Women's Perceived Support Compared with Weight Loss Behavior Changes



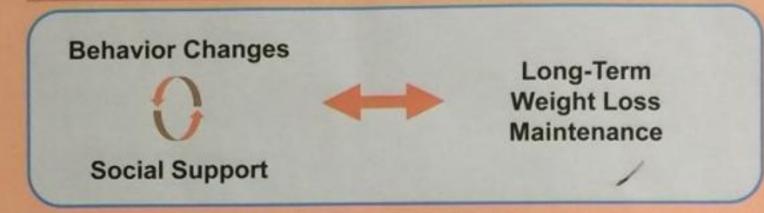
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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to compare women's perceptions in the San Francisco Bay Area regarding social support for weight loss behavior changes. Current United States obesity prevalence remains high (34.9%) for all adults, with females of all ethnicities at higher risk (36%)1. Females also tend to seek weight loss support more frequently2. Four focus groups were conducted at San Francisco State University during the summer of 2014 to identify themes related to weight loss and perceived support with women (n=15) who had lost or wanted to lose weight. In addition to the focus group qualitative data, each participant completed a survey which included 28 validated questions3, demographic information and self-reported height and weight.

Hypothesis

Bay Area women who are currently making behavior changes toward weight loss perceive greater social support than women who are not making behavior changes toward weight loss.



Methods

Questionnaire

Current weight Goal weight Age and ethnicity

Behavior categories

- Limiting behaviors
- Eating behaviors
- Activity behaviors Exercise behaviors

Focus Group

Discussion questions

- General support
- Social support
- Perceived support
- Desired support
- Health impact from perceived support

Results

Most Common Perceived Support: Individual



Most Common **Desired Support:** Friends



Participant Quotes

Perceived Support: "I found that where I feel the most supported is myself...it comes from within. You have to be your...own hero." (Age 36, Current BMI 19.5)

Desired Support: "If I had more friends or if I met more people...to do the gym or weight loss, I think that it would make me a lot better." (Age 53, Current BMI 33.7)



Focus Group Themes*

Perceived Support

Individual (18)

- Family (12)
- Online (12)
- Friends (6)
- Healthcare Provider/RD (5)
- Gym (2)
- Work (2)

Desired Support

- Friends (12)
- Work (10)
- Group (8)
- Individual (7)
- Trainer/Coach (6)
- Family (5)
- Corporate (4)
- Community (2)

Conclusions

Individual support was the predominant theme for perceived support, while family and online support were also key aspects of each discussion.

Interestingly, Perceived Support from friends did not come up as often, but was the most mentioned theme when it came to Desired Support.

Understanding how women seek, find, and perceive support in their endeavors to lose weight is important for registered dietitians to recognize and provide effective individual guidance.

References

1 Ogdeo, C. L., Carroll, M. D., Kit, B. K., & Flegal, K. M. (2014). Prevalence of childhood and adult obesity in the United States, 2011-2012. JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association, 311(8), 806-814. doi:10.1001/jama.2014.732 Villacorta, M. (February 13, 2015). Personal communication.

3 Foley, S. (2009). Psychometric properties of a measure designed to assess stage of change for eating behaviors (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. Publication Number 3364599.

* Focus Group Themes: numbers in parentheses represent number of times theme was mentioned in focus group discussion.