails or cards that you have received from loved ones in the past |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visualize a location in which you feel safe and calm  |   |



# 30-Day Milestone:

## Social Relationships



### Building Your Tribe of Support

As you are beginning your weight loss journey, you may wonder whether to tell your family, friends, and co-workers about what you are undergoing. People often experience some ambivalence here, since part of you may be excited and wanting to share, whereas another part of you may feel embarrassed, anxious, or even ashamed. Further, because our struggle with weight is one that may be more visible to others (compared to any other health condition that may be more invisible), we often experience a need to explain ourselves or to get ahead of questions that may come. It is important to remember, however, that you do not owe anyone any explanation about the “what”, “why”, or “how”.

If you do want to share with people in your life, however, it may be helpful to think about how these people might be able to support you. There are many different kinds of social support – 4 specifically – that have been identified, and as you read through them below, make some notes about who in your life might be best suited to provide that kind of support. Usually, there are people in our life who are particularly good at providing certain kinds of support but are not so great at providing other kinds. It is unusual, in fact, to find someone who is great at providing all kinds of support, so it can be helpful to diversify our support resources. Further, it’s perfectly OK if you don’t feel you need or want support in any of these categories.

### Emotional Support:

This kind of support is what most people think of when considering social support – a shoulder to cry on, someone to vent to about your difficulties, someone to celebrate with when you are excited, someone to cheer you up or motivate you when you are feeling stuck. Who in your life would be best at providing emotional support as it applies to your weight loss journey:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



### Tangible Support:

This type of support refers to help or assistance that you may need during your weight loss. Tangible support might include transportation to the gym, childcare for when you are preparing healthy meals, or financial support to help you pay for medication. This type of support is more material or concrete, and it is support that might take a task, responsibility, or burden off your plate. Who in your life is good at giving tangible support, and more importantly, what kinds of tangible support do you suspect you might need?

_____	for this need: _____
_____	for this need: _____
_____	for this need: _____
_____	for this need: _____



### Informational Support:

Information support is just what it sounds like – people who can give you information about topics they know more about than you. Informational support can be given by family and friends who have been through similar challenges, or it can be given by health and wellness providers who might be experts in an area. Examples related to weight loss might be recipes, exercise techniques, or instructions regarding medication and side effects.

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### Companionship Support:

This final type of support refers to anyone whose mere presence might feel supportive to you. Interestingly, this kind of support does not require anything of the support beyond them just being “with” you — either physically or in spirit. A pet, someone deceased, or the individual whose name you don’t know (but is always pulling into the gym at the same as you) can all be sources of companionship support. Just having someone there can feel supportive, motivating, or soothing.

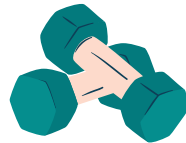
Who in your life (any being – dead or alive) can provide you with companionship support?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



# 30-Day Milestone:

## Habits and Lifestyle



### Understanding Your Habits & Triggers

Most people are surprised by how much they eat outside of their own awareness. In fact, in most weight loss studies, the researchers will ask subjects to purely document a typical week of eating (specifically telling subjects to focus on NOT changing anything), and almost without exception, the subjects will lose weight during that initial week. This is because the act of simply bringing focus to what we are eating can decrease the amount of mindless eating in which we are engaging (and in these studies, the decrease is so significant that it does result in weight loss).

Because mindless eating happens outside of our awareness, it may be difficult for you to identify where and when some of this may be occurring. Even with the assistance of medication, you may find that you eat habitually in certain circumstances. Thus, it can be helpful to pinpoint these trigger situations so that you can create safeguards as you embark on your weight loss journey.

To that end, for the next three days, please document everything that you eat. It's best if one of these days includes a weekend day, especially if your weekend routine is different from your weekday routine. No need to worry about calories or precise quantities – simply taking inventory of the time (e.g., 9:15am), location (e.g., car), food item and approximate quantity (e.g., 1 breakfast sandwich, 3 small hash browns, medium coffee with

creamers) will be helpful for this exercise. As mentioned earlier, it is best if you try not to change anything during these first three days so that you can get a true sense of your starting point.

Once you have this documented, review your logs and highlight (with a highlighter or circle with a colored pen) any eating that you might characterize as beyond what you believe you needed for nutrition (and/or quantities to provide reasonable levels of satiety). There are no hard and fast rules here, but deep down, you likely have an awareness of which eating (either in type of food or in quantity) were moving you closer to, or further from, your health goals. Then, answer the questions below and consider the associated suggestions: consume the food. Because the medication does blunt the pleasurable nature of the entire process of eating, people often find that they are grieving the “loss” of a friend who was always there for them. When we’ve not developed a wider variety of ways to cope and soothe ourselves, it can be difficult to know how to care for ourselves in other ways. Therefore, it makes good sense to come up with some alternative ways to soothe. Read through the list below and circle that appeal to you. Add some of your own! Note that many of these things will not give the same “bang for your buck” as food once did, but over time, you will re-train your brain to be calmed by these other avenues:



### Timing:

#### **Did overeating happen more on a certain day (compared to the other days)?**

*If so, you might consider timing your injection right before the days that you tend to overeat. Many people find that they struggle more with temptations over the week-end, and so a Friday injection day works well. For others, the start of the work week is most stressful, and so a Sunday or Monday injection can help guard against stress eating.*

#### **Did more overeating occur in the evenings versus earlier in the day?**

*If so, know that you are not alone. Nighttime eating is a problem for many people, and it can happen for a variety of reasons. Oftentimes we have less going on in the evenings and so more time for mindless eating. Additionally, you may have gotten into the habit of snacking to soothe yourself after a stressful day. If nighttime meeting is a problem for you, you might consider making a proactive plan to stay busy with a hobby, a book, or spending time with loved ones. Or, you could consider getting into bed earlier, as quality sleep will be helpful, more generally, in your weight loss journey.*

### Location:

#### **Are there certain locations in which overeating tends to happen (i.e., in the car, at your work desk, on your couch in front of the television, standing up in the kitchen while preparing a meal)?**

*If there are a few locations that are commonly associated with overeating for you, you might consider drawing some hard lines against eating in those locations - one at a time! Perhaps for a week, you can focus on not eating in the car. Once that feels comfortable, transition all “couch eating” at home to a table. Working on managing the location of your eating will not only help reduce mindless eating, but it may also reduce the number of overall triggers that you contend with on a day-to-da basis. When you always eat at the car, or at your desk, for example, that location actually becomes a trigger for eating in and of itself. It takes some time and attention to rewire these associations, but it is possible.*



### Food Origin:

**Are you noticing that you tend to overeat more in restaurants versus when you are eating at home?**

*If so, as simple as it sounds, you might consider putting a distinct limit on the number of times that you eat out (or eat food prepared outside your home) each week.*

*If this is impossible, an alternative is to choose a “go to meal” at a couple of restaurants, and opt for one of those when you do need to eat out. Part of what drives mindless eating and overeating is having an endless variety of tempting foods. Especially if you are choosing to eat out because you are in a rush or stressed for time, you will likely not be in a position to choose an option that moves you closer to your goals. Thus, if you have a “go to” option that is more nutritious than other choices, you will reduce some of the friction that comes when it’s time to make your selection.*



### Other Themes:

**Do some detective work as you are considering any other commonalities among your overeating episodes. Do you overeat in the company of certain people? Are you finding that you eat during times of the day or the week when you are bored? Are there certain holidays, events, gatherings, or celebrations that are particularly difficult to manage? Planning ahead for any of these triggers will set you up for success.**