

CHAPTER 2

How Did We Get So Fat?

Disclaimer: There are some people who suffer from one of a number of physical dysfunctions that result in excessive weight gain. These can range from a simple hormone imbalance to a metabolism that is out of whack, causing their body to turn the foods they eat into tissue, rather than utilize it as energy. There are also some people who “benefit” from hereditary factors that make them heavier than normal. While these people can certainly be helped by the D.E.P.T.H.™ process, they should first consult with their physician to address the underlying physiological cause for their problem. For the sake of personal safety and well being, anybody would be advised to consult their physician prior to undertaking any weight loss program.

The philosopher Lao Tzu proclaimed that the journey of a thousand miles begins beneath your feet. Thus does your journey to better health (and lower weight) begin by realizing where you are right now. Having eliminated an underlying physical dysfunction as the cause of the weight problem, we need to acknowledge the ways in which we have literally taught ourselves to be fat.

Those of us born into the “baby boomer” generation typically had parents who grew up during the Great Depression. During those bleak years, millions of people struggled just to get enough to eat, and learned to get food while the getting was good, since they might have no idea where their next meal would come from, or when. While the inclination to eat more than necessary as a hedge against future famine is the result of millions of years of evolution, it was during the depression era that the “clean your plate” mentality became widespread. Just as people learned to eat all they could when it was available, their bodies also honed that primal drive to

store nutrients against the lean times that were sure to come. These were pure survival instincts that served us well in times of need.

Unfortunately, when the lean times passed, we weren't very willing (at least on an unconscious level) to set aside those behaviors. We found ourselves with plenty of food, yet were still compelled to clean our plates, no matter how much food was piled on them. And our bodies had learned their lessons well, and continued storing food away, just in case the food ran out again. At the same time, many people who had previously made their living by the sweat of their brow began working with their brain, rather than their brawn. Our food intake stayed the same, while the amount of exercise we did on a regular basis diminished. The end result is pretty obvious...we got bigger.

The hectic schedule that many of us follow is another factor in our ever-increasing girth. With so many different things to attend to during the days, we allow ourselves certain fixed times to eat — unless something comes up that requires our immediate attention. Then, we grab what little time is available, when it comes available, and eat what passes for a meal. Never mind that we might not even be hungry at our scheduled mealtime, or that by the time we do get to eat, we're already cranky from the drop in our blood sugar level. We grab what is readily available — frequently a high-calorie, high-fat fast-food offering — and stuff it down as quickly as possible. If you've ever seen (or been) a harried office worker, sitting at a desk eating with all the grace and patience of a famished wolf, you'll get the picture. After our hasty meal, we return to what is, in most cases, a sedentary occupation, where we burn very few of the calories we've just eaten, and allow the fat to settle in...well, in whatever places gravity leads it. At least the wolf gets to run off some of the calories it takes in, and you'll never see a wolf eat when he isn't hungry! Now, if they had ever taken up wearing wrist-watches...

The point is that we too often ignore our bodies' genuine hunger and satiety signals. We often eat when we're not really hungry (which, for most of us, is one of the surest ways to pack on unwanted pounds), or we fail to eat when we *are* hungry (and then overcompensate later). And far too many of us who do obey our

hunger signals don't seem to know when to quit eating. We have to have "just one more" slice of roast beef, or piece of pie, even though we're already so full we're groaning. You might think that those times you don't eat when you are hungry would "make up" for the times you *do* eat when you *aren't* hungry, and that the latter wouldn't result in weight gain. For most people, however, it just doesn't work that way. The body stores extra (unneeded) calories as fat, but it doesn't draw on those "reserves" when you simply skip a meal or two.

When you combine our learned, unconscious behavior, our bodies' evolved response to save up for lean times, and our "gotta do it right now" lifestyle, the end result is a "perfect storm" for weight gain, leading us to eat more and more, faster and faster, and pack it away for the famine that our body erroneously believes is sure to come.

While it may seem an indomitable task to overcome these conspiring elements, it doesn't have to be. We can't undo millions of years of evolution, but we can control our own behavior. Just as we have learned unhealthy behaviors, we can also unlearn them. And once those behaviors — and the underlying factors that reinforce them — are replaced with healthy behaviors, the tough part is over. In future chapters, I'll show you how simple the transition can be, and your new, healthy lifestyle will become second nature, rather than just another task to be performed.

“Everything in your life — including yourself — either enhances or diminishes you. The trick is in telling which is which.”

Tom Nicoli