

Introduction

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started"

– Anon

This book is for anyone who wants to change

If you're looking to lose fat, build a more athletic physique, completely transform your body, improve your mental wellbeing or mindset or simply be a healthier person, this is for you. Male or female, young or old, this is for you. If you're just starting out and don't know where to begin, this is for you. If you've repeatedly tried to lose weight without achieving the expected results, this is for you. If you've had some success but still struggle in certain areas, this is for you. And if you think you're too old to change, think again – you're not.

Change starts with a decision

First, you must decide you want something different. Making that decision is down to you, although it's likely that the very fact you're reading this book means you've already made that decision, or are at least close to making one.

Secondly, you need to decide what actions are required. This book will provide you with those answers.

But the third step is the biggest challenge. How do you stick with it for long enough to see results? Overcoming this step is critical and it's the one many people don't pay enough attention to. Creating consistency by building effective habits is the real key to successful fat loss. That's what this book is really about.

Why Many 'Plans' Fail

Many people don't achieve their goals, not because they don't know what to do, but because they get stuck. When their efforts don't work or become too hard to sustain, they give up. As a result, they fall back into old habits, the weight creeps up and the cycle repeats. The problem isn't that the plan is 'bad' on paper. It's probably very effective and if carried out properly, would work perfectly but most are ineffective because they're unsuitable. It's imperative to follow an effective yet sustainable plan that fits *you*. That's the difference between a poor plan and a plan that actually works.

Many fat loss plans focus on *what* to change (and not always in a helpful way) but often with very little focus on how to maintain it consistently over time. They tell you what you should eat, many will tell you what not to eat (including whole food groups such as carbohydrates), some will give you a defined, specific meal plan, they may tell you when you should eat (fasting periods or very low-calorie days) and what specific workouts you should do. It's not to say these diet approaches aren't effective, they can be. They all aim to achieve the same outcome (creating a calorie deficit), so on paper they may be effective. However, such a prescriptive and restrictive plan will be difficult for many people to follow. The monumental flaw with all of these is: *What if the plan you choose doesn't work for you?* Any plan that isn't personalised and focused on the individual is simply not sustainable for most and also ignores a crucially important part: How to stay consistent when motivation drops, when life gets busy and when old habits begin to creep back in. This is when the cracks begin to appear, the same cracks that tend to set people on the path to giving up.

How to Get the Most from This Book

How you use this book is up to you, there is no single 'right' way. The book has been designed to work around you; your experience, your circumstances and the areas where you need the most help.

You can read it from beginning to end, go directly to a particular challenge, use the built-in navigation tools to find relevant strategies, or complete the online assessment and let your answers help identify where to start.

1. Start with your situation — use a Strategy Stack

Sometimes you know something isn't working, but the problem isn't limited to one part of fat loss.

You might struggle to stay on track at weekends, feel hungry whenever you try to lose fat, lack confidence in the gym, repeatedly fall into an all-or-nothing approach, or find it difficult to make fat loss fit around a busy lifestyle. That's where the Strategy Stacks can help.

Appendix 1 explains more about how to effectively use the Strategy Stacks. Each Stack starts with a recognisable real-life situation, behaviour or recurring pattern and brings together relevant Hacks, Tips & Strategies from different parts of the book. Rather than searching through all 200 ideas yourself, you have a more focused selection of strategies to explore.

The scenarios given are:

Beginner Reset Stack for readers who are starting from scratch, returning after failed attempts, or need a simple, structured foundation.

Start & Build Momentum Stack for readers who understand enough to begin but repeatedly postpone taking the first real step, wait for better conditions or feel overwhelmed by starting.

Time-Pressed Routine Stack for readers with limited time, demanding work or family commitments, unpredictable routines or difficulty making their own health a priority.

Always Hungry Stack for anyone who struggles with hunger, cravings, snacking, portion control, tired eating or feeling deprived.

Gym Confidence Stack for those who may be nervous about starting exercise, going to the gym, not knowing what to do, comparing themselves to others or feeling out of place.

Plateau Stack to help where weight loss has slowed, stopped, or become inconsistent.

Weekend Damage Stack for people who are consistent Monday to Friday but lose control at weekends, social events, alcohol, takeaways or relaxed routines.

Emotional Eating Stack for anyone who eats in response to stress, boredom, low mood, frustration or comfort rather than hunger.

All-or-Nothing Stack for readers who are either 'fully on plan' or 'completely off plan'. This mindset causes people to give up after one poor meal, one missed workout or one bad weekend.

Motivation Drop Stack for those who start well but lose drive after the first few weeks. This is very common once the novelty wears off and results feel slower than expected.

Scale Obsession Stack for readers who become discouraged when the scale moves slowly, fluctuates or temporarily increases, even when other signs suggest the plan is working.

Poor Planning Stack for readers who repeatedly fail because they 'wing it'. They may have good intentions but no structure for food, shopping, workouts, weekends, snacks or difficult situations.

Social Life Stack for anyone who struggles with meals out, alcohol, parties, holidays, family events, takeaways and peer pressure. This is slightly different from the 'Weekend Damage Stack' because the challenge is often influenced by external situations and other people.

Pick the Strategy Stack(s) that suit your circumstances, experiment with them and gradually build an approach that works for you. You don't need to use every Hack, Tip & Strategy with each Stack, just choose what will work for you.

Best for: when you recognise a particular situation or pattern that is making fat loss more difficult.

2. Start with what you want to improve – use a Support Area

You may already know exactly where you need help.

Perhaps you want to become better at maintaining a calorie deficit, increase your protein intake, manage hunger, improve your food choices, become more active, get more from resistance training, protect muscle while losing fat, improve consistency or track your progress more effectively.

In Appendix 2, you will find a number of Support Areas that organise relevant Hacks, Tips & Strategies around these specific parts of the fat-loss process. This gives you a quick way to go directly to ideas that could strengthen a particular part of your approach.

You can focus on one Support Area, combine several, or return to different areas as your priorities and circumstances change.

Best for: when you already know the specific area (or areas) you want to improve.

3. Start at the beginning – get the full picture

If you're new to fat loss, aren't yet sure what's holding you back, or feel that you need help across several different areas, the best approach may simply be to read the book from beginning to end, and there's an important reason for that.

The value of this book isn't limited to the 200 Hacks, Tips & Strategies.

Throughout the chapters you'll also find practical guidance and explanations designed to help you understand the principles behind successful and sustainable fat loss, including calorie balance, protein, resistance training, cardio, goal setting, realistic expectations, planning, tracking progress and, crucially, how to stay consistent.

That wider knowledge provides the context behind the individual strategies. It can help you understand why different approaches work, make better decisions and identify weaknesses in your current approach that you may not have realised were there. You can then return to the Strategy Stacks and Support Areas whenever you want more focused help.

Best for: anyone new to fat loss, anyone wanting a broader understanding, or anyone facing challenges across several different areas.

4. Not sure where to start? Let the online assessment help

Sometimes the hardest part isn't finding ideas, it's knowing which ideas are most relevant to you. To help with this, book owners can also complete the 28-question online assessment found on betterbodybasics.co.uk (look for the Strategy Finder in the main menu). Your answers are used to identify the areas of the book that appear most relevant to your circumstances and challenges.

The assessment then brings together a personalised Strategy Stack of suggested Hacks, Tips & Strategies to give you a practical starting point. It doesn't prescribe a fixed plan or tell you that there is only one way to succeed. Instead, it helps narrow 200 possibilities into a more manageable selection based on the answers you provide.

You can review those recommendations in the book, decide which ones fit your circumstances and then add, remove or combine strategies as you learn what works for you. The assessment can also highlight areas you may not have initially considered, making it particularly useful if you're unsure exactly what's getting in the way of your progress.

Best for: when you'd like some help identifying your priorities and choosing where to begin.

Your book. Your route. Your strategy.

These approaches aren't mutually exclusive. You might read the whole book first and later use a Strategy Stack. You might start with a Support Area and explore others as your needs change. You might complete the assessment to identify some initial priorities and then use the book to explore those recommendations in more detail. Or you can simply pick individual Hacks, Tips & Strategies whenever they become useful.

The aim is not to follow a rigid programme, adopt all 200 strategies or change everything at once. It's to understand the fundamentals, identify what matters most to you and choose a manageable number of strategies that fit your life. Then adapt them, combine them and build on them over time.

The book gives you the knowledge and the options. The navigation tools help you find what matters. The assessment can help you decide where to start.

Research Snapshots and Behavioural Snapshots

The strategies in this book are designed to be practical, realistic and easy to apply in everyday life, but many are also supported by established research in nutrition, exercise science and behavioural psychology. Throughout the book, you'll find occasional 'Research Snapshots' and 'Behavioural Snapshots' highlighting studies, expert guidance and evidence-based principles that reinforce key ideas and strategies. These snapshots are included to provide additional context and credibility without overcomplicating the book or turning it into a textbook. The goal is not to overwhelm you with science, but to show that many of the habits, behaviours and approaches discussed are supported by real-world research as well as practical experience.

It Gets Easier – If You Keep Going

This is such an important point to emphasise, it deserves to take its place near the beginning of the book.

A common problem is that many people simply don't persevere long enough to experience this important adaptation that takes place. The towel is thrown in too soon, old habits re-emerge and any progress is soon undone.

Like most things in life, the more you do something, the better you get at it. Many people start on a low baseline, with limited knowledge, little experience, limited energy or fitness and not always a great deal of confidence. To begin with things feel unfamiliar, awkward and harder than they should. That's normal. However, every time you repeat a process, you improve. Not dramatically overnight, but gradually, in ways that add up.

Here's what's happening beneath the surface:

You learn from mistakes. Early on you'll get things wrong. That's part of the process. Each mistake gives you feedback, helping you adjust and improve your approach.

Your skills develop through repetition. The more you exercise, prepare meals and follow a routine, the more efficient you become. What once felt clumsy starts to feel smoother.

It requires less mental effort. In the beginning, you think about everything; what to eat, when to train, how to structure your day. Over time, these decisions become natural and simply become part of your routine.

Your confidence grows. As you gain experience, you begin to trust and believe in yourself. That confidence makes it easier to stay consistent and push forward.

Your capacity increases. What once felt difficult becomes manageable and what was once manageable becomes easy.

In the early days, undoubtedly it can feel overwhelming. You're consciously thinking about calories, consuming enough protein, managing workouts and adding new routines all at once. You're changing habits and pushing your body in new ways, often without seeing immediate results. This is the toughest phase, not because it's impossible but because it's unfamiliar and this is the reason why it's better to start at your own pace.

Over time, something shifts. The workouts you once had to force yourself to do become part of your routine, the food choices that felt restrictive become normal, the structure you're building starts to feel natural; it just evolves into how you live.

This change continues as you keep going, you learn what works for you, you refine your routine, your body adapts and your mind settles into the process. Gradually it all becomes easier. There comes a point where things start to fall into place. You're no longer fighting yourself to train, you're not overthinking every food choice, you're not relying on motivation to get through the day. You're just naturally doing what's required and that's when real progress accelerates, because consistency becomes almost effortless.

The biggest mistake people make is quitting before this point. They assume it's always going to feel this hard, it's not. But you must push through the early, uncomfortable stage to get there. For some people, that shift happens in a few weeks. For others, it takes longer. But if you stay consistent, it will come.

Remember, you don't need to be perfect, you just need to persist. Keep showing up, keep adjusting and keep learning. The more you do it, the easier it becomes.

BEHAVIOURAL SNAPSHOT

Behavioural research consistently shows that repeated actions performed in stable environments gradually become automatic habits. Wendy Wood's work on habit formation highlights that many daily behaviours are driven less by motivation and more by repeated routines and environmental cues. Over time, healthy behaviours such as meal preparation, exercise and daily movement can begin to require less mental effort, making long-term consistency easier to maintain.

Reference: Wood W. (2019). Good Habits, Bad Habits: The Science of Making Positive Changes That Stick.

A Final Thought Before You Begin

You don't need to see the whole journey right now. You just need to take the first step. You can start as slowly as you wish. You'll get things wrong along the way. Don't worry, that's part of it. Learn, adapt and keep moving forward.

Remember, how your future self will look and feel will be the result of the decisions you make starting today. All you need to do right now is make the decision, commit to *something* today. So, let's begin.