

New Year, Real You – The Secret to Lasting Change and a Happier Metabolism

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Quick-fix diets often fail to address the root causes of weight struggles, leading to frustration and rebound weight gain
- › Preparing your metabolism before fat loss ensures lasting results and prevents unnecessary setbacks
- › A maintenance phase boosts metabolism, repairs your relationship with food, and sets the stage for future success
- › A healthier metabolism allows you to eat more while maintaining your weight and makes fat loss easier
- › Combine strength training and daily movement to build lean muscle and support metabolic health

Is "New Year, New You" on your mind? Let's talk about sustainable change. We've all been there – January rolls around and suddenly our social media feeds are flooded with miracle diets and quick-fix weight loss solutions. That fresh-start energy is powerful, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to make positive changes to your health and body composition. In fact, it's completely natural and admirable to set new goals for yourself.

But here's the real talk: Those trending "rapid weight loss" programs that promise to transform you in weeks? They're often like using a Band-Aid to fix a leaky pipe – it might

look good for a moment, but it's not addressing what's really going on underneath.

Think about it this way: Your body is like a sophisticated engine. Before you start pushing it to perform differently, wouldn't it make sense to first ensure it's running at its best? This means focusing on foundations first — optimizing your metabolic health and building sustainable daily habits. It's like tuning up your car before a long road trip, rather than just hoping for the best.

The truth is, successful, lasting weight loss isn't about quick fixes or extreme measures. It's about creating a framework that supports your goals long-term. After all, what's more frustrating than losing weight only to find yourself back at square one (or even further back) a few months later?

If you're thinking about starting a weight loss journey this year, remember: There's no shame in wanting to change your body composition. The key is doing it intelligently, with intention, and with your long-term well-being in mind. Ready to make real, lasting changes? Let's start by building the right foundation for your success.

Do This Before Fat Loss

In 2024, I went through my own fat loss journey, dropping 17 pounds. But here's what matters: Over four months later, I'm maintaining those results while eating a generous 2,600 calories daily (and still slowly increasing my calories). For reference, I am 5', 4.5" and now weigh ~130 lbs.

No rebound, no constant hunger, just sustainable results. But I'll let you in on something crucial — the real work happened before I even started thinking about fat loss. You see, most people are stuck in a frustrating cycle: jumping from one restrictive diet to another, hoping something will finally stick. It's like trying to sprint on an empty tank — it just doesn't work.

The game-changer? Spending most of your year in what we call a "maintenance phase," focusing on optimizing your metabolic health. Think about it — you can't effectively start

a fat loss phase when you're already eating minimal calories. Your body needs a strong foundation first.

This is where a "Reset" phase comes in – a 2 to 12 month period where you gradually increase your calorie intake and work on improving your day to day habits in order to boost your metabolism.

It might sound counterintuitive, but by taking the time to improve your metabolic rate, something amazing happens: your body becomes more efficient at burning calories. This means you can eat more food while maintaining your weight. (Yes, really!)

When you finally transition into a fat loss phase after this metabolic preparation, the process becomes strategic and efficient – no more endless struggling or metabolic damage that often comes with traditional dieting approaches.

The key takeaway? Before jumping into another diet, give your body time to build a stronger metabolic foundation. Your future self will thank you for it.

Why Metabolism Matters

A better metabolic rate means your body will function better systemically, you will have more energy, you will think better, sleep better, and function better overall. A better metabolic rate also makes fat loss a whole lot easier.

Following the Law of Thermodynamics (energy cannot be created or destroyed) – you must be in a caloric deficit to lose weight (calories in < calories out). Yes, there is of course nuance as there are MANY factors that impact the "Calories Out" side of the equation, but we must create an energy deficit which depends on a number of variables. The balance between your energy intake and energy expenditure overtime will determine whether you maintain, lose or gain weight.

Your energy intake (calories in) equates to all of the calories you consume from food and liquids. Your energy expenditure (your 'calories out') is the sum of:

1. Your basal metabolic rate (BMR), which refers to the energy required for your body to maintain basic function. This includes breathing, digesting food, pumping blood throughout the body, maintaining strong hair and nails, the generation of energy, etc.

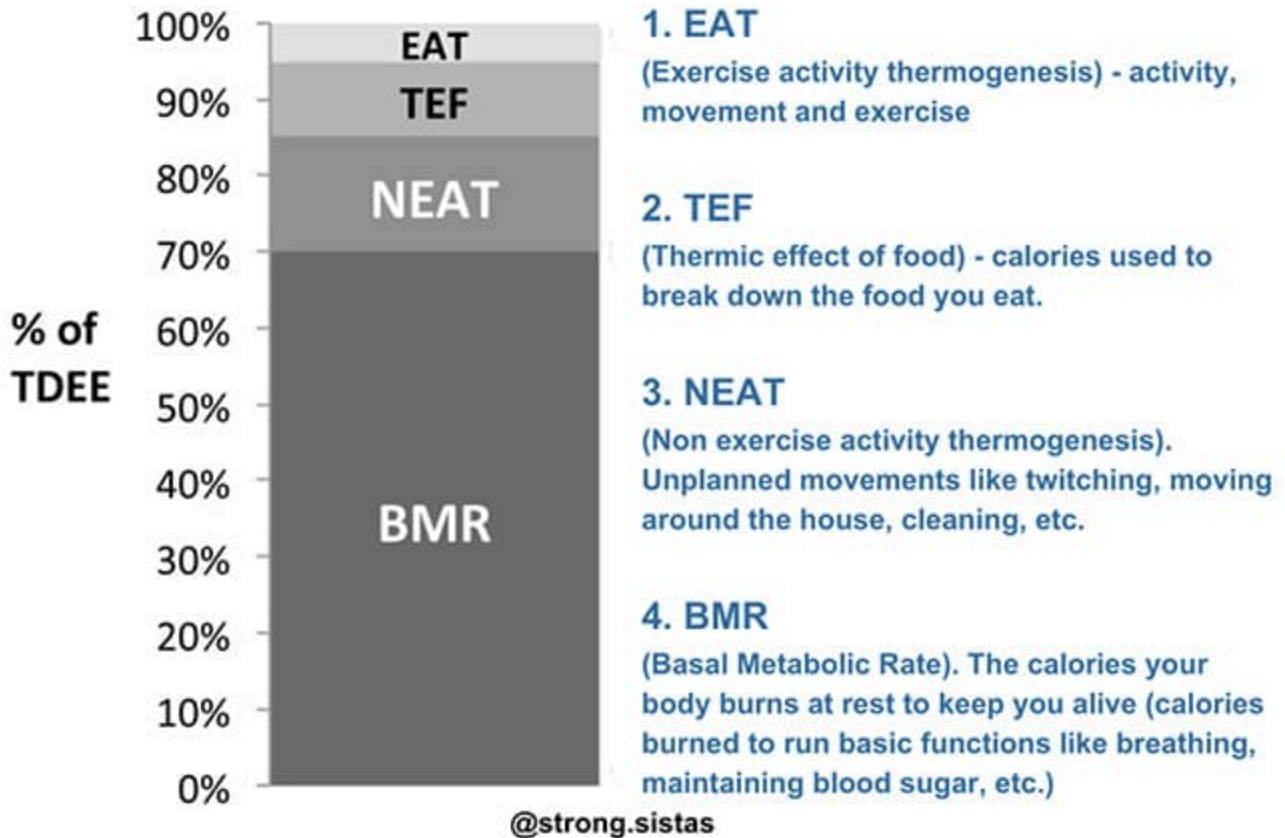
This accounts for 65% to 70% of your total daily expenditure – making it the largest contribution to the energy expenditure equation. Increasing your metabolic rate is one of the best ways to make weight loss and maintenance more sustainable in the long run. You can increase your BMR and this is advantageous for weight loss!

2. Nonexercise activity thermogenesis – NEAT (body movements outside of planned exercise, like fidgeting, doing laundry, etc.). Calories burned from NEAT will vary A LOT. More active individuals (higher daily step counts) will burn more calories due to higher levels of NEAT. Dr. Levine has shown that NEAT can vary by up to 2,000 calories per day between two individuals of the same size!

3. Exercise, the energy your body uses for planned physical activity, whether that is strength training, playing sports or a cardio session. You actually don't burn many calories during a strength training session – and the goal isn't to burn calories. The goal is to elicit a muscular adaptation to then increase the amount of lean mass (muscle) you have, and thus increase your metabolism.

4. Thermic effect of food (TEF) – The amount of calories your body uses to digest the food you consume.

The 4 components of 'calories out'



There's been a lot of debate about the "calories in vs. calories out" model for weight loss, and for good reason. Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, an obesity specialist and professor at Harvard Medical School, shared this powerful critique:

"This idea of 'a calorie in and a calorie out' when it comes to weight loss is not only antiquated, it's just wrong," says Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, an obesity specialist and assistant professor of medicine and pediatrics at Harvard Medical School.

"The truth is that even careful calorie calculations don't always yield uniform results. How your body burns calories depends on a number of factors, including the type of food you eat, your body's metabolism, and even the type of organisms living in your gut. You can eat the exact same number of calories as someone else, yet have very different outcomes when it comes to your weight."

She's absolutely right — there's nuance here! Factors like your metabolism, hormones, and even gut health all play a major role in how your body uses energy. The types of foods you eat can even influence how many calories your body burns.

But here's the key takeaway: While energy balance isn't as simple as "just eat less, move more," it still does apply. Extra energy (calories) that your body doesn't need doesn't just disappear — it's stored as fat. This is why understanding your metabolism is so important.

If your metabolism isn't functioning optimally — due to poor habits, chronic dieting, or hormonal imbalances — your calorie-burning capacity will be significantly lower. And that means weight loss becomes much harder, even if you're eating "healthy" foods.

So, what's the solution? You have to meet your metabolism where it's currently at. Instead of slashing calories or overtraining, focus on gradually improving your metabolic health over time. This patient, intentional approach helps your body adapt and become more efficient at burning energy, setting you up for sustainable success.

Food doesn't just "poof" into thin air — it's either used as energy, stored for later, or helps rebuild and repair your body. The key is to optimize how your body processes that energy, so you can feel great and achieve your goals without constant frustration.

Understanding Your Metabolism — A Game-Changing Perspective

Picture this: You're planning to drive cross-country. Would you start that journey with a car that's barely running, or would you first make sure your engine is in top condition? When it comes to fat loss, your metabolism is that engine — and its condition makes all the difference. Let me paint you a picture with a real-world scenario:

Meet Anna. She's maintaining her weight at 1,600 calories daily. To lose weight, she'd need to drop to ~1,200 calories — that's less than what most children need! It's like trying to run a marathon on an empty stomach.

Not only is it unsustainable, but it's also setting yourself up for a cycle of restriction, binge eating, and frustration. Sound familiar? Now, let's flip the script.

Instead of jumping straight into restriction, Anna decides to invest 3 to 6 months in boosting her metabolism. Through strategic changes in her lifestyle and nutrition (more on these amazing tricks coming up!), she gradually increases her maintenance calories to 2,300 per day. That's right — she's now maintaining her weight while eating 700 more calories daily!

Your maintenance calorie intake is not a set number, it is a range of calories. Below the bottom end of that range, you lose weight, above the top end of that range, you gain weight. But again, the cool thing is that you can shift that range up by improving your metabolism!

Here's where it gets exciting: When Anna decides to start her fat loss journey from this higher maintenance calorie intake, she can eat at a much more reasonable calorie level. No more surviving on lettuce leaves and coffee! She can enjoy satisfying meals while still making progress toward her goals.

Think of it like upgrading your body's engine. By improving how your metabolism and thyroid system function, you're essentially turning your body into a more efficient calorie-burning machine. The result? When you do decide to lose fat, you can do it while eating more food, feeling more energized, and actually enjoying the process.

Remember: Your body is incredibly adaptable, but it needs time and patience. The journey from Point A to Point B isn't a sprint — it's a strategic process that sets you up for lasting success. Ready to learn how to make this transformation happen? Let's dive into the exact steps you need to take.

Boosting Your Metabolism — Your Step-by-Step Guide

Now that you understand why improving your metabolism is so crucial, you're probably wondering: "Okay, but how exactly do I do this?" Let's break down the process of

increasing your BMR (basal metabolic rate) – or in simpler terms, how to rev up your body's natural calorie-burning engine.

What I'm about to share with you is a proven roadmap that has worked not just for me, but for countless others in our course, [Rooted in Resilience](#).

Here's the key: Think of these steps as building blocks. Just like you wouldn't put the roof on a house before laying the foundation, each step builds upon the last. Master one before moving to the next – this isn't a race, it's about creating lasting change. Let me walk you through these five game-changing steps:

- **Step 1: Break free from the quick-fix trap** – Let's talk about something we've all been tempted by – those alluring quick-fix diets that promise dramatic results overnight. You know the ones: "Cut all carbs and watch the pounds melt away!" But here's what those flashy promises don't tell you.

Sure, eliminating carbs might show you a lower number on the scale initially. But here's the reality check: what you're mostly losing is water weight from dropping stored glycogen, and sometimes even precious muscle mass (definitely not what we're aiming for!). It's like cleaning your house by shoving everything into a closet – it looks good temporarily, but you haven't solved the real problem.

I've seen this pattern hundreds of times in our course. The story usually goes something like this: "I tried keto and lost weight quickly ... but then I gained it all back, plus some extra pounds." These aren't isolated cases.

When you restrict entire food groups, you're not just affecting your weight – you're disrupting your hormones, slowing down your metabolism, and worst of all, setting yourself up for an exhausting cycle of restriction and binging.

Here's a truth that might surprise you: Cutting carbs isn't some magical key to fat loss. Yes, some people lose weight on low-carb diets, but that's simply because they're eating fewer calories overall – not because carbs are the enemy.

Your body is perfectly capable of burning fat while enjoying carbohydrates. In fact, a balanced approach that includes all macronutrients often leads to better, more sustainable results.

Remember this: Your body is smarter than any trending diet. Instead of looking for the next quick fix, let's focus on what really works – building a stronger metabolism and creating healthy, sustainable habits that stick around long after the latest fad diet has faded away.

- **Step 2: Know your numbers – they tell your story** – You've heard the saying "what gets measured, gets managed," right? Well, when it comes to improving your metabolism, this couldn't be more true. Think of it like trying to follow a map without knowing your starting point – pretty tricky, right?

This is why your first crucial step is simple but powerful: Start tracking your weight and food intake. Consider this your metabolic GPS – it tells you exactly where you're starting from and helps guide your journey forward. Why is this so important? Because without knowing your baseline:

- You can't accurately gauge your maintenance calorie needs
- You won't know if you're making real progress or just seeing normal fluctuations
- You might be eating far less (or more) than you think
- You'll miss important patterns in how your body responds to different foods and portions

The easiest way to get started? Download an app like Cronometer and begin logging your meals. Don't worry about changing anything just yet – simply observe and record. Weigh yourself consistently (ideally first thing in the morning) and track these numbers too.

Remember: This isn't about judgment or restriction – it's about gathering information. Think of yourself as a scientist collecting data about your own body. This baseline data will become your roadmap for making informed decisions about your nutrition and metabolism going forward.

- **Step 3: Become the chef of your metabolic success** – Want to know one of the most powerful ways to boost your metabolism? It's simpler than you might think: Start cooking your own meals. This isn't just about saving money or knowing what's in your food (though those are fantastic bonuses!) – it's about giving your body the precise fuel it needs to fire on all cylinders.

Think of your metabolism like a high-performance engine. Sure, it might run on regular gasoline, but it performs best with premium fuel. When you cook your own meals, you're in control of that fuel quality.

Restaurant meals and processed foods often come with a hidden metabolic cost: they're typically loaded with both carbs and fats (think french fries – high carb and deep fried), rich in inflammatory PUFAs (processed vegetable oils), and surprisingly low in the micronutrients your body craves.

But here's the good news: You don't need to become a gourmet chef or never eat out again. Even cooking most of your meals at home (while still enjoying the occasional restaurant meal) can make a huge difference. Why? Because you're:

- Avoiding those sneaky preservatives, gums, and fillers that can wreak havoc on your gut health
- Controlling your ingredients to support energy production
- Choosing foods that help balance your hormones
- Building a foundation for a stronger metabolism

Remember, every meal you cook is an investment in your metabolic health. Start simple, focus on whole foods, and watch how your body responds when you fuel it

with care. Your metabolism will thank you!

- **Step 4: Develop a well-rounded exercise and movement routine** — Here's the thing: you don't need to go overboard with exercise to improve your metabolism, but staying active is essential. Humans are built to move! Regular activity isn't just about burning calories — it supports a healthy metabolic response, helping your body function at its best.

Science backs this up. Studies show that people who move consistently throughout the day — not just during a quick workout — maintain better body composition and higher metabolic rates than those who are more sedentary.

In fact, sitting all day after a workout can cancel out some of the health benefits of that workout. Yup, even if you crushed it in the gym, being sedentary the rest of the day means your body isn't reaping the full rewards, like improved fuel utilization. So, what's the sweet spot?

- **Strength train 2 to 3 times per week** — Why? Muscle is the most metabolically active tissue in your body. Building and maintaining muscle helps boost your metabolism long-term.
- **Aim for 8,000 to 12,000 steps per day** — Think light walks, active breaks, or just incorporating more movement into your daily routine.

The goal is to blend intentional workouts with regular movement throughout the day. This balanced approach maximizes the benefits of exercise, promotes fat loss, and supports overall health — without the burnout of overtraining. Let's keep it simple: Move more. Lift weights. Feel amazing. You've got this!

- **Step 5: Gradually increase your calorie intake** — Now that you've spent a few weeks learning how to track and understand your calorie intake, it's time to take the next step — slowly increasing your calories. Why? Gradual increases help your body adapt, improving your metabolism without unwanted weight gain. Here's how to do it:

- **Split your calories into 3 balanced meals per day** (breakfast, lunch, and dinner), plus a snack if needed.
- **Start small** — Increase your daily calories by just 10 to 30 calories per week. For example, if you're starting at 1,800 calories in week one, aim for 1,820 to 1,830 in week two, and so on.
- **Track bodyweight trends** — Weigh yourself 3 to 7 times per week and compare weekly averages. The goal is to increase calories while keeping your weight stable. A small bump at the beginning is normal, but we don't want to see a continuous upward trend.

Why so slow? This gradual approach gives your body time to utilize the extra energy effectively, boosting your metabolic rate (a.k.a. improving your "calories out") without storing it as fat. Think of it as training your metabolism to work smarter, not harder. What's the payoff?

After just 3 months of small weekly increases, you could be eating 240 to 360 more calories per day! That's extra fuel for your body without sacrificing progress. Many people can continue to increase for several more weeks (since most people have severely downregulated their metabolisms due to years of restrictive diets!)

But remember: You can't increase calories indefinitely. At some point, you'll reach the upper end of your maintenance calorie range, where adding more calories leads to weight gain. If that happens, adjust slightly down and stay at that sweet spot. The longer you maintain at the upper end of your calorie window, the better your body will adapt.

This is about more than calories — it's about building a stronger, more efficient metabolism while giving your body the fuel it needs to thrive.

Summary

And that's a wrap, folks – five steps to improve your metabolism! Taking time to focus on a maintenance phase can do wonders for your body and mind. Dieting endlessly wears down your metabolism, leads to mental fatigue, and makes it harder to stick with any plan. When you're constantly bouncing in and out of dieting cycles, it's easy to lose the belief that you can actually succeed at sustainable fat loss.

Here's the good news: eating at maintenance can reset your metabolic baseline, restore your mental energy, and build the momentum you need to crush your future fat loss goals. And for some people, these changes alone – better habits and a stronger routine – can even lead to weight loss as their "calories out" increases, creating a natural calorie deficit.

But the benefits don't stop there. A maintenance phase can also repair your relationship with food. Long-term dieting often damages our hunger cues, makes it harder to trust our instincts, and turns eating into a mental battle. Imagine a life without constant food anxiety, restrictive rules, or fear of eating "too much."

Instead, picture yourself eating with satisfaction and abundance, free to focus on your passions and goals. Resetting your metabolism isn't just about physical health – it's about creating the freedom to live fully, without the weight of dieting holding you back.

Transform Your Health – One Step at a Time

Ashley and her sister Sarah have put together a truly groundbreaking step-by-step course called "Rooted in Resilience." They have compiled what clearly is the best application of Dr. Ray Peat's work on Bioenergetic Medicine that I have ever seen.

It is so good that I am using the core of their program to teach the many Health Coaches that I am in the process of training for the new Mercola Health Clinics I am opening this fall. It took these women working nearly full-time on this project for a year to create it.

This has to be one of the absolute best values for health education I have ever seen. If you want to understand why you struggle with health problems and then have a clear program on how to reverse those challenges, then this is the course for you.

It is precisely the type of program I wish I would have had access to when I got out of medical school. I fumbled around for decades before I reached the conclusion they discuss in the course and share with you so you can restore your cellular energy production and recover your health.

Use reverse dieting to increase your calories without gaining weight and tanking your metabolism, all while improving your energy levels

Select and eat the right foods to heal your metabolism and improve glucose utilization

Balance your hormones to help reduce anxiety, weight gain and sleep disturbances

Heal your gut for proper immune function, mood and weight management

Tweak your diet and lifestyle habits to improve your mindset and mental health

Crush your fitness goals with ease and get your life back on track

Master the most essential habits for health with bonus guides, including tons of meal plans to take the stress out of meal time planning and shopping, and so much more!

Learn more about Rooted in Resilience [here](#).



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About the Author

Ashley Armstrong is passionate about helping educate and inspire others to improve their metabolic health. She and her sister run the "Strong Sistas" social media account, and have [free information and courses on their website centered around improving metabolism](#).

Ashley is also passionate about improving the food system and providing food products that support thyroid and metabolic health. Ashley is a regenerative farmer, and co-founder of [Angel Acres Egg Club](#), which specializes in low-PUFA (polyunsaturated fat) and low phytoestrogen eggs that are shipped to all 50 states, and [Nourish Cooperative](#) which ships low-PUFA chicken and pork, beef, cheese, A2 dairy and traditional sourdough to all 50 states.