

BODY WARFARE

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BODY WARFARE

Lisa Renn



FOREWORD

Have you had enough of diets? Sure, they get results but as soon as you stop following the plan you go back to ‘normal’, and so does your weight.

Have you ever thought of changing your ‘normal’? By changing the way you usually think and do things you may be amazed at the different weight loss outcome you can achieve.

Have you got a well used list of excuses why you can’t lose weight and some ingrained habits that have you eating when you are trying to cut down?

If you are ready to lose weight forever and aren’t scared of hard work then *Body Warfare* will help not only to identify the obstacles you put in your own way (self-sabotage), but to develop a plan to help eliminate them.

‘All limitations are self-imposed’

Ernest Holmes: 1887-1960

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INTRODUCTION

Are you enjoying the roller coaster ride of dieting and weight regain? Is there any other way to think about the foods you like, except with guilt? Do you want your eating, exercise and food choices to add to your feeling of well being rather than tear it apart? There is a way to align your actions with your values in life and to achieve peace of mind as well as sustainable weight loss.

Do you know what to do but are having trouble getting started or keeping your efforts going? Do you wonder why things go wrong just when you think the diet is going well? If this is the case, you are not alone. Most people who start a diet struggle with motivation or find that they go along okay until a stressful or extraordinary event occurs and then the old habits creep back in.

This book will help you to identify the thought processes and habits that act to sabotage your weight loss efforts. By

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answering the questions, 'Why do I stop just when I was going well?' and 'What do I say to myself to make it okay to stop trying, even though I really do want to lose weight?' You will learn to recognise the things you do to sabotage your weight loss attempts. Couple this with a good reason to lose weight, one that compliments your values, and you will be well on your way.

Sustainable weight loss is the goal

Weight loss is one part of losing weight, sometimes, believe it or not, the easy part. Most people will have lost weight successfully in the past, potentially many times. The stumbling block is keeping the weight off once you have shed it. Sustainable weight loss is what dieters are trying to achieve, however, the very nature of a diet is the creation of a situation different to your usual patterns. You eat less and you lose weight, but how do you *keep* it off?

Core beliefs

This is the hard part; it requires you to change how you do things; not just how you eat, but how you think about yourself. Sometimes, your core beliefs will be the thing that holds you back. Core beliefs are those principles around which you run your life; they help you make decisions and can directly influence your behaviour. These beliefs are an integral part of who you are and yet they may be in conflict with your goal of maintaining your weight loss. If you are thinking that you are not good enough and ultimately don't deserve good things, this thought will guarantee that you never get to your goal. You might be thinking:

- ◆ 'I'm okay like this';
- ◆ 'I'm managing to get most things I need to do done';

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- ◆ ‘I’ll start when I’m not so busy’;
- ◆ ‘I have never been successful in the past’.

These are the thoughts which predetermine your failure. You become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Becoming aware of these types of thoughts and acknowledging how they can hold you back is an important step towards creating a different outcome to your usual weight loss attempts. These thoughts are difficult to recognise in yourself but they help to explain why sustainable weight loss is an ongoing challenge.

Diets don’t consider individuals

Each person is an individual, so it makes sense that your thoughts and habits will be slightly different to the next person’s, and yet you expect that one diet will solve everyone’s weight issues, and that if it doesn’t solve yours there is something wrong with you. This book presents an alternative that does consider you as an individual with your own unique thoughts and habits that establish how successful you are with anything you attempt.

You are in control of your outcome

Acknowledging that your usual thoughts and habits are responsible for the outcomes you see time and time again will be the first step to overcoming the traps of your previous unsuccessful weight loss attempts. You will come to understand that your success or failure is determined by the way you think, and that the way you think and act can be changed if you are willing and have a good reason to change. If you want to change your usual outcome in regard to weight loss success, you need to DO something differently to how you normally would – this idea is adapted from one of the useful ‘rules’ of Brief Solution Focused Therapy (de Shazer & Molnar, 1984).

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Without changing your thoughts and habits you will not change the outcome; it simply becomes a vicious cycle.

Thoughts are not facts; they are the way that you interpret a situation. We often feel that because we think in a certain way, it is also how everyone else would think in the same situation. Recognising that the way you think is unique to you, and that it could be what has always been holding you back is an important step to being able to create some change to your weight loss outcome. Your thoughts are affected by family upbringing, your schooling, your friends, your personality and innumerable other factors. When you look at it this way, you can see that everyone's thought processes will be different to yours. By recognising that your way of thinking is not the only way, and could in fact be causing a problem for you, will be a 'light bulb moment' toward creating change for the better.

Awareness brings possibility. If you are aware of your unhelpful thoughts and habits, you will be able to work on changing them. The discovery that you are in control is an important lesson for any person wanting to be successful with long-term weight loss. Once you have taken responsibility for your situation, you are then in a strong position to change and create sustainable weight loss.

Weighing in

The endless chase for weight loss means that many people are attached to their scales and use them to determine their self worth. If the scales show a loss then it's a good day; if not, then things are going bad. Sustainable weight loss is not about what the scales are saying; it is about creating healthy habits, one at a time, and focusing on the benefits these changes have made to your life. You may have been exercising regularly and

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are not losing weight; does that mean that you are getting no benefit from the exercise? How do you feel when you exercise regularly? The evidence speaks for itself. Most people say they feel good and have more energy when they are exercising. What have the scales got to do with any of that? Learning to make the shift away from the scales and towards healthy behaviours, focusing on how you are feeling as a result of the changes you are making is an important step to achieving a healthy lifestyle and sustaining weight loss.

It won't happen overnight

Learning that sustainable weight loss is achieved by making gradual changes to the way you eat and giving consideration to your individual needs means you are creating something that is unique to your situation, thus building in a plan for sustainability. To establish new healthy habits, the changes have to fit into your lifestyle – to consider your work and family needs – and who knows these needs better than yourself? And, yet again, you expect that a strict food plan drawn up by someone else and endorsed by a celebrity will be the long-term answer. Diets work in the short-term, but because they make you eat less than you usually do for a short period of time, they do not address your habits. All diets do is put you out of your comfort zone momentarily, then you expect that you'll want to stay in that uncomfortable and impractical situation indefinitely. Diets make you eat less than you usually do, say 6000kJ (1500 calories) or less, so you lose weight. Then you go back to normal which may be 8000kJ (1900calories) and yet you are surprised when you put the weight back on. Diets neither work for weight loss sustainability from a mathematical point of view, nor do they work to create sustainable change, but they do work to make you feel guilty. Do you want to

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change that feeling?

Fad diets cannot hope to achieve a natural relationship with food as they concern themselves only with telling you what to eat. They do work to lose weight because what they are doing is decreasing how much you eat. That's all weight loss is, but as you've discovered, it's not only about the weight loss part; it's also about the 'keeping it off' part. Diets are about creating a kilojoule (energy) deficit, whereas sustainable weight loss is about understanding how you use food, and creating a plan to undo a lifetime of dieting behaviour. Diets and diet books lack an understanding of human nature. This is where this book is different. It has come about from listening to people talk about their struggles with weight. It is not a miracle cure, but it does provide you with a step-by-step plan outlining the processes you need to go through and the changes that will need to happen if you want to keep your weight off. By not addressing these types of issues, diets are ensuring your failure, because once you finish the diet and go back to your 'normal' foods and your usual way of thinking, your weight comes back on and you have to start again. What a clever marketing campaign the diet industry has!

What's the alternative to dieting?

Natural eating means that you listen to your body and you eat when you are hungry. You need to eat at **least** three meals a day and more if you need to. Natural eating means that sometimes you will overeat and sometimes you will under eat but in the end it all evens out. (Kausman, 2004) Natural eating is looking at the big picture and identifying which areas of your diet are problematic. Natural eating allows for social occasions and it allows for healthy eating most of the time. Just as the healthy diet pyramid suggests the high energy/ high

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fat foods are a part of a healthy diet, it's also about putting them in the right proportions. As soon as you tell yourself you need to be perfect and avoid foods that you love, you are creating an unsustainable 'diet' for yourself and this is not normal or healthy.

Taking a normal or natural approach to healthy eating rather than a dieting approach will take the guilt out of eating and allow the enjoyment to return. It doesn't take much to work out which is the more sustainable position to create for yourself, does it? If this sounds too unrealistic, you need to consider, 'Is what you are doing right now working to create sustainable weight loss?' If not, then daring to do something differently offers you the chance to create a different outcome. If you continue to do and think the same way then it stands to reason you will get the same outcome. How is anything going to be different? What you stand to gain from changing your usual patterns is a new healthy relationship with food that allows you to enjoy the foods you like, that improves your food choices, and ultimately creates sustainable weight change.

Taking the challenge of this new approach will be difficult as you will be going against everything you have always done and thought to be true. However, you need to embrace this difference. By doing something different, you will create a change to your usual outcomes.

Unhelpful thinking

The Centre for Clinical Interventions (CCI), a specialised program of psychotherapy, research and training administered by health services in Western Australia, has outlined definitions to assist you to identify your unhelpful thinking styles. These thinking styles are discussed and will help you to recognise that your usual way of thinking about situations is leading

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you to behave in a way which contradicts the outcome you are wanting, in this case weight loss. It is often hard to understand why you can't lose weight and keep it off when it is what you want so much. However, if you are prepared to believe that your way of thinking is holding you back, you will be able to create some change to the way you usually think and therefore a change to your weight loss outcomes.

When staying overweight is the better option

Another point to consider is why do you keep doing things the same old way? What do you gain by staying the same? As the famous TV psychologist Dr Phil McGraw says, 'There must be a payoff for you to keep the same behaviour going':

- ◆ What reason do you have for being overweight?
- ◆ What are you putting off?
- ◆ How do you think weight loss will affect your personality?

People have many different reasons for staying the same weight:

- ◆ 'If I stay overweight I won't be attractive to others and I feel more comfortable that way'
- ◆ 'If I stay overweight then I can avoid doing something that I am putting off until I am thinner'
- ◆ 'Everyone I know who has lost weight and kept it off has turned into a fanatic. I don't want to be like that.'

Discovering your reasons for wanting to stay overweight is an important wake-up call because unless you address this issue, you will be trying to lose weight while at the same time believing that it is not going to be good for you.

What's your problem?

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This book will take you through some of the ‘classic’ problems people describe with weight loss and will present examples drawn from my experience as an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD). Most people know what they are doing wrong with regards to food and food habits, and most will know if they use food as a comfort or in times of stress or as a relief from boredom or any other reason. However, knowing that you do this and being able to change it are two different things. Becoming aware of your unhelpful thoughts and exploring those thoughts more deeply will create a pathway for changing them. Where did these thoughts come from? Are they still relevant to you? Are they true? Following the recognition of your unhelpful thoughts, you will be guided to assess what purpose food is providing you in these scenarios. What else could you do at these times that would reduce stress, relieve boredom and cure loneliness?

Making plans

Goal setting and action planning are two processes utilised by Health Coaching Australia (www.healthcoachingaustralia.com) You may have heard of SMART goals before, but this process takes goal setting one step further. The action planning makes the goal foolproof. How many times have you said that you would go for a walk or increase your fruit/water intake and it didn’t happen? The action plan will make sure that you think of everything you need to in order to achieve your goal (Gale, 2010). Goal setting takes on a whole new meaning; it’s not just about stating what you want to do and then hoping for the best. It is a considered plan which, when done well, provides you with motivation to keep going with your desired outcomes. Setting goals for small changes that you will build upon, and recognising unhelpful thoughts that

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you have as you go through the process, will all be part of the highs and lows you may experience. The important thing to keep in mind is that every slip-up is a learning experience and that your problem lies within the goal you set or your way of thinking.

Weight loss is about making good plans and good decisions, so although it seems time consuming, it is what people who manage their weight well are doing all the time, even though they may not be aware of it. Sustainable weight loss is about an ongoing series of good decisions and planning, not depriving yourself for a short period and expecting a long-term change to your lifestyle. Writing down goals and committing to your action plan will improve your chances of attaining what you want to do. So, even though the idea of writing down a goal rather than just thinking about it is tedious, it is a significant step to ensuring the goal will happen.

Food choices

Many diet books tell you what to eat or give you recipes to try, but ultimately you know what you like to eat. Having to fuss too much over label reading can also put stumbling blocks in your way, as food choices become impossible to make with your new found label reading skills. Learn the basics of healthy eating in a no fuss way. There are some things that are handy to know but, as you have long suspected, 'everything in moderation' and 'using common sense' are also essential to selecting a healthy diet. As an Accredited Practising Dietitian, it is my aim to guide you through the maze that healthy eating sometimes appears to be and also to simplify the nutrition messages so you can be sure that you are choosing a healthy menu.

*Introduction***Physical Activity**

The idea that exercise is or is not vital for weight loss is an interesting question and most people probably hope the answer is that they don't have to exercise. However, exercise is vital for long life, good health, the prevention of disease, improving fitness and wellbeing and weight maintenance. The good news is that, to create some weight loss, you don't need to be able to exercise. Once you have made some food changes and are feeling better about yourself, your desire to exercise will increase. Exercise is important for a healthy lifestyle but if the idea of exercise is currently overwhelming then relax! Let's tackle your thoughts, habits and the food side of things before progressing to the exercise. Research shows exercising at the recommended level of 30 minutes per day will create weight loss of 1–2 kg per year for most people. (NH&MRC, 2003) Weight loss is more about changing what you put in your mouth, and what you put in your mouth is often governed by your thoughts and feelings.

Embrace the challenge

Those who read this book and apply the ideas to their own lives will stand to gain a new outlook on life. Life will no longer be a series of excuses as to why you can't lose weight, as your excuses will no longer hold the power they once did. You will have a strategy to re-motivate and refocus your efforts and a better understanding as to how your thoughts can negatively affect your actions. With a good reason to change and knowledge of how to set a sensible goal, you will be able to progress towards sustainable weight loss one success at a time.

If you have tried many diets over the years, successfully lost weight, then put it back on, this book is for you. It contains a sure-fire way of boosting your desire to achieve weight loss and

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stick to your goals. There is no will power involved; just a simple strategy to keep you on track. Harness your most powerful ally – your mind. It has been capable of keeping you stuck at your current weight, so start learning how to use your mind to change your outcome. Dare to do something differently.

Are you ready to take the challenge?

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