

# **EVOLUTIONARY EATING**

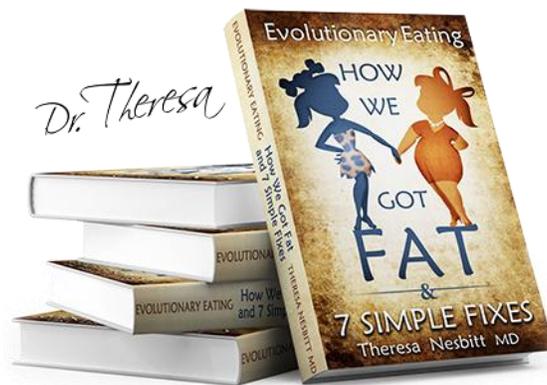
**How We Got Fat**

**&**

**7 Simple Fixes**

Theresa Nesbitt, M.D

“To my mother, Agnes Heisley,  
who taught me the value  
of the family meal”



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# PREFACE

Everyone knows the tale of Cinderella, the beautiful princess trapped in a life of endless drudgery until she gets an unexpected visit from her fairy godmother. Cinderella gets a makeover, complete with swank transportation, and is whisked off to the ball, where the handsome prince falls madly in love with her. Her glimpse of the happy life, though, is brief.

At the stroke of midnight, she finds herself back in her pile of cinders (in other words, hell). The prince looks everywhere for the gorgeous creature he fell in love with, but when he sees her covered in soot and sweat, he doesn't recognize her—his lovely was LOVELY. Eventually, though, he realizes she must be the one when she squeezes her foot into the unyielding, shows-every-flaw glass slipper.

Sounds like a parable for today's everyone's-desperate-to-lose-weight times, right? Well, yes—and no, too. *Our* stories aren't true Cinderella stories because we have the wrong goal. Cinderella's goal wasn't to fit into the glass slipper and have the prince fall madly in love with her. Her goal was to live happily ever after.

*We, however, live in a “once upon a time” in which we believe the answer to our problems is to squeeze into those new pants. We have figured out ways to transform our bodies temporarily—not with the help of a fairy godmother, but with the latest and greatest diet. Yet somehow, the midnight hour always catches up with us and we find ourselves back in the same situation.*

We don't live in fairyland; we live in FATland, surrounded by signals to eat and an abundant supply of cheap, tasty food. The only thing that's “magic” is that food can be in your stomach literally seconds after you think about eating it. We are only human—and humans are the naturally fattest species on Earth, fatter than hippos or polar bears. We have ten times the number of fat cells expected for mammals of our size.

This distinctive feature evolved along with our big human brains to ensure that we had a constant supply of fuel even when food became scarce. Our brains need a continuous supply of oxygen; we breathe continuously because there is no air storage tank. We eat intermittently because we do have a fat storage tank—our adipose tissue.

The modern world is a very fat habitat. Humans haven't evolved into a new species in the last two million years; we have evolved into a highly adaptable one. We can live and thrive in a wide variety of environments, where we use our brains to develop the skills needed to nourish our bodies.

The modern world is triggering changes in our bodies that make us store and hoard fat. It is very difficult to "lose weight" in fat-storage mode and even harder to keep it off. We aren't designed to lose weight, but rather to USE weight.

So that's the real world. Those are the facts. But don't despair—not living in fairyland doesn't mean you can't make your dreams come true.

You don't need to be Cinderella to have a happily ever after, and you certainly don't need a prince to rescue you. Princes (doctors, fitness gurus, and diet experts) offer instant solutions, but these promises are illusory and empty. We all have an inborn weight-regulating mechanism, but we still must learn and use skills to master our current environment.

That might sound challenging, scary or confusing, but don't worry, you will have help. Just think of me as your personal fairy godmother and let's get working on that personal happily ever after—an attractive healthy body that will last a lifetime.

# INTRODUCTION

*"Have you heard about the diet that makes you burn fat while you sleep?"*

*"I just got my hands on the newest fat burning program. It promises to shed the fat in just 3 minutes and 46 seconds a day!"*

*"Well, I just got this new scientifically approved weight loss pill. It's guaranteed to take off 35 pounds in 30 days!"*

Weight loss. We all want it, and we all think we know how to get it. Diets, pills, exercise, surgery . . . they all work . . . right? I thought they did too, but that was *before* I heard all of the above comments *from the same client*. Sarah was always on the latest and greatest fat-burning, fat-shedding, weight-loss program. The problem for her, and everybody else, was that it was just impossible to stick to any of those "fat burning miracles" forever.

Although various weight-loss programs differ, most of them place an emphasis on the same underlying factor, CALORIES: How to regulate them. How to balance them. How to burn them off.

Wanna lose weight? It's easy, you just:

*Eat Less.*

*Move More.*

*Take This Pill.*

*Have It Surgically Removed.*

OR

*Wish For a Fairy Godmother Who Can Instantly Transform Your Shape  
From Round Pumpkin to Sleek Hourglass.*

These concepts have been around for some time now and are still the most commonly used methods for weight loss. But do they actually work? Let's take a look ...

## Why Not Diet...More, Harder, Better?

Dieting is the most common of the weight-loss strategies. Many of us have had the giddy experience of watching the numbers go down on the scale, buying new clothes in a smaller size, and getting lots of compliments on our successful weight loss. If you are like 98% of the population, the results don't last longer than a year or two. Even for those who continue to diet and exercise the weight usually comes back, often much more quickly than it was lost.

Over time, each diet becomes more and more difficult. The weight refuses to budge despite more desperate calorie restriction. Any loss of control leads to further weight gain along with feelings of shame, depression, and hopelessness. This lasts until the next new diet, the one that will finally work.

The reality is that if these diets did work there would not be thousands of diet and weight-loss programs, there would be one. So if diets don't work...

## Why Not Exercise...More, Harder, Better?

Ah-ha! Exercise makes sense. You know, the whole calories in, calories out thing. Well, before you sign up for yet another gym membership, let's take a quick look at the stats. The National Weight Control Registry is an American membership platform that was developed to identify the characteristics of individuals who have succeeded at long-term weight loss.

To be eligible to join the registry, you must have lost at least 30 pounds and maintained that weight loss for at least one year. In studies done on these successful dieters, one particular finding stands out. Out of all the successful registrants, only 1% relied on exercise alone to maintain their weight.

This may seem like a better percentage than the diet method; however, this is a percentage of *successful* weight-loss campaigns, and doesn't account for the hundreds of thousands of people who try exercise and fail. An active lifestyle is associated with long-term weight maintenance, but it's hard to know which comes first. It's a lot more fun to move around when you are 100 pounds lighter.

Exercise alone, even running marathons, isn't likely to help you get where you want to go. In 1989, Danish researchers had obese men and women spend 18 months training for a marathon. After a year and a half, the men had shed just five pounds, and the women had lost no weight whatsoever. So if you thought dieting was ineffective, exercise, especially for women, has even poorer results. That burn you're feeling isn't fat – it's the dollars in your wallet and the hours in your day. Not to worry. Instead...

## Why Not Take Weight-Loss Pills?

"Take this pill and your troubles will be gone forever!" We all wish that there was a pill for everything. A pill that puts a million dollars in your bank account? I'd buy that. A pill that could make you fly? I'd buy that too! Pills that can make you lose weight and keep it off forever? Sign me up!

It is this illusion of the magic diet pill that has caused an explosion in the pharmacological industry, and although pills don't work (or at least safe ones don't), people keep buying them. Let's take a brief look at the history of diet pills:

The most "successful" weight loss pill in history was actually a combination of two drugs—phentermine and fenfluramine, more commonly known as phen-fen. Phen-fen acted in a complex way on two brain chemicals, serotonin and dopamine, and reduced the reward that people would seek from food.

So why is phen-fen not available today? It was pulled off the market in 1997 because it produced serious and sometimes life-threatening cardiac side effects. Not to worry, though, when all else fails. . .

## Why Not Remove it?

Ah, surgery. It's a drastic measure, but one with potentially dramatic results. Whether it's liposuction, tummy-tucks or Brazilian-butt lifts, the allure of instant results with no effort has resulted in our spending well over a billion dollars a year on surgical-body sculpting.

None of these surgeries are cheap and few are covered by insurance. They would probably be even more popular if they were. But here's biggest the problem with them: even when you suck the extra fat out and throw it away, you haven't changed the fact that many of the overweight patients are hormonally in fat-storage mode.

They are gaining weight, and just trying to keep pace. It's like bailing water out of a leaky boat and going nowhere—you are stuck bailing and bailing until someone comes along to rescue you.

Because liposuction doesn't change behavior, we find ourselves "still in the same boat." After the surgery, most people will continue the same behaviors that made them fat in the first place, so it always comes back.

For those that are morbidly obese and metabolically broken, there is gastric bypass or lap-band surgery, very invasive last-ditch efforts for those who feel they have no other option. Even if the surgery is "successful," there are severe side effects that last a lifetime. Even more troubling is the risk of death, either during the surgery or later in life. It's not a happy ending at all.

I'm pretty sure I know what you're thinking right about now:

*"Thanks for ruining my day, Doc! If these methods don't work, then what does?"*

## What Else is There!?

Well, first of all, there is relief. And happiness. You should be happy in the knowledge that the reason you can't get to and remain at the weight you want is not because you are inadequate, or that you don't have "sufficient willpower."

The methods you have been using are the real failures—they just don't work. So when you try dieting, or weight loss, or pills, or surgery, you are not addressing the underlying reason that you have excess fat. You are treating the symptoms, not the system, so you've lost the game before you've even begun.

What I am about to tell you is probably something that you have never heard before, and it is the same thing I told Sarah when she came to see me. Forget about these methods. They all address the symptom—excess fat—but none of them address the SYSTEM, which is the reason why you are fat in the first place. The real reason you are fat is that...

## You Don't Know How to Eat!

Yes, that's right. *You don't know how to eat.* Most people don't realize that eating is an acquired skill, not one we are born with. When we come into the world, we have legs, but can't walk; we have hands but we can't write; and we have mouths, but can't talk. In the same way, we need food, but we don't know how to eat. Just as we learn to walk, talk, and write, we must also learn to eat.

If you are overweight, you have a food preoccupation. If you are a yo-yo dieter, you are constantly on weight-loss programs. If you are always monitoring what you put in your mouth...it's not because there is something wrong with you. It's because you haven't learned the skills of eating.

You aren't "broken" and you don't need "fixing." All you need is skill. You aren't born with skills, you must learn them.

When asked to name a genius, the most common answer is Albert Einstein. Einstein was asked how he would save the world if he only had 60 minutes to do it. He answered:

*"If I had an hour to save the world, I would spend 59 minutes defining the problem and one minute finding solutions."*

I think this can be rewritten to address our current situation. I'd like to call it *the problem with the problem*. And let's call this *the solution book*. We are all looking for the solution to keeping off weight, but what good is a solution if it's addressing the wrong problem? That's what the current weight-loss strategies all do. Obesity isn't the actual problem. Obesity is, in fact, a predictable result of ignorant humans living in an obesogenic environment—that is to say "the modern world."

The reason that every single weight loss strategy is bound to fail is that they are all based on the *skills of weight loss*, but none of them teach the *skills of eating*. Weight-loss skills help you with weight loss, but there is only so much weight that you can lose. Eating disorders are not a "successful outcome."

So if you are fortunate and your short-term weight-loss strategy gets you to your desired weight, then what? When we loosen up on the restrictive diet most of us slide back to our old eating habits, either slowly or quickly. For most people, the problem is compounded because while they were on their restrictive reducing program, they remained hormonally in fat storage mode.

When your body is in fat storage mode the default is slow, but steady weight gain. This goes on for a while until something jars you into action - an unkind remark, a special occasion, or a closet full of clothes that don't fit.

When you restrict your food intake, you can "lose weight" but your hormonal status doesn't change... you are still in fat-storage mode. As soon as they give up struggling to "lose weight," the pounds will come back. And statistics show that you usually end up heavier than before.

The real problem isn't that you don't know how to diet. The problem is that you haven't learned the skills of eating. Until you learn those skills, you will always be struggling.

This book—*Evolutionary Eating: How We Got Fat & 7 Simple Fixes*—will introduce you to each of the skills that you need to become a competent eater.

Every chapter will outline a problem and then address it with one of the skills of eating. There are also 10 to 15 quick-start strategies at the end of each chapter to really get you going.

*Evolutionary Eating: How We Got Fat & 7 Simple Fixes* is a little like boot camp, or perhaps more accurately, “booty” camp. Boot camp takes a bunch of kids and gives them enough skill to enter enemy territory, and hopefully avoid the worst of the danger. But a graduate of boot camp is still a raw recruit, not a seasoned soldier. This book is designed to introduce you to the fundamental skills of eating. Though it will take many months to develop expertise, if you practice the suggested behaviors, you will develop eating competence.

The modern world is a dangerous place for unskilled eaters interested in staying thin and healthy. It is full of temptations and has no boundaries—it's like Pleasure Island from *Pinocchio*.

Everywhere we look, we are offered food forgeries—synthetic foods—that are very confusing to our natural weight-regulating mechanism. The media sends us hundreds of irresistible marketing messages each day promising that these “foods” are quick, economical, delicious, and even healthy.

They're not healthy. They are saboteurs. And it's our job to learn to avoid them.

Willpower has its limitations. Skill power is what is required to navigate the modern food environment. That is what this book—and I—want to teach you.

*Let's get going!*