

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

Researched & Written by Robert J. Bovee Certified Master PPT, RTS, ETS, FTS, LMS, WMS, HWFS, SNS,SSCS, MES, E/FT, PSCS, PRCS

EVALUATING FAD DIETS

It seems as though every week there is a revolutionary weight loss regime on the market that claims to work miracles on fat cells. The diet industry in the US rakes in almost **40** billion dollars per year including diet programs, diet foods and weight loss gimmicks. As fitness professionals we work not only in the fitness industry but in health care as well. Our job is to educate our clients on their fitness goals and be aware of any influential factors on them. Market research indicates that most people hire a fitness specialist for one of the following reasons: weight control, body reshaping or help or adherence to an exercise plan. At the top of the list is – you guessed it – weight control, and the financial success of the diet industry can attest to that. Consider what you will do when a client approaches you to help her do one thing – lose weight. She understands the necessity of physical activity to help her with this task, but beyond that her friend informed her that she lost weight on the new Celery and Water diet and your clients is asking the familiar questions: What about this diet? Will it work? Before you roll your eyes and yell out a resounding “no”, there is some important information you need to tell your client so that she will be able to determine whether this diet is worth it.

Your metabolism

When it comes to trimming up, two important factors involved in a successful weight loss are metabolism and caloric intake. Metabolism is a colloquial term used often in our industry but is rarely understood by our clients and some industry professionals. We throw around terms like “burn” and “furnace” to give a symbolic understanding of the metabolic process. It is important to explain this concept to our clients because metabolism is as unique as the individuals you train. It refers to all of the chemical reactions in the body and is a balancing act between reactions that break down large molecules into smaller ones for energy (catabolism), and those that use energy to create more complex molecules from simple ones (anabolism). Eating an apple as an afternoon snack for an energy boost requires catabolic reactions. The common practice of consuming amino acids in the form of protein shakes to develop muscle mass after a workout, utilizes anabolic processes. Our interest really lies in the metabolic rate - the amount of energy our body uses to carry out these metabolic reactions. Because many factors affect the metabolic rate, it is measured under standard conditions with the body in a quiet, resting and fasting condition called the **basal state**. This is how we arrive at what is commonly known as the **basal metabolic rate** or **BMR**. The BMR is essentially how much energy your body requires to just survive. The more active you are the more energy your body needs above your BMR and vice versa.

Counting Calories

You’ve explained metabolism to your client and she asks you the proverbial question; “What about calories?” We hear about them, we count them and we cut them; but what exactly are they? The kilocalorie, or calorie for short, is simply a way to measure energy; the energy of food, as well as the energy released in the body. Different foods provide varying amount of calories and therefore energy. We can now modify the meaning of BMR in relation to calories. If we do this we consider it to be how many *calories* your body requires to survive. Caloric needs are based on a number of factors including your age, sex, metabolism, activity level and body size. If you eat more calories than your body

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requires, an extra **3500** to be exact, then it's no surprise that the scales read **1** pound heavier than it did one week ago. Think about this: If you require **2000** calories daily in order to maintain your current weight. You've eaten a hearty breakfast, a light lunch and, because you didn't fill up at lunchtime, a pretty heavy dinner. You estimate that so far you've eaten a about **1900** calories for the day. You're considering a snack and deciding to go the healthy route for some non-fat yogurt and a banana. But guess what? You've just eaten **350** calories from your healthy snack. What does this mean? It means that you have taken **250** calories more than what you needed to maintain your weight. If you do this for **1** week straight you've gained half a pound. It doesn't matter if you eat an apple or **2** Krispy Kreme donuts. The result is still the same because you ate more calories than you should have. The good news is that if excess calories encourage weight gain, creating a calorie deficit can lead to weight loss. Assessing the caloric needs of your clients is an important step when helping them to reach their fitness goals. You can make an estimate by using the method in Table 1.

Table 1: ESTIMATING YOUR CALORIC NEEDS

- 1.** Estimate your basic energy needs by multiplying your current weight (in pound) by **10** if you are a woman and **11** if you are a man. Note that this formula does not take into account age.
- 2.** Determine you activity factor value:
 - Very light – **0.2**
 - Light – **0.3**
 - Moderate – **0.4**
 - Heavy – **0.5**
- 3.** Multiply your basic energy needs by the activity factor value that you determined
- 4.** Determine the number of calories you need for digestion and the absorption of nutrients
 - Digesting and absorbing nutrients uses about **10%** of your daily energy needs
- 5.** Total your calorie needs. Add together your BMR, activity and digestion/absorption calorie needs to get your total calorie needs – the amount you need to maintain your current weight.

BMR calories + activity calories + digestion/absorption calories = total calories

Fad Diet Theory

Regardless of the name, the marketing material, or celebrity spokesperson advocating it, fad diets all have one thing in common: they create calorie shortages. They are designed, in some way, shape or form, to decrease the amount of energy taken in on a daily basis. Over time its leads to a slimmer waistline. Take for example the Celery and Water Diet. Your body doesn't care that you're eating celery. What matters most is the amount of energy (calories!) the celery will give you. Any energy that is not used will be stored (fat!). Explaining this to your client takes the mystery out of not only dieting, but acquiring proper eating habits.

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Diet Analysis

You're almost finished with your coaching session and you feel as though you've fulfilled your professional obligation to educate you client. Now for the final answer: "Are all of these diets bad?" How do you answer this? The promises put forth by diet crusaders are all too often inflated and unfortunately convincing. Whenever you are counseling a client you should try to avoid the answers "yes" or "no". Instead, ask them a few questions about the diet to empower them to think and come up with their own conclusions:

1. Does it guarantee quick weight loss or lasting results?
2. Does it make promises that sound too good to be true? Is the diet a cure-all for every single condition you've ever had?
3. Is it healthy and nutritionally sound?
4. Does the diet follow the principles of variety, moderation and balance, or does it advocate cutting out one food group in favor of another?

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