

## Build a Bridge and Get Over It

By Lisa Schilling RN

If where you are now seems far from where you want to be, it is time to **build a bridge** to reach your goals. Creating a healthy lifestyle is a life long journey. Most chronic dieters share a common thought process. They understand that the *need* to lose weight and would *like* to, but on some levels they are comfortable with their bodies. Enjoyment of personal habits and the pleasure gained from the weight-causing behaviors keep them in **bondage** to them. It is often more comfortable living life at that level than going through the struggles and hard work of trying to shed weight or become more fit. Not to mention the *guilt and shame* that can result if goals are not met.

Many unhealthy habits are used to self soothe. It is tough to tell someone facing multiple stressors to give up the few habits that they are using to cope and deal with their stress. Taking that behavior away, while at the same time offering only a painful replacement, will never work. Until something more beneficial is found to replace the harmful behavior, people will want to lean on the familiar.

You have two choices. You can remain where you are, a place of relative comfort, or you can aspire toward your goal. The problem being, there is no EASY **bridge** from your comfort zone to your ultimate goal. You must determine if it is WORTH the hard work to reach your goal, or if you are comfortable ENOUGH with where you are right now. Many people start out on this journey and find it hard to navigate. So they return to the comfort and familiarity of their original situation.

**Giving up** on the journey happens for many reasons. Most people who attempt this journey have not been equipped to deal with the obstacles that they will encounter. Knowing what to expect and having a plan to counteract problems will go a long way in propelling you toward a goal destination.

You can properly equip yourself to withstand the journey. In order to be

successful, you must possess and use tools to navigate the pitfalls of the trip. **Build your bridge** by using your knowledge of food, its affect on your body, how to exercise and why it is important, along with the mental component of making healthy changes, to create a strong foundation. Use that bridge to access your goal destination in a way that you can *enjoy* and *maintain* your residence there. Support your bridge with strategies and tactics that allow you to make wrong steps without falling completely off the wagon. (Who made “the wagon” such a good place to be anyway?)

After starting this journey several times, many people decide that it is easier to just stay at their current comfort level, at a less than ideal size, than it is to go through a period of uncomfortable change. It can become *too much to deal with* in their current situation. At this time, the IT of the prize is not worth the COST of the journey. For this “season-of-life,” the *journey* is not a top priority.

It is amazing the discomfort we will put up with when we are building something great. So it is with building the bridge to your goals. Picture that healthier you, just as you would picture your new or remodeled home. Start with SMALL actions that lead to BIG changes. You need to realize what you have control over and what you don't. Use **what you can control** to offset **what you cannot**. By building a bridge of smart food choices, exercise discipline, personal relaxation/de-stressing and **working smarter, not harder**, you can meet goals without being worn down on the journey.

People often falsely assume they must be motivated first, and then act later, but often the motivation will come after the action. When you make small doable changes and succeed you will be motivated to do more. Your trip across the bridge can be more comfortable when you utilize the tools you have learned. Those tools will be unique to who you are. Use them to help you deal with the uncomfortable feelings associated with changes in lifestyle. The journey to your goal may feel like a climb, but it shouldn't

feel steep. You have an edge when you are equipped. You possess the tools you need to get where you want to go. So—get started! NOW is the time. Evaluate, plan, execute and build a bridge that will result in the **fulfillment of your total health goals**. As my son would say, “Build a bridge, and get over it!”