

# 'Thinspiration' is the key to losing weight

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Wednesday, 3 August 2016

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The 'biggest loser' in weight loss groups is more motivational than the average group weight loss, new research from the Desautels Faculty of Management at McGill University finds.

Assistant Professor Nathan Yang found that the top performer has an encouraging effect, acting as an inspirational target that doesn't alienate those who fail to reach it.

Instead, it was the average group weight loss that proved to be discouraging as it acts as a benchmark that discourages those who fall below it.

Yang suggests that leaders of weight loss groups like Weight Watchers and Slimming World talk about the most successful member's loss to help with both member retention and overall group weight loss.

"Obesity is contagious," says Yang, who investigates the role peer effects play in healthy and sustainable lifestyles, "your peers have a big effect on your weight, but the fact that different peers have varying effects on participant motivation suggests that role models need to be chosen carefully.

"The results of these findings extend beyond the encouragement of healthy behaviour, and may even apply to situations where a firm is trying to motivate employees using "employee of the month" recognitions. It's important to remember what sort of influence these people might have."

The researchers studied data from two million weight loss programme participants and attended 20 meetings over two years.

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For more information, a copy of the study, or to speak to Professor Yang, contact Stephanie Mullins at BlueSky PR on [smullins@bluesky-pr.com](mailto:smullins@bluesky-pr.com) or call +44 (0)1582 790 706.