

January, 2000

A New You - Say "NO" to Dieting in the New Millennium

As we begin a new year, and a new millennium, millions of Americans will resolve to lose weight. It's estimated that our nation spends more than \$30 billion a year on dieting. For decades Americans have been popping diet pills, drinking diet sodas, joining weight-loss clubs, and following fad diets in record numbers. At the same time, we have been getting fatter and fatter. Although some people are able to lose weight by dieting, few are able to maintain that loss over time. Research has shown that in 95% of cases, lost weight is regained within five years, and a majority gain back more than they lose.

A growing number of health professionals are saying that it is not healthy, nor advisable to promote and prescribe weight loss for everyone. They maintain that *body weight* itself is **not** a risk factor for disease and premature death. Their views are supported by research which has shown that other lifestyle factors, such as lack of physical activity, smoking, etc., have more impact on health than weight. A new way of managing weight has emerged from these findings: the *non-diet* approach.

Believe me, giving up *dieting* for a ***non-dieting*** approach is a complex process that does not happen overnight. It takes time and effort to adopt a new paradigm or framework that moves you away from a *weight-centered* to a *health-centered* approach to living in a health body. The first step in moving away from diets is challenging the *diet mentality*, including beliefs such as:

- * It is impossible to be **fit** and fat at the same time. ***False, it is possible to be fit and fat!***
- * **All** large people **must** lose weight in order to improve their health and fitness level. ***Not true!***
- * **All** large people are in poor health. ***False!***
- * Everyone can lose weight **if** they just follow the "proper" diet and exercise program. ***Not true!***
- * The main reason people regain lost weight is **their** failure to comply with prescribed diets to make long-term commitments to weight loss. ***Isn't it ironic that with the massive failure rate for dieting (90-95%), we don't blame the process of dieting!***

The non-diet approach unleashes the shackles of dieting. It is based on common sense and supported by increasing scientific evidence. There are four basic concepts that are essential to adopting this new non-diet approach to weight management, focusing on:

Inside This Issue

- ✓ Respect Your Body
- ✓ Healthy Journaling
- ✓ Learn More about "Non-dieting"
- ✓ Exercise and Drive

* Total health orientation rather than weight

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loss or achieving a specific
“ideal weight”;

* The pleasure of eating well,
based on *internal* cues of
hunger and satiety, rather
than on external food
plans or diets;

* The joy of movement,
encouraging all physical
activities rather than
prescribing a specific routine
of regimented exercise;

* Self acceptance and respect

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for the diversity of healthy,
beautiful bodies, rather than
the pursuit of an idealized
weight at all costs.

optimize their health and
well-being. The goal for all

These basic concepts can
be summarized into three
simple and positive themes:
Appreciating Yourself and
Others; Eating Well; and
Active Living. Adopting a
non-diet approach offers a
new philosophy or paradigm
for weight management, and
new ways to help individuals

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Respecting Your Body in a Fat-phobic World

People have always been interested in physical appearance, however, the current emphasis on “thinness” as physical beauty, is unprecedented. The fashion world and media have shaped the ideal look for women into various versions of thin, from the Twiggy figure of the sixties to the modern waif look of today. The negative impact is extending to younger and younger children. Studies report that almost half of 3rd to 6th grade girls say they want to be thinner, and as many as one-third have already tried to “diet” for weight loss.

Respecting your body is hard in our fat-phobic, diet-obsessed world, but it is worth every ounce of effort that you put into it. We all come in different shapes and sizes. It is important that we accept our genetic blueprint. Just as a person with shoe size of eight would not expect realistically to fit into a size six, it’s just as futile to have a similar expectation about body size.

For overall better health, strive for fitness, rather than thinness. Invest time and money in yourself rather than the diet industry. Surround yourself with size-friendly people, who are positive and upbeat. Focus on what you like about your body, your eyes, your smile, whatever. Clothe your body with beautiful, comfortable clothes that fit now. Respecting your body means celebrating your uniqueness, your many abilities, and making friends with the mirror on the wall.

should be a healthful lifestyle that can be maintained indefinitely, rather than a short-term “diet”. If you are interested in reading further on the non-diet approach, check for these books at the library or your favorite book store: *Intuitive Eating: A Recovery Book for the Chronic Dieter*, by Evelyn Tribole & Elyse Resch; or *Women Afraid to Eat, Breaking Free in Today’s Weight-Obsessed World* by Frances M. Berg.

Journaling to Good Health

Journal writing is a tool for self-understanding and personal growth. It is a means of assuming more responsibility for your health and taking an active role in your health care. Of course, journal writing isn’t always related to health care. In recently, Oprah Winfrey has touted writing your simple joys in a journal to celebrate life, from the little joys. And, probably, many of you have “had” to write journals in high school English or college classes. If you haven’t “journalled” as an adult, I’d recommend trying it.

How can journaling help you stay healthy? Your journal is a tool for self-improvement. You can use it to set behavior change goals for yourself, to track progress

toward reaching these goals, and to engage in positive self-talk. Self-talk can keep you going when there is pressure to give up. What you say to yourself does, in fact, affect you. Your journal can help you explore barriers such as feelings, attitudes and actions that get in your way. You can then think creatively about potential solutions to those barriers.

Brag about accomplishments toward goals. You can also explore feelings about your success and slips, and give yourself a pat on the back for success. Often, re-reading journal entries of prior motivated moments can re-motivate you toward your ultimate health goal.

How do I Get Started?

Your journal is for you, by you. There are no rules or limits on how to keep your own journal. But, here are some helpful tips:
✍ Materials - Your choices are endless when it comes to paper and pens. You can buy a book with blank pages, or find an old 3-ring binder or spiral notebook around the house. Comfort is the primary consideration for a pencil or pen.

✍ No
Grades -
don't worry
about
spelling,
grammar,
punctuation,
etc. You
won't be

graded on your journal.
Remember, it is for you, by
you. Don't be afraid to write
your "gut" reactions and true
feelings. Many times, writing
your anger and "ugly"
emotions allows you to
release those feelings more
quickly so you can move on to
more positive things in your
life. Remember, journaling is
a tool for personal growth and
improved health so look at
yourself with a balanced view
of both strengths and
weaknesses.

✍ Where and When to Write
- The physical setting has an
important effect on journal
work. Find a quiet, com-
fortable place where there
won't be interruptions or
distractions. The important
thing is to fit it into your daily
routine. The amount of time
you write will depend on what
you have to say. To get
started, plan to write three
times a week for 10 minutes.

Workout While Driving Home?

No time to exercise?
Here are some exercises you

Q&A Q&A Q&A Q&A Q&A Q&A Q&A Q&A

Q: I feel like I'm always dieting. I've tried every diet, from grapefruit to the cabbage soup! It's so discouraging! How do I learn more about this new *non-diet* approach?

A: Beginning in February, Extension is offering "*A New You: Living in a Healthy Body*" as a series of four classes that introduces the new health-centered approach. You'll learn to reject diet mentality, recognize your eating style, and cope with emotions without using food. You'll discover how to respect your body no matter what size or shape; honor your hunger with gentle nutrition; and enjoy active living. For more information on classes, contact your Extension Center. **Preregistration is required.**

can do with both hands on the steering wheel.

Strengthen Your Abs.

Press your lower back into the seat while you tighten your abdominal muscles. Hold for a few seconds.

Work your gluteals.

Squeeze your buttocks together.

Stretch your neck muscles. Tilt your head

toward one shoulder, then the other.

Work the muscles across your upper back (trapezius). Bring your shoulders down and back as if trying to make your shoulder blades touch.

Work your forearms and pectorals. Tightly squeeze your grip on the wheel. With hands at the 9 and 3 o'clock position, press your arms inward.

Best exercise of all if you have a long commute. Stop your car in a safe area. Get out, stretch and take a

short walk.

Be sure to save these exercises for when you're driving slow, waiting for lights, in a traffic jam, or on an open stretch of the road. You can also do most of them on an airplane.

Source: Work & Family Life, January, 1999

Did you know - - You can lose 18 pounds a year just by walking 45 minutes, four times a week.
(Univ. of Massachusetts Medical School study)