

# Food for thought: A novel psychological and non-dieting approach to weight management.

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**Background:** Obesity is a one of the greatest health issues facing communities and health systems; the related disease states are numerous. Methods to promote weight loss are often of limited success in terms of sustained weight loss.

**Methods:** Food for Thought is a group based 8-week program with a psychological and non-dieting approach aimed at assisting participants to improve their eating behaviours and relationship with food. The experiential group-based clinical intervention utilises Allied Health professionals including dietitians, psychologists and exercise physiologists. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to conduct an impact evaluation with the aim of also conducting an outcome evaluation in the future.

**Results:** Seven programs were conducted with 68 participants in total over three iterations. At this stage only impact results are available for 31 participants (23 female, 8 male) as other data are still being analysed. There was a statistically significant decrease in mean weight from pre- to post-program of 2.35kg (95% CI -3.26 to -1.45,  $p < 0.001$ ). There was also a statistically significant favourable decrease in emotional and external eating behaviours as measured by the Dutch Eating Behaviour Questionnaire of -0.71 (95% CI -1.07 to -0.35,  $p < 0.001$ ) and -0.53 (95% CI -0.82 to -0.25,  $p < 0.001$ ) respectively, on a 5-point scale. All participants who completed the qualitative impact survey agreed or strongly agreed that they benefited from their participation in the program across a range of impact measures.

**Discussion:** The Food for Thought program was well received by participants and has demonstrated an improvement in eating behaviours and a reduction in weight at conclusion of the program. The results indicate the participants experienced a shift in thinking about food, eating behaviours and weight with the hope that these changes will be sustained and result in long-term improvements to both weight and health.