

Section 1: Building Bridges

Help patients begin to bridge their efforts while they're still in the Reducing Phase. Begin using these educational tools when patients are 5 to 10 pounds from their goal weight in the Reducing Phase. Then carry these tools over on a weekly basis during the five-week Adapting Phase.

Goal: Educate patients early in the program about the difficulties they can expect to face in the Adapting and Sustaining Phases. Help patients understand that relapses can occur and that weight management is a lifelong process.

Follow these tips to begin building bridges:

1. **Jump-start the education process.** As soon as patients sign up for the New Direction program and come to the center for the initial screening, emphasize the “one process, one commitment, one continuum” philosophy. Of course, you also want to highlight the importance of the Adapting and Sustaining Phases of the program. But patients must understand that, although you offer a three-phase program, they must complete the *entire* program from start to finish in order to achieve long-term success. To help patients grasp this “continuum theory,” provide some simple analogies for them. For example, you can’t build a house without a foundation – it supplies the core, the base of the whole house. You also need to add walls for support and ceilings to separate each level. Without all of these elements working together, the roof of the house would fall down. They work in tandem, with no one particular element being more important than the next, but all elements equally important to the end result. The same holds true for New Direction — all three program phases build on each other, and all three are critical to the patient’s success in completing the entire program and achieving their weight management goals.
2. **Applaud early successes.** During the Reducing Phase, fasting patients are only concerned with complying with the program. Their compliance yields quick, positive results: weight loss. Patients see the physical results and receive a congratulatory pat on the back. This provides a great opportunity to reinforce the importance of compliance in all three program phases. Using patients’ early success as a springboard, emphasize that they can achieve similar success in the Adapting and Sustaining Phases by strictly adhering to the program.
3. **Set a realistic time-frame for goals.** Don’t encourage patients to reach their goal weight before they start the Adapting Phase. They must start adapting 5 to 10 pounds from their goal weight. If they achieve (or exceed) their goal weight while still in the Reducing Phase, it gives them the false assumption that they can gain a little weight. That’s a dangerous assumption because that “small” weight gain can quickly spin out of control.
4. **Schedule a special Adapting Visit.** Do blood work, schedule an EKG and let patients watch a video on the exchange system. (A little hand-holding session wouldn’t hurt, either!) This might be a good time to distribute and discuss the “What To Expect When You’re Adapting” flyer, described in the toolbox section. This visit also provides an important opportunity to assure patients that relapses can and do happen. Stress to patients that they can expect staff assistance and support in a non-judgmental atmosphere. This visit can also serve as an informational session to make sure patients know all the procedures your center follows for entering into the Adapting Phase.

5. **Gauge patients' anxiety level.** As you discuss the adapting process with patients, assess their attitude. Are they over-confident? If so, instill some reality-based fear into them or else they'll be unpleasantly surprised. Are they excessively fearful? If so, reassure them that you'll help them every step of the way.
6. **Drill the point home.** Every week, make it a point to reinforce the concept of weight management as a life-long process. Explain that weight management has a beginning and a middle, but there is no end to the process. It requires a permanent commitment. Play up the "continuum theory."
7. **Put it in perspective.** Let patients know that a lapse is perfectly acceptable, whether it happens in the first week of the Adapting Phase or three years down the road. The key to long-term success: wherever and whenever a relapse happens, patients need to be prepared to handle it.
8. **Manage expectations.** Patients will be less likely to fall (or at least better equipped to handle a fall), if they know what to expect in the first place. As patients approach their goal, start discussing the difficulties they can expect to face in the next phases of the program. Prepare them for the hunger they'll feel and the relapses that might occur. Let them know that lapses are a normal part of the process. Equip them with the tools they need to handle these challenges and to bounce back if they are overcome by them.

Tools To Use

- **Flyer.** By spelling out, in black and white, what challenges patients can expect to face and what dangers to watch for when they enter the Adapting Phase, they'll be better prepared to handle them. Most importantly, it will help them realize they are not the only one experiencing these emotions.

In the Toolbox: "What To Expect When You're Adapting"

“What to Expect When You’re Adapting” Flyer

Directions: In order to successfully make the transition from the Reducing Phase to the Sustaining Phase, you need to prepare yourself for the physical and emotional challenges you’ll be facing. Review this information and discuss any fears or concerns you have about the Adapting Phase with a New Direction staff member.

	What you might be feeling:	How to handle these feelings:
Week 1	In the first few weeks after weight loss, your body is still under the effects of ketosis. You should not feel much physical hunger during this time. You feel that you can handle anything, which can lead to a false sense of security.	Enjoy the feeling of power and control while you have it, but it’s important to remember that these feeling of empowerment won’t last for longer than a week or two. Prepare yourself for what might feel like an emotional roller-coaster.
Week 2	“I’m afraid if I eat everything I’m supposed to, I’ll blow up like a balloon.”	This fear is normal. However, if you don’t follow the plan and eat exactly what it prescribes, you’re setting yourself up for a lapse. If you eat less food than prescribed, you no doubt will become intensely hungry which can lead to a binge. Remember, you <u>will not</u> gain weight if you follow the plan.
Week 3	Around the third week, you begin to feel true physical hunger. That’s because the fructose in the fruit added to your diet triggers hunger. This is a conflicting time. You feel hungry after eating, yet you can’t seem to eat all you’re supposed to. You feel as if you need more food to feel full.	This feeling of hunger might hit you unexpectedly or more powerfully than you expected. You might forget everything you learned and quickly revert to old habits. Hang in there, because you’re not alone. Most importantly, you possess the skills to deal with this trying situation. Put these skills to use to maintain control.
Week 4	Because of your hunger, you may become over-anxious. This can trigger the need to eat to quiet your feelings.	Your comfort zone still lies with your old habits. The new habits are not yet etched in your brain, but practice will make it happen. Think back to how you handled stress or other eating triggers when you were on beverage. Then dust off your coping skills and use them.
Week 5	Fear overwhelms you because you can no longer rely on beverage as your crutch. If you stumble and fall, you feel like a failure. When you eat something “bad” you typically do one of two things. You either punish yourself by not eating the rest of the day, which sets you up for out-of-control eating when you finally do eat. Or, you assume you’ve blown the whole program, call yourself a failure and you, your guilt and your shame will regain the weight together.	Remember, weight management is a <i>life-long process</i> . You’re going to experience ups and downs in your moods, feelings and yes, even your weight. The key is to minimize gains by reacting to them early. The most important thing you can do when you stumble or fall is forgive yourself and get back on track. <i>Success is getting back on track as quickly as possible.</i>