Sainsbury K, Evans E, Teixiera P, Lahteenmaki L, Sniehotta F. 
A qualitative investigation of the role of emotion regulation in weight loss maintenance and its interaction with motivation and behavioural self-regulation. 

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This is the author’s manuscript of a paper that was presented at 24th European Congress on Obesity (ECO17), held 17-20 May 2017, Porto, Portugal

Link to conference website:
http://eco2017.easo.org/programme/

Date deposited:
19/10/2017

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The roles of motivation and self-regulation in weight loss and maintenance (WLM) are reasonably well understood. In contrast, little is known about the role that emotions and emotion regulation may play in WLM. The aim of this study was to summarise the ways in which emotions and emotion regulation influence WLM efforts, and to characterise both the between- and within-participant variability in how emotional experiences interact with, and potentially undermine, otherwise good motivation and self-regulatory capacity.

Methods: Qualitative interviews were conducted with 44 previously obese individuals (UK: N=25; Denmark: N=19) who had successfully lost >5% of their body weight following a deliberate weight loss attempt, and were currently attempting maintenance of that loss. Topic guides were developed to elicit information about emotion regulation and its links with self-regulation and motivation. Data was analysed in NVivo.

Results: Responses could be categorised as indicating a predominantly emotional or reasonable style for managing the impact of emotions on eating and WLM. There was also evidence of considerable within-participant variation in coping responses over time and across contexts. Emotional and reasonable participants differed in the intensity of emotional experiences and the likelihood that their emotions and regulation would lead to regain via lapses in motivation and active self-regulation.

Conclusion: Emotion regulation is an important consideration when understanding the process of WLM for many individuals. Motivation and self-regulation can be undermined by strong emotions and an emotional coping style, and this should therefore be considered when designing interventions and support to prevent weight regain.

1. Conflict of Interest:
None Disclosed

2. Funding:
This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 643309