



# Conversation with Dr Robert Kushner

HOW CLINICIANS CAN USE THE SIX FACTORS TO FIT PROGRAM  
TO HELP PATIENTS MANAGE WEIGHT

## Why should clinicians consider using the *Six Factors to Fit* lifestyle modification program to help patients manage their weight?

Quite simply, this lifestyle modification program provides you with an easily administered assessment tool that will quickly identify each patient's top lifestyle and mindset factors to focus your weight management counseling.

The *Six Factors to Fit* program is a patient-centered approach that allows busy clinicians to provide more effective and efficient weight management.

This targeted and comprehensive lifestyle modification program uses evidence-based interventions related to diet, physical activity, exercise, behavior change, coping and stress management—all personalized to meet each patient's needs based on his or her Six Factor Quiz results.

## What should we know about the *Six Factor Quiz Background and Research*?

Back in 2004, I developed a lifestyle habits quiz that was posted online and taken by more than 740,000 people from 200 different countries. This treasure trove of information, which represented a diverse

group of people from multiple cultures, communities, and lifestyles, allowed me to reorganize the approach. Using this data, I teamed up with a biostatistician to use a scientific method called factor analysis, which allowed me to take a deeper dive into the quiz responses. I was able to shorten the quiz from 66 to 27 items and simplify the lifestyle habits from 21 down to the current 6 factors. This new Six Factor Quiz was also independently validated with another group of individuals who completed it online as part of a prospective research study.

After the entire process was subjected to peer review, my article *Development of a Six-Factor Questionnaire for Use in Weight Management Counseling* was published in 2016 in the journal *Patient Education and Counseling*.

This validation of the research methods and Six Factor Quiz confirmed the basis for my new approach. The 27-item Six Factor Quiz, which takes 5-10 minutes to complete, can be taken online at <https://drrobertkushner.com/quiz> where it is electronically scored, or it can be taken manually from the book and self-scored.

## What are the Six Factors?

Through this published research, I identified the six distinct factors (Convenient Diner, Fast Pacer, Easily-Enticed Eater, Exercise Struggler, Self-Critic, All-or-Nothing Doer) that reflect the most important features

of lifestyle and self-identity that are linked to weight gain. Because long-term weight management is about more than just following a diet and exercise plan, the six factors focus not only on what people eat and how active they are but also on why and when they eat and how they cope with stress, handle emotions, and approach life's challenges.

Once you know your patient's scores for each of the six factors, you can personalize a lifestyle modification plan to help your patient lose weight, eat better, be more active, gain energy, and feel better. In essence, each patient's Six Factor Quiz results can become the framework for your counseling as a supplement to what you are already doing or as a stand-alone program.

## How is the Six Factors to Fit approach team-based or interdisciplinary?

As a weight management physician expert with almost 40 years of experience, I have always practiced as part of an interdisciplinary team comprised of physicians, registered dietitian nutritionists, health psychologists, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. I learned long ago that long-term weight management is really a team sport. However, many clinicians practice independently and may not have access to such a team, so *Six Factors to Fit* brings a team to you.

My co-author Nancy (also my wife) is a nurse practitioner and health writer. Registered dietitian nutritionist Dawn Jackson Blatner is our contributor for everything nutrition related in the *Six Factors to Fit* program, including superb meal-planning content. Our publisher, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, also supported the need for interdisciplinary peer review as the entire manuscript was shared with weight management experts around the country. Through this extensive peer review process, along with our own consultation with experts, *Six Factors to Fit's* information has been vetted by registered dietitian nutritionists, psychologists, physicians, and an exercise physiologist.

## How can I get started using the Six Factors to Fit program in my own practice?

A good first step would be to visit my website at <https://drrobertkushner.com> where you can look around and check out the pages that may be of interest to you. On my website, you will find pages such as:

- The *Six Factors to Fit* page at <https://drrobertkushner.com/six-factors-to-fit> where you can watch my short video about the book and learn more about the program.

- The Quiz page at <https://drrobertkushner.com/quiz> where you can take the Six Factor Quiz yourself, get your results, and see if you think this will resonate with your patients.
- The Professionals page at <https://drrobertkushner.com/professionals> where you will find selected resources for clinicians.
- The In the News page at <https://drrobertkushner.com/media> where you can read recent interviews related to obesity and *Six Factors to Fit*.

If this program resonates with you, I encourage you to purchase the book through the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics [eatrightSTORE.org](http://eatrightSTORE.org), at Amazon, or wherever books are sold.

Once you have read the book, you will have a better idea of how it can help you provide targeted lifestyle modification counseling for your patients—either in face-to-face visits or through video or phone telehealth visits. Here is some guidance:

- Before a patient's first visit, ask them to take the Six Factor Quiz online and email you their results.
- Your patient's scores can then set a framework for your lifestyle modification counseling.

- *Six Factors to Fit* describes how to prioritize which factors to start with. This is most commonly a shared decision making process based on the patient's personal goals, self-efficacy, and impact on health.
- You can use the evidence-based action steps, the progressive meal planning ideas, along with the many other book resources to guide your counseling.
- As patients progress in your program, you will want to ask them to re-take the Six Factor Quiz to see how their scores change. As they lose weight, their scores will also go down. Alternatively, as new lifestyle challenges arise, they may see an increasing score, such as an increase in the Exercise Struggler factor type if they develop an injury or disability.

Keeping with the theme of weight management being a team sport, I hope the book helps clarify when to refer patients for additional help, such as an exercise specialist or personal fitness trainer, a registered dietitian nutritionist, health psychologist, obesity medicine physician specialist, or a bariatric surgeon.

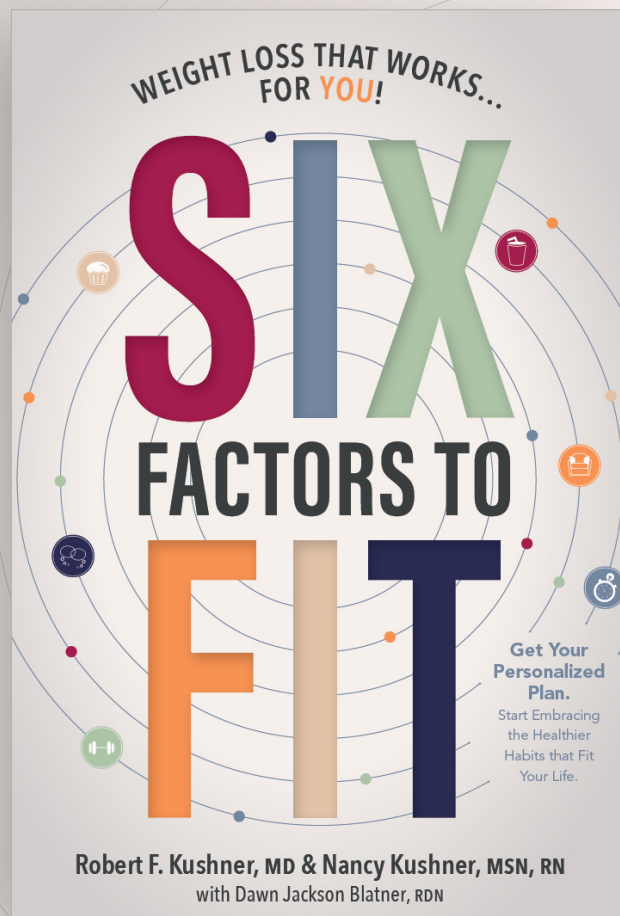
As you use the program, feel free to contact me through my website with questions or feedback.

## What are the online resources available to supplement the Six Factors to Fit program?

I continuously stay abreast of the changing field of obesity and the latest research. My website <https://drrobertkushner.com> and social media channels ([Twitter@DrRobertKushner](https://twitter.com/DrRobertKushner), [Facebook.com/drrobertkushner](https://www.facebook.com/drrobertkushner), and [LinkedIn/in/RobertKushnerMD](https://www.linkedin.com/in/RobertKushnerMD)) are updated regularly as a resource for both clinicians and patients.

You and your patients can visit my website to find:

- Ongoing blogs on timely topics to help patients better manage weight. Recent blogs include: Build Skillpower, Not Willpower to Manage Weight; Tips for Healthy Eating on a Budget; Are You a Candidate for a Weight Loss Medication?; Tips for Safe Social Fitnessing; and Health Habits Silver Lining during Pandemic?
- A monthly *Healthy Nudges* newsletter (the option to sign up is at the bottom of each website page)
- News links for my radio, print, and television interviews about obesity and *Six Factors to Fit*
- The ability to take (and periodically re-take) the Six Factor Quiz, print your personalized results, and have them emailed to you
- A contact page where you or your patients can ask me a question or share something



**DR ROBERT KUSHNER**, a recipient of the 2020 Weight Management (WM) Friend Award, is Medical Director of the Center for Lifestyle Medicine at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago, Professor of Medicine and Medical Education, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and Past President of The Obesity Society. He is also author (or editor) of 12 books, 58 book chapters and over 200 scientific articles on overweight, obesity and nutrition and a founder of the American Board of Obesity Medicine that certifies physicians in the care of patients with obesity. His new book, *Six Factors to Fit: Weight Loss that Works for You!*, designed for individuals wanting to lose weight and the health care providers who counsel them, was published by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Board-certified in internal medicine and nutrition, Dr Kushner is a passionate clinician, educator, researcher, and advocate in helping to improve the lives of those affected by overweight and obesity. Using a personalized, habits-based approach, he has been breaking weight loss barriers with customized plans for almost 40 years. A noted national and international speaker, Dr. Kushner teaches health care professionals about both the science and art of helping individuals lose weight, keep it off, and embrace the healthier habits that fit their lives.