

## [ HEALTH ]



Tribune photos by Nancy Stone

Judy Weitzman will accompany clients to the grocery store and turn their refrigerators into virtual salad bars.

## Coaches help dieters do their best to lose

By Terri Yablonsky Stat  
Special to the Tribune

Before you surrender to that slice of chocolate cake, you may want to speed-dial your personal diet coach.

That's right. There's help when the urge to binge strikes, when the craving for a fast-food fix blows all caution to the wind.

Personal diet coaches, a kind of cross between your mother and a cheerleader, are the latest trend in weight-loss management. Watchdogs for your waistline, these motivators accompany you to the grocery store, eliminate temptations from your cupboards and teach you to order healthfully in a restaurant.

Judy Weitzman of Chicago is helping others slim down through her business, Motivation Plus. In 1979, Weitzman conquered her own weight-loss battle, shedding 50 pounds and keeping it off. With more than 20 years' experience in weight-loss training and management, she now develops individual programs for clients.

"Everybody has different tastes and lifestyles," Weitzman said. "I interview clients and learn their likes and dislikes, lifestyle, whether they work, entertain and so forth. I'll personalize menu plans so they still enjoy foods they like in controlled portions."

Weitzman knows how to



A much lighter Tracy Mogan gets off the "L" before her normal stop to add a longer walk to her day.

change bad eating habits. "After you go to the grocery store, spend an hour prepping your foods," she said. "If you put a big stalk of celery in the fridge it will go bad, but if you cut it up and wrap it in foil it will stay fresh and be ready for immediate snacks." She advises transforming your refrigerator into a salad bar. "Pre-cut everything so when it's time to make a salad, it's ready."

Tracy Mogan, 30, of Chicago began working with Weitzman last summer and is now 50 pounds lighter. "Judy had me track what I ate for a week," Mogan said. "If I didn't lose anything, we'd go over my diet. She advised me to eat less fruit and more peppers and celery sticks."

Weitzman, who consults with a psychologist, licensed

well. A session with Phillips is \$80; 10 sessions are \$700.

"I tell my clients there are three things they need to do to lose weight: cardiovascular exercise to burn calories; strengthening and toning, which raises metabolism so you're burning more calories at rest; and diet. If you're not eating properly, you're not going to lose weight very effectively."

When clients insist they're eating right but aren't losing, he'll say, "Do you mind if I see what's in your cabinets and fridge?" Sometimes they blame their husband and kids for what's in there. If it's not there, they won't eat it."

Phillips is available round the clock. "If I need to talk someone down from a piece of chocolate in the middle of the night, I'll do it." For chocolate lovers, he advises eating a small piece of dark chocolate for a big chocolate fix. You can eat milk chocolate all day long and still not feel satisfied, he said.

"I educate clients on how to read a food label," Phillips said. "Many fat-free foods have lots of sugar. Sometimes reduced fat or low fat is better. It's all about finding habits and things that you like and timing. Rather than eating one big meal at night, try to eat five or six snacks a day so you are eating something every three or four hours."

Now that's sweet.

nutritionist and an internist, also gave Mogan ideas for squeezing exercise into her day. "I now get off the 'L' a couple of stops before my home, which adds a 25-minute walk to my day. I walk it really fast now, wearing ankle weights."

"I give my clients side-by-side unconditional support," Weitzman said. "They get phone calls or e-mail once or twice a day. When you know I'm going to call, you're less likely to put something unhealthy into your mouth."

Weitzman's fee is \$500 for the first month, then \$75 per week afterward or \$60 per week for four weeks pre-paid for constant motivation.

Certified personal trainer Clint Phillips, owner of Gold Standard Trainers on the Gold Coast and in Evanston, coaches clients on diet as