Do I Need To Exercise In The Fat Burning Zone To Lose Weight?

You may have heard that there is a certain heart rate you should work at to ensure you are working in your "fat burning zone". The idea behind this is that your body predominantly uses fat stores for fuel, so anyone seeking weight loss thinks that this is the place to be when exercising. Unfortunately, it is not as simple as, "exercise at this heart rate and the fat will just melt away". In fact, there is a better way to lose body fat, if that is your goal, and it does not mean staying in the fat burning zone every workout.

Yes it is true, steady state lower intensity workouts will use fat for fuel. Things like walking or a light jog tend to be your go to steady state type exercises. When you increase your heart rate and start hitting the high intensity workouts, fat cannot be metabolised quick enough to provide fuel for the body. So carbohydrates are your main fuel source. But the truth is, weight loss comes from calories in versus calories out, and you are going to burn a lot more calories in a higher intensity workout than you ever will walking around the lake chatting to your friend. Higher intensity workouts not only increase your calorie burning potential during your workout, but it can also have an after burn effect. This means that even when you have finished exercising ,your metabolism is still revved up and burning calories, even though you have stopped your workout. This is especially true if you involve some form of resistance training into the workout. Getting the muscles working hard really boosts your calorie burning and that after burn affect. With steady state workouts, this does not happen, there is minimal to no after burn of calories.

My suggestion for those wanting to lose weight. Try 3 high intensity workouts a week with a mix of cardio and resistance training. Whether it be body weight strength such as squats and pushups, or actual weights with the use of dumbbells, kettlebells etc. Then when you can, throw in some walks as well. Add some steady state workouts to your weekly exercise regime, reap the benefits of the "fat burning zone" but focus your energy on the higher intensity workouts to really burn those calories. And just remember that you cannot out exercise a bad diet. If you really want to lose weight, you are going to have to first look at your diet, then the exercise is the cherry on top to get you fitter, stronger and healthier…