



## **Guiding Principles For Significant Others**

**Reduce, rather than increase, stress at home.** Your significant other is probably stressed by surgery and trying to adapt to new lifestyle habits. They will need additional help from you during this time.

**Try not to be negative. Complaining and being negative also leads to stress.** Your significant other needs positive support. Positive support means asking questions about their program. It does not mean taking charge and telling him/her what should and should not be eaten. This is his/her program. Negativity, which might include excessive suggestions or direction, is usually harmful. If there is a continuing problem which concerns you, talk to the physician.

**Reduce temptation by making your house a "safe zone".** If your significant other is having or has had weight loss surgery, the procedure helps control the amount of food eaten at one time and/or absorbed by his/her body but it does not get rid of the disease of obesity. The drive to eat excess may still be lurking somewhere beneath the surface and may be for life. Some may begin to get serious food cravings again. For them, "out of sight, out of mind" is beneficial right from the start.

**Be positive and encouraging. Praise the improvements, the good changes and accomplishments.** Some patients may have a poor self-image and low self-esteem. When they become smaller, most find that they need to develop a better self image. Sometimes you need to praise and be supportive beyond what you might consider OK in order for it to make an impact. Be consistent in this-one days or one week's praise and encouragement is not enough. It needs to become part of your daily pattern of behavior with him/her for years, if not for life. Many find difficulty in accepting praise; your significant other might need to learn to accept praise better. This cannot happen if praise is not given.

**Allow your significant other adequate space.** We all need space, time to be alone, time to go out with others, to be ourselves.

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**Work at relating-make and spend extra time together.** Communication is the key to any successful relationship; it doesn't happen by itself.

**Support his/her Weight Loss Surgery Program and related activities, including there Support group.** Even years after weight loss surgery, remembering where he/she has come from can help keep them on track. The support groups help remind patients of that and are enjoyable as well as instructive. They continue to grow this way. After "learning the ropes", he/she will help teach others and, by doing so, learn more.

**Take advantage of togetherness opportunities such as swimming, fishing, dancing, and walking together for exercise.** As a person gets larger, their world often gets smaller due to not being able to fit or being self-conscious about size. Since he/she has gotten smaller after having surgery and following their weight management program, your shared world can become larger. It is wonderful to be able to do more things together. First, work at changing those old patterns, old habits which limit you. It's time for a fresh new outlook. Start thinking about, and then doing, those things you haven't done for a long time.

**Openly discuss your good and bad feelings with your significant other.** As he/she loses weight, things in your life and home will change. As is normal for any human being, you may react to these changes. Worry, jealousy, insecurity are some of the natural reactions that people can have when things change. You need to be honest with yourself and think about how and what you feel and then openly discuss your feelings with your significant other. It is better than bottling them up and perhaps being angry inside or losing your temper even when you do not want to. If there is a real problem, it is best to find it out early so you can find a solution sooner. Professional counseling may be beneficial.

**Encourage regular follow-up visits & attend counseling together if necessary.** By looking after the care of your significant other, you are looking after your future together. If problems arise between you, counseling may be recommended—if so, it is worth it.