the DIET JOKE

A Reprogramming Guide for Perpetual Consumers

by LISA PEDACE

Illustrations by Timothy Warren

BIG SHOT PRESS • SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Printed in the U.S.A.

Copyright © 2010 by Lisa Pedace
ISBN-10 0-9823404-1-9
ISBN-13 978-0-9823404-1-7
Library of Congress Control Number: 2009911960

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any way, shape, or form without written permission from the author, except for brief quotes in, preferably, shining reviews.

This book is for informational/entertainment purposes only. It does not take the place of a visit to your doctor, for which you are probably overdue. The author and the publisher take no responsibility for any mess you might get yourself into as a result of reading this book and/or using the information contained herein.

Published by
Big Shot Press
P.O. Box 90932
San Diego, CA 92169

Text design by Kathryn E. Campbell, Gorham Printing

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my excellent editor Jen Howard at The Editorial Department, who, if she got sick of me, was kind enough not to show it. Thank you also, to my outstanding illustrator Timothy Warren, who did get sick of me, and still agreed to illustrate this book.

Thank you to my original fans (and sometimes my only fans): Mom, Dad, Frank, Julie, Mike, and Elizabeth, who I never get sick of.

And thank you to my sugar pie, George, who never gets sick of me. At least, that's what he tells me.

Contents

Read This First / vii

PART 1–ABOUT US

Chapter 1 • Modern Times / 1

Diets Are a Joke • "Diet" • The Modern World • Messages • How Advertisers Brainwash Us • Commercials Mean Business • The Truth • Let's Sum It Up • Reprogramming Activities

Chapter 2 • Fat America / 25

Have You Seen those Americans Lately? • Conclusions • The CDC • BMI • Waist-to-Hip Ratio • Waist Circumference • The Statistics • Businesses and Industries • Let's Sum It Up • Reprogramming Activities

Chapter 3 • Land of a Thousand Diets / 47

The Diet Industry • Weight Loss Fantasyland • Fantasyland Odds • Clues to Fraud • Repeat Dieters • SUCKER • Diet Defined • Realistic Goals • Let's Sum It Up • Reprogramming Activities

PART II–ABOUT FOOD

Chapter 4 • It's a Numbers Game, Baby / 69

A Modern Fable • A Calorie Primer • A Science Experiment • Calorie Equating • Losing Weight • Diaries and Food Logs • Finding the Numbers • Bigger Portion/Bigger American • Out to Eat • Calories Count • Let's Sum It Up • Reprogramming Activities

Chapter 5 • Food Groups and Other Cliques / 97

The Food Groups • The USDA • Grains • Vegetables • Fruits • Milk • Meat & Beans • Oils • Discretionary Calories • Physical Activity & Calorie Recommendations • A Different Pyramid • Your Own Food House • Let's Sum It Up • Reprogramming Activities

Chapter 6 • The Good, the Bad, and the Toxic / 127

Why Do We Eat? • The Nutrients • Carbohydrates • The Glycemic Index • Fats • Cholesterol • Protein • Water • The Micronutrients • Nutrition Facts and Ingredient List • The CSPI • Organic vs. Nonorganic • What Cigarettes Have Taught Us • Let's Sum It Up • Reprogramming Activities

PART III–BEYOND FOOD

Chapter 7 • The Mental Game / 159

Love • Love/Hate • Friends • Rescuers • Circus Seals • Controlling Ourselves • Social Conformity • Creating Healthy Relationships • Being Kind • Let's Sum It Up • Reprogramming Activities

Chapter 8 • Modern Bodies / 181

The Body • Your Body Image • What Size You Come In • Body Types • The Business of Exercise • Walk It Off • How Much Physical Activity We Need • The Benefits of Physical Activity • Having Fun • How Many Calories You'll Burn • Staying Motivated • Let's Sum It Up • Reprogramming Activities

Chapter 9 • Keeping It Up / 205

Getting in the Habit • Plain Old Consistent and Reasonable Effort • Positive Thinking • Affirmations • Modern Mantras • Make Up Your Own • To Chant or Not to Chant • Tips for Using Your Catchy Positive Phrase • To Believe or Not to Believe • Let's Sum It Up

Parting Words / 223

Moving Forward • Reprogramming Activity

Bib / 227

Read this First

Most diet books are written by celebrities or doctors, and in extreme cases, by celebrity doctors. I am neither. I'm not a doctor, I'm not a celebrity, and I'm not an expert. In anything.

Why anyone, including me, thinks this qualifies me to write a diet book is beyond comprehension, and yet I have. I'll tell you something else you're not going to like. I don't have a weight problem. Not because I'm one of those naturally thin people who can eat anything they want, but because I'm one of those annoying people who orders dressing on the side.

I do a lot of other annoying things too, like walk every day. Not that walking is so annoying, but I tend to look in other people's windows when I do it and I'm sure the neighbors get tired of it. But I haven't always had these habits. I had to reprogram myself first.

You can reprogram yourself too. Just remember to consult your doctor, or your celebrity doctor if you can get an appointment with him or her, before you do anything. When I wanted to lose some weight, I did not consult anyone and I managed not to kill myself, but I don't recommend that for you because I don't want to get sued.

PART I

About Us

I'm on the Dr. Dolittle Diet. I can't eat food. I can only talk to it.

CHAPTER 1

Modern Times

Diets Are a Joke

If you ask me, diets are a joke. Not the funny kind that make us chuckle or laugh, but the mean kind that make us feel worse than we did when the joke started. Why? Because the joke's on us.

Let's start by assuming diets are dysfunctional. What am I saying? I'm saying that, like families, despite their best intentions, diets tend to screw us up. Sometimes they screw us up so much we no longer know what's normal.

This book is about what's screwed up and what's normal. If you need a hint, what's screwed up is a weight-obsessed culture set smack in the middle of a culture that encourages us to constantly consume everything in sight. What's also screwed up is the message of inadequacy we're fed 24/7 to drive our consumption. Screwed up, too, is the long list of never-ending, quick-fix solutions available for purchase, most of which deliver light results and heavy self-loathing. What's normal is knowing that, as much as we may hate to admit it, if we really want to change something about ourselves, then we have to do the work.

If you picked up this book, I assume you're interested in changing something about you, most likely your pants size. I think I can help. Not because I'm an expert in change or weight loss or nutrition, but because I'm good at wading through crap. In other words, this isn't your mother's diet book. This is a reprogramming guide. In this guide, you'll find information, activities, games, suggestions, humor, and sarcasm—a lot of

sarcasm—all designed to help you reprogram yourself, maybe not to be normal (who knows what that is anyway), but to not be so screwed up by the storm of messages we get.

Those messages include:

1. More is better, and
2. We're never enough.

When it comes to food, those messages brainwash us to:

1. Eat constantly, and
2. Rely on "diet" products to lose weight.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. As with all reprogramming, let's start at the beginning, with the word itself.

"Diet"

Diet is a four-letter word and three of the letters spell "die."

Wow. That's bad from the get-go. No wonder we find the word is so unpleasant. If I ruled the world, I'd throw it out completely. I'd start all over with something positive and affirming, something like *livet*.

"How's your livet?" your doctor could ask and you could smile back and say, "Not bad. My livet's not bad at all." Then he'd pat you on the shoulder and send you home, no charge.

Or your spouse could say, without worry of dishes flying, "Honey, you seem to be spreading. Maybe you should watch your livet." And you could turn to your spouse with big loving eyes and say, "You're right, dear. My livet's too important. I'm going to start paying more attention to my livet right now."

That's what it should have been: *livet.* But instead, it's *diet.* So instead of livet plans and livet recommendations, we're stuck with diet plans and diet recommendations. No wonder people are stuffing themselves to death. The word practically encourages it. It makes you wonder how we ended up with this lemon.

"Diet" comes from the Greek word "diaita," meaning "a way of life."

Those doggone Greeks. I can see them now, with their deep tans and curly hair, eating grapes and feta cheese, drinking wine and playing discus on the beach. That's not a bad *diaita* at all. I bet you would love a *diata* like that. Instead you got *diet*, a four-letter word that kicks sand in your face. Talk about a bad translation.

Too bad you can't turn to the back of some flimsy comic book and order some Charles Atlas-like solution, not for frustrated scrawny males, but for frustrated doughy balls, maybe like you. Something they could mail to your home in a plain brown wrapper for you to eat or drink or rub on your belly, and then, presto magic, you'd reemerge on the beach a few weeks later, trim, fit, and ready to kick some sand.

Oh, wait. You can. You can order something right now. Diet meals, pills, bars, and creams can be shipped to your door at this very moment. You don't have to be a frustrated doughy ball after all. A new life is just an order form away. Excess fat will melt off your body before your very eyes. You'll be fit and trim in no time. Within weeks, deeply tanned, curly-haired Greeks will invite you to drink wine and play discus on the beach with them. What are you waiting for? Isn't it time you lived better?

That's what the ads say. What nobody tells you, least of all the phone reps and sales folks who just ran your credit card, is that once you stop the meals, pills, bars, and creams, and return to your regular everyday life—the one that got you into this mess in the first place—you will gain back what you have fought so hard to lose, and maybe even then some. And then, not only are you a frustrated overweight doughy ball, you are also a failure.

No wonder you want a cookie. I don't know about you, but I could sure use some inspiration right about now. Lucky I keep some in my pocket for just this kind of thing.

Our greatest glory is not in never falling,
but in getting up every time we do.

—Confucius

Or as your mother used to say,

Get up.

—Your Mother

Get up. Today is a new day—a glorious day—and you only get so many of them, so you better stop taking them for granted.

The Modern World

If it makes you feel any better, it's not your fault. I mean it's sort of your fault, but I know how hard it is to hear that. What I mean is, it's a modern world and that works against you as much as it works for you.

Consider Oogg, a single caveman. His typical day looks something like this. Wake up. Get club. Leave cave. Look for breakfast. Eat. Look for lunch. Eat. Look for dinner. Eat. Return to cave. Wash club. Make rock bed. Fluff rock pillow. Go to sleep. Repeat.

Oogg doesn't have a weight problem. Oogg is a hunter. Oogg spends most of his day running after food. When Oogg isn't running after food, Oogg is running away from things that see *him* as food. One day Oogg meets Gloga, a pretty young cave woman, and together they have three little cave babies. Gloga leaves the hunting to Oogg and takes upon herself the task of keeping the cave clean and the babies out of the fire.

Gloga doesn't have a weight problem either, because while Oogg is out hunting, Gloga is busy gathering wood for the fire and rocks for her growing dishware collection. Gloga is not sitting at home with a disappearing sleeve of cookies watching game shows.

And what, you wonder, does any of this have to do with you? Absolutely

nothing. You're not a cave person. You're a modern person. Your day looks more like this. Wake up. Eat. Drive. Eat. Work. Eat. Shop. Eat. Watch TV. Eat. Sleep. Repeat.

Boy, would Oogg like a day like that. Not because it's so much fun, but at least you don't have dinosaurs chasing you around. That's one of the benefits of being so modern. We don't have to outrun the food chain. Practically everything we eat has been bred and packaged for us. We don't hunt and gather; we drive and take out, or microwave and defrost, or just unwrap and eat.

The problem with this kind of eating is not that it's easy—I'm all for easy—but look up "easy" in the dictionary. It doesn't say a thing about being good for anyone. That's not to say things need to be hard to be good for us. You're not fat because you have a microwave. You're not fat because you have a freezer. You're fat because you're lazy. I don't mean you don't work hard. I'm sure you do. I mean, when it comes to really understanding the relationship between food and your body, you are lazy.

Lazy means "unwilling to work or use energy," also, "showing or characterized by a lack of effort or care."

At least that's the definition in the dictionary in my computer. I could get up and check it against the definition in the dictionary in my bookcase, but that's all the way in the other room and I'm too lazy to go get it.

We're all lazy somewhere. There's no fault in that if you can afford it. Oogg would love to be lazy. Oogg would love to relax in his cave, recline in his favorite rock chair and watch cave art all day long, but who would feed the family? Oogg can't just walk to the corner and buy some Dino-Burgers. Even if he could, he'd never make it home. A great big Giganotosaur would get a whiff of the delicious burgers and hunt Oogg down.

Sure, Oogg could throw the Dino-Burgers into the bushes, hoping to divert the Giganotosaur long enough to make it back to the cave, but then he'd have to explain why he came home empty-handed to Gloga, who's got her own hands full with three screaming babies and a clogged rock sink.

Messages

With this kind of ancestry, is it any wonder humankind is worn out? Who can fault a population for taking the hunt out of the equation if it's in the position to do so? And the modern world is. The food chain has been conquered. The hunter has retired.

We are the fortunate flabby beneficiaries of progress.

Everywhere we go, the modern convenience of ready-made food awaits us. Takeout tempts us at every corner. Gas stations have closed the garage and opened a minimart. Supermarkets line their shelves with boxes, bags, and cans of processed ready-to-eat foods. We can hardly step out the door without someone wanting to sell us a pastry.

Even the home is not safe. Little kids selling candy knock on our door. Colorful menus promising quick delivery hang from our doorknob. Third-class advertisements featuring two-for-one burgers and pizza fill up our mailbox. We turn on our television and they hit us again. The grand slam breakfast is back. Value menus seduce us. Singing chocolate candies invite us to play. No wonder we struggle.

We are bombarded with messages to eat every hour of the day.

We must be nuts to think we can lose weight in this environment. That's why, more messages say, if we're trying to lose weight, we better seek help to do it.

Boy, advertisers are clever. They not only tell us what to eat, they solve our every dilemma. No time to cook for your dysfunctional family? Don't worry. Buy this bucket of food and everyone will be normal and happy. Have no buddies to watch the game with? No problem. Buy these chips and beer, and everyone, including attractive members of the opposite sex, will come knocking on your door. Life a little boring? Listen up. Buy these crackers and pop, and toe-tapping music will fill that growing sense of ennui. Getting roly-poly from too many buckets of food, chips, beer, crackers, and pop? We can help. Buy these diet meals, pills, bars, and creams, and watch your fat dissolve in days.

Those people in advertising sure are smart. They know how to fix everything. They must be geniuses. Unfortunately, they must also be liars. Maybe buckets of food and chips and diet pills and everything else they're selling will make us happier, more fulfilled, and more attractive. Or maybe, just maybe, to be happier, more fulfilled, and more attractive, we actually have to do something besides sit on the sofa with a bag of tortilla chips and a can of bean dip.

How Advertisers Brainwash Us

Standing up to advertisers isn't easy, but we can do it, because despite what we've been brainwashed to believe, we control what we consume. Don't believe me? Let's say it's one o'clock in the morning and for reasons beyond my control, I haven't had a thing to eat since Tuesday. My head's spinning, my stomach's howling, my hands are shaking; I feel weak and dizzy. Thank god there's a 24-hour-anything open. I walk in, and what's this? It's the *Survivor* Minimart. All they offer are boiled cockroaches and pig eyeballs. Am I shopping? No thank you. Am I eating? No way. No matter how hungry I am, trust me, I ain't *that* hungry. Even if they offer me $100,000 and a chance to be on television, the holy grail of modern times, I will pass.

Maybe my example is a little extreme. The point is, when we really want to, we control what we put in our mouth. Boiled cockroaches and pig eyeballs aren't ice cream and pie, and still the point remains: if it's in our mouth, it's usually because we put it there. Everything you ate yesterday you picked up and put in your mouth. Nothing flew in. Nothing magically appeared. Nobody pried open your clenched jaw and shoved in a banana split. You were in charge and on board for most of it. I say "most of it" because of the brainwashing thing.

To understand in part how the brainwashing thing works, let's play a game I call Count the Fat People. The game is to watch some television, but instead of walking out during the commercials, stay in front of the TV, watch the commercials closely, and count the fat people in them.

I played this game as soon as I invented it and watched an hour of *Maury,* starring host Maury Povich. This episode of *Maury*, like many episodes of *Maury*, involved plenty of swearing, some women with big hoo-hoos, and a lot of heckling from the audience.

The first commercial break included:

1. A pretty girl selling herpes medicine.
2. A man in a suit selling get-out-of-debt services.
3. A commercial for a home pregnancy test.
4. A commercial for a vacuum cleaner.
5. A commercial for a nightlight.

From this I deduced the demographic breakdown of people who watch *Maury* include people who are in debt, people who stay at home, and people who have lots of unprotected sex.

Number of fat people in the commercials: 0.

The second commercial break of *Maury* included:

1. A commercial for a vaginal anti-itch cream.
2. Another get-out-of-debt commercial.
3. A man in a suit selling aggressive attorney services.
4. A man in a suit selling criminal and DUI defense services.
5. A tease for tomorrow's *Maury* featuring Cheating Lovers.

One starts to wonder if perhaps the people who watch *Maury* wouldn't be better off if they stopped sleeping around so much and got a second job, but that's beside the point.

Number of fat people in the commercials (not counting the tease for tomorrow's *Maury*): 0.

The third commercial break advertised aspirin, which wasn't such a bad idea, so I went to the bathroom to get some. Then I started plucking my eyebrows and missed the rest of the show.

Commercials Mean Business

Lest you think I just sit around and make up meaningless, meanspirited games, let me explain. I'll do this by example, using a commercial I saw during another show. This particular commercial advertised Hershey's Chocolate Bars and Jet-Puffed Marshmallows, and featured attractive men and women at a beach campfire playing guitars, dancing, and making and eating delicious s'mores.

Number of fat people in the commercial: 0.

I'm sure if I called Hershey's and said something like, "Hey, how come you didn't invite any fat people to your beach party?" they would probably say something like, "Well, we invited them, but they didn't want to come. You know how self-conscious fat people can be."

I say it's more likely Hershey's didn't invite them because Hershey's doesn't want anybody to associate chocolate bars with fat people. Hershey's doesn't want us to connect chocolate with fat. Hershey's wants us to connect chocolate with fun. That's how commercials work.

Commercials are all about association.

Remember those early erectile dysfunction commercials. The men in the commercials were always attractive, not so old, and in pretty good shape. Why? Because men who have ED don't want to associate themselves with old, unattractive men who can't get it up. And remember the women. The women in the early ED commercials always looked older than the men and were only moderately attractive, as if to say to the man who might buy an ED pill, "We know you wouldn't be having this problem if you were dating Pamela Anderson."

Am I saying you'll never see a fat person in a commercial? No. I've seen them in insurance commercials (as the reason to get insurance) and in prescription drug commercials (as the reason to take prescription drugs) and in diet plan and diet food commercials (as the reason to go on a diet). I just never see them in regular food commercials. Don't you think that's funny? Not funny funny, like I am, but funny odd, like not real.

What does it mean? I'll tell you what I think it means. I think it means the food industry doesn't want us to make any connection between food and fat. If we did that, we might start thinking more about what we buy and how much we eat, and that, my friend, would be bad for business, especially the food and diet business. You may think one has nothing to do with other, but sometimes they meet in dark corners to hold hands and rub noses. Where will they meet next time? How about the company boardroom?

Company boardrooms aren't that romantic unless money turns you on. Take the company boardroom at Nestlé, for example, where brands range from Toll House Cookies to Dreyer's Ice Cream to Jenny Craig Weight Loss. Am I saying Nestlé is the Big Bad Wolf who's trying to fatten us up

so we'll, in turn, buy expensive diet products? No. I'm just saying they sometimes meet in the boardroom and shut the door.

What goes on behind closed doors isn't any of our business. Besides, business is business. If Nestlé, just for example, is looking to broaden their customer base and grow their company by buying up another company, the way they did when they bought Jenny Craig for approximately $600 million in 2006, more power to them. I wish I had $600 million. And is there any conflict of interest for a company to sell both chocolate and weight-loss products? No. Nestlé isn't a politician. It's a business. It's all business.

Selling products is their business.
Taking good care of our body is ours.

The Truth

The truth about losing weight is the same as it has always been. You have to burn more calories than you consume. I know it's an easy thing to say, not such an easy thing to do, but you're more talented than you think. If you really committed to it, you would see results. Besides, what are you eating, anyway? You're the king of your body, the king of your mouth, and the king of your food chain. You are not the King of France.

I doubt you're overweight because someone is bringing gourmet food to your table every day. I doubt you live on a five-star luxury yacht where white-hatted chefs prepare silver-plated entrees round the gilded clock. You are overweight, I would guess, because you eat too much, much of it highly processed crap, loaded with fat and sugar, and filled with additives (so it lasts longer) and salt (so you crave more). I would also guess you're overweight because you sit too much. These are the habits of the modern world.

The good news is that reprogramming ourselves is as simple as changing our habits.

We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.

—Aristotle

So is stuffing our face.

—Lisa Pedace

Let's Sum It Up

- Greeks know how to live it up.
- Cavemen did a lot of running.
- The modern world is cranky.
- The point of advertising is to sell you something.
- Mr. Whipple wasn't real.
- You are not the King of France.
- Habits, like hearts, are breakable.

Reprogramming Activities

Activity #1–Habit Check

What are some of your modern-day habits? To find out, fill in the following questions.

For breakfast, most mornings, I _____.

For lunch, I frequently _____.

When I come home from work, I usually _____.

My favorite way to wind down is to _____.

When I'm bored, I tend to _____.

My daily exercise routine consists of _____.

My nighttime ritual begins with _____.

I always worry about _____.

A day without _____ is like a day without sunshine.

Now answer this. My three worst habits are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If you can't come up with anything, ask your partner or anyone else who knows you well. They can probably spit out a dozen. Why is knowing our habits important? Because changing something in our life usually begins with changing some of our habits, and we can't change them until we admit what they are.

Activity #2–Modern TV Habits

If you're like most Americans, watching plenty of TV is probably one of your modern-day habits. To find out how much of a habit it is, get a piece of paper and write out the following headings at the top of it. Then keep your piece of paper, along with a pen or pencil, near your TV for whole week, and keep track of how often you watch it. Even if you do other things while you watch TV, make a note of every time you turn it on and how long you keep it on.

TV LOG

Day	Time On	Time Off	Total Time	Show	Seen It Before

At the end of the week, add up the total time you spent watching TV. Chew on that for a change.

Activity #3–Count the Fat People

While you're watching all that TV, why not pay close attention to those commercials and play Count the Fat People.

TV Show _____

Time of Day_____

COMMERCIAL #1

What were they selling? _____

Who was selling it (not the brand, but the folks in the commercial, i.e. gender, age, implied economic level, implied status level, etc.)?

_____

Number of fat people in the commercial: _____

If there were any fat people, what was their role in the commercial:

_____

COMMERCIAL #2

What were they selling? _____

Who was selling it? _____

Number of fat people in the commercial: _____

If there were any fat people, what was their role in the commercial:

_____

COMMERCIAL #3

What were they selling? _____

Who was selling it? _____

Number of fat people in the commercial: _____

If there were any fat people, what was their role in the commercial:

_____

COMMERCIAL #4

What were they selling? _____

Who was selling it? _____

Number of fat people in the commercial: _____

If there were any fat people, what was their role in the commercial:

_____

COMMERCIAL #5

What were they selling? _____

Who was selling it? _____

Number of fat people in the commercial: _____

If there were any fat people, what was their role in the commercial:

_____

SO GOOD!
DIET

Activity #4–
How Food and Drink Can Solve Your Problems

Now focus just on food and drink commercials. Think about what each commercial implies you'll get if you eat or drink their product. For example, Olive Garden commercials say, "When you're here, you're family." They also show a lot of happy family relationships, whether it's gramps and grandson, or the neat nuclear (not divorced) mom, pop, one son and one daughter out for dinner. What they imply is that happy families eat at Olive Garden, so if you eat at Olive Garden, you'll have a happy family. Is that my opinion? You bet! Three cheers for opinions. Not the loud, obnoxious kind on radio and television, but the small, personal ones we make for ourselves and then offend our friends with.

I'll give you another example. Heineken beer commercials always seem to imply if you drink Heineken, you'll be a little more in the know. Do I drink it? Sure do. Am I in the know? Just ask me!

Oh, and look for fat people too. You won't see many of them selling food (unless they represent "the other brand").

FOOD OR DRINK ADVERTISEMENT #1

Food or Drink product being advertised: _____

What the commercial implies you'll get from eating or drinking it:

_____

Number of fat people in the commercial: _____

FOOD OR DRINK ADVERTISEMENT #2

Food or Drink product being advertised: _____

What the commercial implies you'll get from eating or drinking it:

_____

Number of fat people in the commercial: _____

FOOD OR DRINK ADVERTISEMENT #3

Food or Drink product being advertised: _____

What the commercial implies you'll get from eating or drinking it:

_____

Number of fat people in the commercial: _____

Commercials are an integral part of the brainwashing process. Whatever you ain't got, whether it's love, friends, family, beauty, security, serenity, excitement, or anything else you're lacking, their product will deliver. They promise.

Activity #5–Let's Set Some Goals

Getting back to you, think about what you'd like to change and fill in the following sentences:

I want to change my _____.

Life is a beautiful thing and when it's not, we can sometimes make it a better thing by making some reasonable changes. We cannot, however, change everything. For example, if I were going to fill in the above sentence, here are some reasonable things I might come up with:

I want to change my weight.

I want to change my lifestyle.

I want to change my spending habits.

Here are some unreasonable things I might come up with:

I want to change my height.

I want to change my leg length.

I want to change my past.

You'll have to decide for yourself if your answers are reasonable. Just a hint: if it requires a time machine, it's probably no good. Also, while modern medicine can do many things, like put water balloons in breasts, they have yet to figure out how to give me longer legs, although they're probably working on it.

Once you've come up with some reasonable possibilities, let's look closer at why you want to change whatever it is you want to change. This is an important step because we want to be sure you're motivated by your own desires, and not someone else's, like advertisers, or your spouse. I'm sure your spouse is a very nice person, but spouses in general are always trying to change something about us that didn't bother them when we were dating. So, using the answers you've already come up with, or even brand-spanking new ones, fill in the following sentence:

I want to change my _____

because I want _____.

Using my same examples from above, I might come up with:

> I want to change my weight because I want improve my health.
>
> I want to change my lifestyle because I want to have more energy.
>
> I want to change my spending habits because I want to live more responsibly.

These sentences all represent reasonable goals that are motivated by a reasonable desire of something I want for myself. We're always more likely to have success with something we want for ourselves than we are with goals that are motivated by what other people want from us or we want from other people. For example:

> I want to change my weight because I want my mother to stop harping on me.
>
> I want to change my lifestyle because I want my ex to be jealous.
>
> I want to change my spending habits because I want more people to like me.

I understand wanting to make other people do things, like shut up or be jealous or like you more or regret not liking you more. It's fair to want these things. The problem is you can't do anything about them. People are right up there with the weather, traffic, and the economy: we can't control them. Besides that, how can other people possibly know what you expect from them just because you decided not to eat a cupcake?

Finally, let's look at what you want and what you're willing to do about it today.

I want to change my _____ so today I

will _____.

Going back to my earlier responses, I might suggest the following:

I want to change my weight so today I will skip dessert.

I want to change my lifestyle so today I will take a walk.

I want to change my spending habits so today I will brown-bag it.

When you complete the day, check the appropriate box.

- ☐ I did it!
- ☐ I started to do it but then _____ (fill in your excuse).
- ☐ I didn't have time to do it.
- ☐ I just want to read the book.

Onward, ho!