

Have you tried every diet out there and still not been successful in reaching or maintaining your goal weight? Well you're not alone. Please understand that we are not failing diets, they are failing us. Did you know that 98% of all attempts to lose weight inevitably fail? People who diet are generally making themselves fatter. There is a misconception out there that you should eat less and exercise more to lose weight. This is not a healthy way to lose weight. Each time you go on a low calorie diet you lose metabolically active muscle. Then when you go off the diet and regain the weight you gain back nearly all fat and not the muscle previously lost. Now you have extra weight, a less healthy body composition, and a less attractive physique. Yes, dieting actually makes people fat!

Overweight people often say they don't eat very much and still can't lose weight. They are not lying. As biological creatures we are designed to keep from starving ourselves with a basic survival mechanism. When our bodies think they are in danger they send signals to eat so we can save ourselves. Your body actually thinks it is starving and becomes more efficient at storing fat by slowing down your metabolism. By not listening to this message our bodies get fat and grow old before their time. This creates an unhealthy metabolism and this is why you gain more weight.

People allow the number of calories they consume to drop below their RMR (resting metabolic rate). The RMR is the basic amount of energy or calories needed to run your metabolism for the day. It is approximately 10x your body weight. That means if you weigh 150 pounds you require an estimated 1500 calories a day just to lie in bed and maintain your biological functions. The human body is dependent upon getting enough energy to keep the heart beating, body temperatures stabilized, and the lungs breathing. This energy requirement is BEFORE you perform any other daily activities, including eating. It is surprising to many to learn that eating actually burns calories and accounts for 10% of total energy expenditure. This is called the thermogenic effect of food and can be increased by focusing on whole foods. So we need many more calories to function than most people realize.

I do not believe it is lack of will power that causes a person to be unsuccessful on a diet. Diets fail due to a combination of hormonal changes, muscle loss, and flat out frustration. They just don't work for long-term health and success. We have to heal our metabolisms first with healthy whole foods and exercise to be able to lose weight. One must get healthy to lose weight, not lose weight to get healthy.

Muscle is very expensive tissue for the body to maintain. It is also highly expendable so when the body is under the stress of a diet it will use the muscle for fuel. It actually breaks down its own muscle to provide the energy needed for survival. This state is described as "catabolic" meaning the body is undergoing a chemical process that breaks down its own tissue, muscle, and bone. When the body is catabolic it is actually wasting away. The metabolic rate of the body will slow down, requiring fewer calories. Your weight will be sustained by the body using it's own tissues for fuel. After a diet when your eating returns to normal again weight gain occurs rapidly because the body has less muscle to expend for excess calories.

Muscle requires 70 times more energy to sustain than fat. If you gain muscle mass your metabolic state increases and you burn more calories. Exercise (especially weight training) will stimulate and maintain lean muscle mass if you consume sufficient fuel. This state of the body is called “anabolic” when chemical reactions occur that cause different molecules to become larger and more complex. An anabolic body is regenerating, building itself back up.

For long-term good health you must move away from low-calorie diets and focus on enjoyable physical activity and good nutrition. America spends billion of dollars on different ways to “fix” people. I believe if we focused more on prevention and on changing our daily habits we could cut health care costs significantly. Making gradual changes in your diet and adding physical activity will yield great improvements in your health and well being. These changes are best not to be viewed as difficult or overwhelming but rather the core of an exciting lifestyle that you will greatly enjoy. A healthy regimen of eating should be part of your lifestyle, not something to suffer through for a week or two and then quit.

Healthy fat loss needs to be gradual for long-term success. This requires patience and commitment to achieving optimal health. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that the rate for “healthy fat loss” is 1-2lbs of fat per week. The bottom line is that you want to make healthy changes rather than punishing your body, mind, and spirit with starvation. Eat more to lose weight, not less. Soon you will discover your bodies’ capabilities and begin to look, act, and feel your very best! Life is short; don’t you want to enjoy it in excellent health?