

Let's Do This!

Find your own path to lasting leanness by uncovering your true motivations. Take our quiz and never lose the same 10 pounds again.

By *Leslie Goldman*

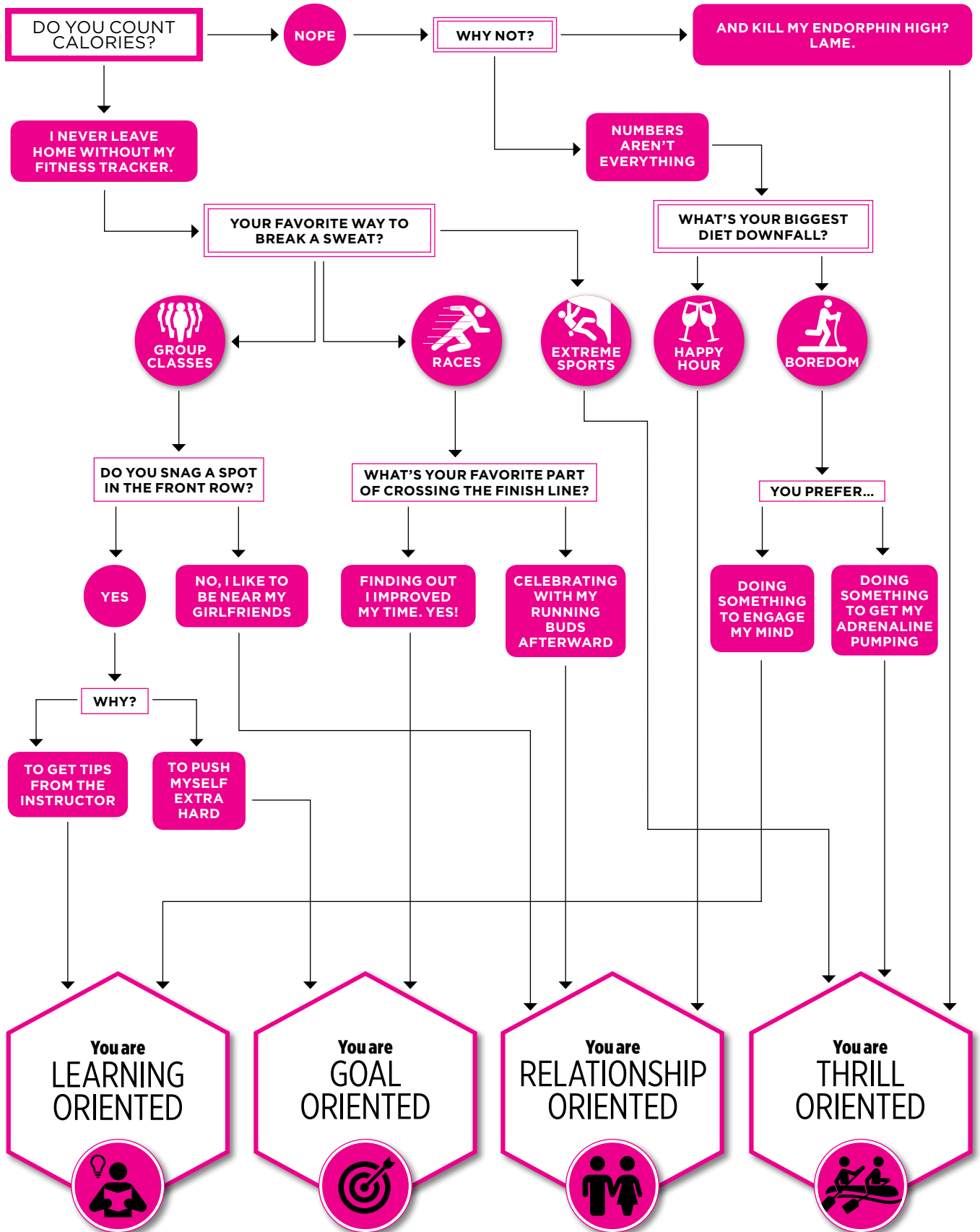
Posters of kittens dangling from tree branches with the message “Hang in There” may get you through a dental cleaning, but as far as helping you stay the course on a pound-dropping plan? Sorry, Mr. Whiskers, it’s going to take a lot more.

The majority of Americans want to slim down, according to Gallup poll results, but our resolve isn’t quite as big as our appetites: Only half of those desiring change are doing anything about it. Call it a national motivation deficit.

So what’s up with our lack of follow-through?

Well, like thank-you notes and celebrity roasts, effective weight loss has to be personal. Experts say that most people fall into one of four basic patterns when it comes to how they approach conquering the scale—and finding the one that best suits you is the key to keeping off the lbs for good. “Putting together a plan that fits who you are and how you live will make it seem less like a chore,” says Ramani Durvasula, Ph.D., author of *You Are Why You Eat*. Use the chart on the next page to find the best approach for you.

FIND YOUR MOTIVATION



**If you are
LEARNING
ORIENTED**



Dropping a few pounds isn't rocket science—but you almost wish it were. You thrive on the geeky knowledge that others find tedious and are most likely to succeed when you can pick up new intel along the way.

Avoid rote “eat less and exercise” regimens (such a yawn for you) and seek out activities that engage your body and your mind.



**MOTIVATION
METHOD**

WITH FOOD

Feed yourself—with knowledge. Get your bookworm on by immersing yourself in label reading and healthy-cooking techniques. If you can't swing a class—we like The Nutrition School by *WH* weight-loss columnist, Keri Glassman, R.D. (nutritiouslife.com/certification)—the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website, eatright.org, offers a Good Nutrition Reading List.

WITH EXERCISE

Trade your usual workout playlist for a podcast like NPR's Hidden Brain (sample topic: the science of why we hate being bored) or a download of Mary Roach's latest hilarious audiobook. You might be totally distracted from the fact that your abs are burning.

Green Means Go!

To pump yourself up no matter what your personality, wear green. People working out felt less fatigued and more motivated when viewing that hue than others. Looking at you, emerald sports bra.

**If you are
GOAL
ORIENTED**



When crossing things off your to-do list, your competitive nature takes charge. Problem is, after focusing all your energy on hitting that one target, your attention shifts to the next challenge, leaving you at risk of sliding back into your old, bad habits.



**MOTIVATION
METHOD**

WITH FOOD

Instead of focusing on a particular clothing size or number on the scale—something you check off your list once you've hit it—set your sights on a goal that can become part of your lifestyle (with weight loss as a happy side effect). Vow to cook more and cultivate a culinary habit, for instance. Goal-oriented people tend to be visually stimulated, so collect inspirational photos (activities you'd like to get involved in, healthy meals you'd like to try) on Pinterest or an old-school corkboard; the eye candy may help you avoid the real stuff.

WITH EXERCISE

Engage your inner competitor. It works: A 2016 Australian study found that coworkers who competed against one another logged more pedometer miles, sat less, and lost more weight than those who didn't. You can even compete against yourself using a website like StickK.com: Sign a commitment contract, and if you fail to follow through, the site will charge your credit card and donate it—this is kinda brilliant—to a cause you loathe. (The site has a 76 percent success rate for weight-loss goals with an anti-charity option.)

**If you are
RELATIONSHIP
ORIENTED**



People who need people...are more likely to stick to their weight-loss and fitness programs than those who go it alone. But relying on the buddy system means you're only as healthy and fit as your entourage.



**MOTIVATION
METHOD**

WITH FOOD

Not into group weight-loss programs? Tap your healthy pals, even long distance ones. Duke University researchers found that when women texted daily about what they ate, they lost nearly 3 pounds in 6 months, while non-texters gained 2.5 pounds. Or set a standing date for lunch or a weekly potluck where you each bring a good-for-you dish. When researchers secretly instructed two out of three female friends not to eat the cookies set before them, the third (clueless) member of each trio was better able to resist them too—and stayed strong even after her friends left and she faced the temptation alone.

WITH EXERCISE

A Kansas State University study found that a fitter exercise partner can push you to work out up to 200 percent (!) longer and harder. Try a virtual bud: When Northwestern University researchers tracked members of an online weight-management community, they found that even one or two e-friends was enough to boost weight loss; those with more lost up to 8 percent of their total body weight. (Users with the fewest social interactions shed the fewest pounds.)

**If you are
THRILL
ORIENTED**



Adrenaline junkies like you are always chasing down life's next big thrill. But your restless nature also means you won't fare well with strict rules or monotony—on your plate or at the gym. Without any kind of routine, your weight can yo-yo.



**MOTIVATION
METHOD**

WITH FOOD

Impulse buys are your jam, so don't grocery-shop hungry, and use a list, which has been linked to healthier diets and lower BMIs. You're likely to grab the first thing you see when you're hungry, so stash healthy options like pre-cut fruit and veggies or trail mix toasted with cumin, garlic, and cayenne in see-through containers (spicy foods may appeal to your danger-loving psyche and have the added benefit of temporarily revving metabolism).

WITH EXERCISE

You're never going to love the treadmill, but you can't bungee-jump your way to lasting weight loss. Your fix: Take your workout outside. Ever-changing scenery can help you stick with daily runs, especially if you vary your route. Better yet, download an app that will really make you sweat: *Zombies, Run!* (zombiesrungame.com) gives you incentive to move fast, in the form of virtual hordes of the undead chasing you. There are also (less macabre) sites like Daily Burn, which let you stream different workouts for \$13 a month. Bonus: Studies show that switching up your workout challenges your muscles to work harder, incinerating more fat. ■

Sources: Art Markman, Ph.D., *The University of Texas at Austin*; Traci Mann, Ph.D., author of *Secrets from the Eating Lab*; Marcia Conner, change strategist in Sarasota, Florida; Ramani Durvasula, Ph.D., author of *You Are Why You Eat*