

# Investigating Mobile Weight Loss Programs

If you're anything like me – and apparently more than half of Americans are – you feel as if you need to lose at least a little weight. You're probably also busy, and uncomfortable talking to friends, family, and co-workers about your weight problem, but you have heard that it's easier to lose weight with moral support. Well, if those things are true, then the article “Mobile But Connected: Harnessing the Power of Self-Efficacy and Group Support for Weight Loss Success through mHealth Intervention” by Heewon Kim, Meara Faw, and Andreas Michaelides has great news for you. Nearly 210 billion dollars a year are being spent on health care costs due to obesity. About 77 percent of American adults are either overweight or obese, putting us at higher risk for “adverse health outcomes,” explain the authors.

Kim, Faw and Michaelides describe three necessary ingredients to the kind of lifestyle changes necessary to lose weight. The first is self-efficacy, which simply means believing in yourself. In order to make any kind of lifestyle change, you must first believe that you can achieve your dreams. Not everyone is ready for that kind of belief immediately, but if you find yourself at a crossroads, then the rest of this article should encourage you!

Second, the authors explain, successful dieters need to daily log and control their input of food. And finally, as I already implied, in order to make long-lasting, effective change, people need social support and encouragement. Kim, Faw, and Michaelides decided to test whether mHealth applications such as Noom would provide those benefits in sufficient quantities to help people succeed at their weight loss goals.

For this study, they used the lifestyle application Noom to find people who were willing to pay for a six-month subscription (at \$9.99 per month), log their food intake, and participate in Noom's social support system. In addition to the Noom data, the authors created a survey about the users provided with a promise of a month of free membership to the program and the possibility of winning other prizes. The authors apparently hypothesized that if users were willing to commit to spending money on a weight loss program, they must have a significant degree of self-efficacy. Additionally, the authors used the application's data over time to track which users most effectively tracked their food and activities. Finally, Kim, Faw and Michaelides compared the starting and ending weight of users over a six-month period to confirm that those who tracked and utilized the social support system the most lost weight more successfully than those who did not.

According to the study, there is good news for those who want to lose weight. If you are willing to participate in the online support, it seems to be as helpful for you as it would be to participate in an in-person group, and if you are willing to control your daily habits over a substantial period of time, an application such as Noom can help you lose the weight you want to lose!