

Sabotage and collusion could be derailing your weight loss journey, finds study

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Family and loved ones may be conspiring to sabotage your weight loss journey, according to a new study from the University of Surrey. The study is part of a growing body of evidence which suggests that not all

social support results in positive health outcomes.

Reviewing literature in this area, researchers found the negative side of social support in the form of sabotage, feeding behavior and collusion, which all undermine the attempts of those trying to lose [weight](#). The Surrey team found acts of sabotage, discouraging [healthy eating](#), and putting up barriers to attending [support groups](#), often undermined an individual's confidence and [self-esteem](#), negatively impacting their attempts at weight loss.

Jane Ogden, Professor of Health Psychology and lead author of the study from the University of Surrey, said, "Weight loss often results in change, from giving a person more confidence to a change in [social dynamics](#) in their relationships. Many do not welcome such changes and may, consciously or subconsciously, try to derail a person's attempts to lose weight in order to keep things the way they are.

"We need to explore this area further to develop interventions which could target family and friends and help them be more supportive in helping those they are close to lose weight."

Closely linked to sabotage, researchers identified 'being a feeder' as a harmful form of social support. Although often done as a gesture of love or as a sign of wealth and status, researchers found that deliberately providing food when the person is not hungry or trying to eat less can be detrimental to weight management.

Interestingly, researchers also pinpointed collusion, which is often seen to reflect kindness and friendship, as a form of negative social support. Analyzing a number of studies, researchers found a examples of family, friends and partners colluding with those trying to lose weight through 'going along' with their behavior when it is not in line with their weight loss goals.

Professor Ogden added, "People pursue [weight loss](#) for a number of reasons, be it for their overall health or to feel better about themselves. Support from friends and [family](#) can be an invaluable tool in helping people achieve their goals however sometimes those closest to them thwart their efforts by tempting them with unhealthy food or acting as a barrier in helping them adopt a healthier lifestyle."

This research was published in *Current Obesity Reports*.

More information: Sabotage, collusion and being a feeder: towards a new model of negative social support and its impact on weight management, *Current Obesity Reports* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s13679-023-00504-5](#)

Provided by University of Surrey

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