INSPIRED TO FEEL GOOD

Making healthy and fit choices so rewarding and liberating you never want to stop



Choose Satisfying Healthy Foods

Overcome Exercise Resistance

Enjoy Being Active & Fit





ALICE GREENE

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Making Healthy and Fit Choices So Rewarding and Liberating You Never Want to Stop

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To my mother Anna who has traveled the long journey beside me with an open mind and loving heart

and

To my clients who took the leap of faith that changed their lifestyles and from whom I learned so much



In Gratitude

My heartfelt appreciation and gratitude goes to my dear and loyal friend, Gail Jones, who cheered me on, jumped in to serve as editor and continues to share the road-less traveled while pursuing our purposeful and starlit journeys. She has been my rock and my roll.

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Introduction



Introduction

Barbara knew how good it felt to be active and to eat healthy foods, but she had reached a point where she didn't care anymore. It had been more than a year since she had gone to Curves regularly, and she was beginning to think it didn't really matter if she ever went back. Two years before, she had been serious about taking better care of herself after learning she had high cholesterol and was at risk for diabetes and heart disease. Yet she struggled to stick with her improved eating habits and exercise routine, and she eventually succumbed to the inertia of doing nothing. She had tried other programs, worked with trainers and tried Weight Watchers in the past, but none of these regimens worked for her. She wanted help, but she wasn't sure where or whom to get it from.

When we first talked, Barbara told me she didn't feel very well. Her body ached, her knee bothered her and she just didn't feel good. She wanted to feel better, get past her ambivalence about taking care of herself and find a way to be motivated to make fitness a way of life. She had succeeded in being regularly active after undergoing a hip replacement many years before and knew she could do it again. Yet she also told me, "I don't have it in me to do this right now, and I have a sense of failing and hopelessness."

Despite feeling despondent, she decided to work with me for a while and see if she could recapture her zest for healthy living and reduce her risk of disease. Barbara started off easy, choosing aerobic exercise three times a week by either walking or doing a Richard Simmons video. She discovered that it felt good to be in motion again. She realized that although she had put off exercise, once she got moving, her mood lifted, and it felt wonderful to get her heart rate up. Within six weeks she was also going to Curves twice a week, and her knee, which had bothered her for years, wasn't so painful anymore. By the eighth week of her new routine, she was really seeing some big shifts in how she felt. In our eighth session, she said, "It was like old times this week. I got a great feeling from exercising. It really feels good, and my body wants to do it. I feel secure trusting in my body and myself, and I feel balanced."

Barbara also began changing the way she looked at food. She learned to listen to her hunger signals and to eat whenever she got hungry and to stop eating when she was satisfied but not full. She also discovered that it wasn't so hard to eat more vegetables or to prepare nutritionally balanced meals and snacks so she had food available whenever she got hungry. By the sixth week, she was finding she really liked eating healthy meals and was feeling better physically. And she told me, "Every time I don't eat a healthy meal, I naturally gravitate back to healthy options without bingeing. I'm not out of control. With balanced meals, I'm not obsessed or getting too hungry. I'm also gaining trust in having some of my 'forbidden foods' in moderation."

She was learning it wasn't about judging herself for eating the right or wrong foods, but about getting clear on the underlying issues that were driving her eating behaviors that mattered. When you can be conscious of your behavior, such as choosing unhealthy food or overeating, without judging it, you can stop for a moment to check in with yourself and see what is driving your choices. At that point you can decide if it is the food you really need or something else. Barbara had an epiphany in the eighth week. She told me, "This is so much more than about food [and she's right]. Without controlling everything, I have more control, and it is less about judging things as good or bad but accepting there is no perfect way." Within the next couple of weeks, she was happier, more confident, and trusting herself to make choices that served her better. She also noticed that the less she judged her behavior with food, the less she judged herself and others elsewhere in her life. By the twelfth week of following this program, she was feeling like she was really living life and not depriving herself or feeling hung up about food. She claimed, "I know what I'm hungry for and how I can balance it, which makes eating flow so easily." She was now in control and feeling free to really enjoy food without the fear of being preoccupied by it or of judging herself.

When I asked her for a testimonial, this is what she wrote: "This is the missing piece. I already knew about nutrition, diet and exercise, but this self-honoring approach allows me to use all that as part of a lifestyle with greater trust in myself. What is so different is that the focus is on making choices that best serve me instead of trying to measure up to a structure and feeling judged for how well I did. This program helps you trust and feel good about yourself, and I am so thankful for the changes in my thinking. It isn't aboutfixing me. It is about self-acceptance and having choice. I now feel better, happier and more confident. I also know that I do have control and can keep doing this lifestyle for myself."

Breaking Free of Ambivalence

Barbara's experience of feeling despondent isn't unusual. The feeling of hopelessness also creates a feeling of ambivalence about making healthier choices and feeling better. Right now, probably half of all Americans and nearly as many others around the world are feeling the same way or are looking for a better answer to getting and staying fit and healthy.

Ambivalence makes it difficult to start or keep up a healthy and fit lifestyle. This feeling of both wanting and resisting healthy changes occurs frequently when you are depressed or stressed or have experienced repeated failures in dieting or sticking with

a fitness or nutrition program. In time, ambivalence leads to indifference, becoming apathetic and choosing to avoid awareness of your body because of disappointment, shame or feeling overwhelmed. Most people will drift in and out of their indifferent state, often staying apathetic for months or years at a time.

It takes hope, resolve and enough obvious benefit to break free of ambivalence. That usually happens when a defining moment occurs and you are driven to make a lifestyle change. At that point there is a shift out of inertia into taking some type of action, but determining how to shift is where people are getting stuck. Many have come to realize that dieting doesn't work, and they question if going back to the gym or doing the fitness programs available to them will have a better outcome or feel more motivating than the last time they tried them.

A history of yo-yo exercising and dieting can lead people to feel leery of repeating programs or recommendations that haven't worked for them in the past. I hear this repeatedly from my clients who have done dozens of diets and tried many different fitness programs. They don't have the confidence they will succeed or that the programs will really work for them, yet they know they have to do something.

And these people won't succeed without changing their thinking about and approach to being fit and healthy. What gets in the way of success is the mental and emotional mindset that creates your attitude and feelings about making a healthy change and sticking with it as a way of life.

Your current mindset stems from past dieting and fitness experiences and perceptions of yourself and your abilities. It also stems from trying to measure up to someone else's expectations that may be unattainable, aiming for specific weight loss results in a short period of time, or striving to reach unrealistic goals, such as exercising six days a week for a minimum of 45 minutes when you normally do three days at 30 minutes or less, and then seeing yourself as bad or having failed if you don't fully comply or succeed. If you feel achieving anything less than 100 percent or straight As is not good enough or worth doing, it creates the belief that anything less than perfection isn't good enough or you aren't good enough to succeed. This creates all or nothing and good or bad thinking. Believing there is no middle ground, you will eventually give up and berate yourself for not succeeding once again, even if you had successes along the way.

What I am here to show you is how you can reach your goals in the short and long-term in a way that frees you of believing you are bad, wrong or guilty. This is possible with an approach that feels good from the start and is appealing, positive and energizing to keep you motivated along the way to creating a more active and healthier life. Improving

your lifestyle doesn't take force and willpower when you are doing and eating healthy things you enjoy in a way that is realistic, reinforcing and empowering.

Feeling So Good You Never Want to Stop

When people call me for coaching, they typically ask for help with losing weight, staying motivated, having some accountability for their goals and sticking with their new behaviors, pretty much in that order. Yet what they really want, I find when we talk further, is to feel better. It is so easy to focus on weight loss and being compliant with a diet or fitness program because of our culture, but what really matters is how you feel physically in your body and how you feel emotionally about yourself.

This book isn't about how to lose weight or how to have enough willpower to eat right and exercise six days a week. This book is about how to create a healthy lifestyle you can't wait to experience because it frees you to explore what feels really good physically, mentally, emotionally and even spiritually. This approach is the opposite of encouraging you to once again comply with rigid guidelines and avoids the inevitable inability to stick with them that leads to self-criticism, emotional eating, weight gain and loss of self-esteem. Instead, the book gives you the guidance and freedom to discover what works and feels good to you at a pace you can live with.

Have you ever tried something new and felt it was easier than you thought, and then become excited because you could do it? When that happened, could you then see why you would want to do more of it? Some people discover this when theyfirst start cooking, gardening, sailing or painting. I don't think too many people say that when theyfirst start working out or dieting. But I will show you a new way to discover the pleasure of being more fit and eating healthier that really is easier than you would expect and that you won't want to stop. As you experience how good the process feels, you will gravitate to making even more healthy changes on your own. You won't need willpower because you will be helping yourself make choices that work for you and your life on your own terms.

What I will share with you will change your relationship with food, fitness, your body and yourself in a way that feels good and natural to you because it won't be forced on you. It will instead validate you and be driven by your own desire and motivation to change in alignment with your values, dreams and needs — and it won't be as difficult as you may expect.

You may wonder, as many of my clients have, why you weren't told what I'm going to share with you before. You may feel angry that you've had to suffer for so long before finding out that reaching your goals didn't have to be so hard and painful. You have a

right to those feelings. Sadly, the reason none of us knew this before is because of our culture. Our society promotes the belief that more is better, you have to feel pain to get results and you have to work hard to succeed. Yet you will find less is more — that less pain, suffering and work will bring you far greater results.

How I Became a Healthy Lifestyle Success Story and Coach

I didn't know what I know now back in 2000. I was on the verge of a midlife crisis and dealing with high stress, chronic back pain, chronic fatigue and rapid weight gain. I went up four dress sizes the year I was forty-two and another size a couple of months later. My size affected how I felt about myself. I felt embarrassed and was losing my self-esteem. There were times when I felt enormous despair and just wanted to crawl into bed and never come out, which was a feeling I knew well from being overweight and struggling with low self-esteem in my past.

When people meet me, they can't believe I've ever been fat or struggled with health issues. Yet I grew up overeating to compensate for a traumatic childhood and a belief something was wrong with me. Back when I was a child I was called plump, but I felt huge because I was one of the few fat girls in my class and I was so tall. It was humiliating to be fat, and I turned to extreme dieting as a teenager to become thin enough to feel I fit in. This was the beginning of my long history of dieting, which worked to keep me slim and allowed me to avoid serious exercise. I would exercise with great fanfare for a month or so every few years, yet for all practical purposes I was sedentary throughout my twenties and thirties with the exception of a year when I worked with a personal trainer. Unfortunately that was not a positive experience.

Soon after turning forty-three, I had one those defining moments that finally got my attention and put me into action. After being in bed for a couple of months from a repeating episode of chronic fatigue and discovering I didn't fit into the clothes I'd just bought beforehand, I realized enough was enough. I thought if I didn't do something about my health, fitness and weight, it might become too late. I made a pact with myself that day to use the dusty StairMaster aerobic machine in the basement as soon as I was well enough, and I pledged not to quit using it regularly until I could get back into my wardrobe.

I started exercising on January 1, 2001. It was two years before I reached my goal and another year before I discovered I had a passion for fitness and a whole new perspective on living a healthy lifestyle. I also realized I had created a very different method of getting back into shape and reclaiming my health than was typically taught. I had learned how to create and maintain a healthy lifestyle I could happily live with

and do my own way, which was exciting. It was also something I thought others would want to know about and could benefit from.

I certainly would have welcomed some healthy lifestyle assistance during those first two years. While I believed I knew what to do for the most part, I wanted some accountability, specific help with my challenges, an expert I could bounce ideas off of, and someone to share my successes with. I didn't want another trainer, and I didn't want to join the gym. There were many things I guessed at that worked and others that didn't, which led to slower results and a couple of injuries.

I believed that other people were going through similar experiences and seeking a more holistic approach to fitness, and my initial research validated my thinking. My vision was to combine wellness and life coaching with a foundation in fitness, nutrition and stress reduction. I found the certification and training programs that allowed me to do just that and created a unique blend of expertise in personal training, nutrition, emotional eating, intuitive eating, lifestyle fitness coaching, wellness coaching and dream fulfillment coaching. Together, these certifications and programs gave me a unique and powerful foundation on which to develop a healthy lifestyle coaching practice. By 2004, I was one of the first to practice fitness coaching by phone, and I was amazed by the power coaching had to change my clients' attitudes from "I can't lose weight, stick with it or succeed" to "I can and I want to be active and eat healthier because it feels so much better. I don't have to be perfect."

What I learned during the first four years of my private coaching practice was the correlation between a client's mindset and his or her success. I increasingly turned to my training in emotional eating to help clients resolve old beliefs and feelings that were getting in the way of their progress. The more I did this, the more success clients had. And this in turn led to an even more powerful and unique approach to healthy lifestyle coaching, which I continue to use today.

I now believe the struggle that keeps people from being healthy and fit is often what they believe about themselves and the emotions they keep repressed. It is this emotional and mental baggage that prevents people from reaching their dreams of feeling and looking their best. By addressing what is going on inside your head, you can change what is happening on the outside.

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

-Wayne Dyer

I don't claim to be the absolute authority on fitness, nutrition and stress management. Instead I will give you the tools and guidance to help you make decisions about what is best for you and feels good to you so you can be your own authority and know when you need to turn to local experts for additional help.

What makes me so different is my perspective. I have a unique vantage point because I didn't choose the conventional approach to becoming a personal trainer, dietician or healthcare practitioner. Instead I got the certifications I needed and blended several approaches to become an expert in healthy living, and then I chose to work with clients using a coaching model. This approach worked better than I could have imagined, and within the next ten years, I believe the healthy lifestyle coaching approach will be commonplace in the fitness and healthcare industries.

What You Will Learn in This Book

This book will help you understand why it may have been difficult in the past for you to adopt healthier habits, stick with your programs or stay motivated to reach your goals. You will get a new perspective that will make sense, and you will begin to see what can work for you in a way you didn't think was possible.

The book is divided into three sections.

- Part One: Changing Your Mind about Fitness
- Part Two: A New Way of Thinking about Eating, Exercise and Self-Care
- Part Three: Creating a Healthier Lifestyle That Feels Good

Part One: Changing Your Mind about Fitness

In the first section of the book, you will learn that what you've been told in the past about eating right, getting fit and being healthy may be making it harder for you to succeed at reaching your health and fitness goals. You will discover there are good reasons why you may have struggled with dieting, weight loss, working out, having enough willpower or putting yourself first. And then you will be given an empowering perspective for addressing food and fitness that focuses on the mindset that will allow you to succeed. By changing your mindset, you will gain the freedom to finally discover the pleasure of a healthy and fit lifestyle and the confidence that comes with feeling good inside and out.

Part Two: A New Way of Thinking about Eating, Exercise and Self-Care

This section will introduce you to an easy yet powerful three-step process that will change your entire attitude toward and approach to healthy eating, fitness and taking care of yourself. The steps will give you ah-ha insights about your behaviors toward

food, exercise and yourself, an awareness of why you make the choices you do, and how to choose healthier options you can easily live with and feel motivated to stick with for the long-term. Even better, these steps only take a minute to do, and once you start using them you'll find they can be applied to many other aspects of your life.

Part Three: Creating a Healthier Lifestyle That Feels Good

In the last section I will walk you through the process of applying the three steps to being active and eating healthier. You will be given everything you need to get started, feel informed, make smart decisions, stay motivated and be supported as you become more healthy and fit. Along the way I will guide and coach you, which will build your fitness and nutrition knowledge and self-confidence that you can succeed. As you read this section, you will come to integrate this process into your new mindset and you will find it easier to make healthier choices as an extension of yourself.

Many people have already experienced this process by working directly with me, and I am grateful to my clients who so graciously allowed their stories to be part of this book so you too can learn from their experiences. They took a leap of faith when they reached out to me and were willing to try something different to overcome their challenges with food, exercise and putting themselves first. And it changed their lives.

Reclaiming the Power to Feel Your Personal Best

You have an opportunity to release the mental and emotional baggage you carry about specific foods, healthy eating, exercise, being in balance or whatever is keeping you from living the full life you deserve and want. I don't promise you'll completely change your mindset in just one week or even the first month, but with the tools and techniques in this book you can become free of what keeps you from reaching your fitness, weight and health goals the more you use them.

In the place of resistance, ambivalence or striving to do better, you can reclaim the power to choose what feels better to you. What I do promise is that if you pay attention to what motivates you and allow your body to guide you, with the techniques I give you the process will feel easier and more enjoyable. I also promise that the better you feel as you make healthier choices, the more healthy decisions you will make, and the more you will incorporate them into your lifestyle. It doesn't have to be hard to be healthy andfit. Instead, I believe it should be easy and based on what feels good to you and your body.

Are you ready to feel your personal best?

Let's get started by turning the page. Alice Greene

Part One Changing Your Mind about Fitness



Changing Your Mind about Fitness

How often do you promise yourself that this time you will really follow through on your diet or exercise program, only to find yourself struggling to meet the goals you set? How does that feel, and what do you tell yourself when this happens? Most likely you feel badly about yourself and question if you are capable of following through. You may beat yourself up for good measure. That not only doesn't help, it reinforces negative beliefs about yourself and drives you to repeat the same behaviors.

Sarah, who called me for help, felt helpless in her struggle to get fit. She said, "I don't know what is wrong with me. I just can't get myself motivated and I've let myself go. And now I hate how I feel and I don't even want to try anymore." She told me how bad she was with food and how she failed at sticking with exercising. She didn't even know if she could ever be good enough to lose all the weight that was making her sick. I told her the issue wasn't about being good enough. It was about finding a way to address fitness differently so that it worked for her and so she wouldn't judge herself as being good or bad.

Millions of people are struggling to find a way to force themselves to get more exercise, eat healthier or make their health a priority, and they aren't finding an easy method that consistently works. Do you ever wonder why so many people are in this struggle and why this wasn't such a problem just thirty years ago? Even fifteen years ago, according to the Centers for Disease Control, less than twenty percent of Americans were more than thirty pounds overweight. Now one-third of the population is obese and two-thirds are overweight.

The biggest difference is our mindset, which determines what we think, believe and feel about being active and healthier. We all have different emotions and beliefs when it comes to fitness, yet many would agree with my client Betsy. She said with frustration and concern, "The thought of going back to the gym makes me want to eat a pint of Ben & Jerry's." Well then, going to the gym is not the right answer for her, although it could be in the future. What worked better for her was an aquatics program with lots of great classes and an atmosphere that felt more comfortable, motivating and energizing. There are lots of other ways to be active when you rethink the definition of exercise.

In this section you will learn that much of what you've been taught about nutrition, fitness and healthy habits is not helping you to successfully make healthy lifestyle changes. In fact, the guidance you've received may be your problem. More experts, including dieticians, now recognize that diets are failing people instead of the belief that people are failing at dieting. They see that the problems with dieting are the extreme restrictions and emphasis on strict compliance.

The same problems exist with most fitness, nutritional and healthcare weight-loss programs. When someone feels forced to make highly restrictive and rigid lifestyle changes, even if they've agreed to them, they will likely resist, rebel and eventually give up. This overbearing emphasis on compliance is getting in the way of successfully creating long-term healthy habits for a great many people. There is a better way of looking at food, exercise and taking care of your health and fitness that is inspiring, engaging and addresses the very things that hold you back. This better way is found in the mindset of people who are naturally active, thin and healthy. These people don't struggle to stay in shape. It comes easily to them, and it can come just as easily to you.

Change Your Mindset and Discover an Easier Way

Given a freer way of looking at healthy habits, you can change how you relate to food, exercise, your body and yourself. In the process you will set yourself free of judgment, gain control of your choices and create a healthier lifestyle you can actually enjoy. You will also discover how it feels to have a body and life you love.

No doubt that sounds too good to be true. With your current mindset that probably doesn't seem possible, but I will show you that it is possible by revealing a whole new way of looking at healthier choices.

And that is what you want, isn't it? You are probably sick of the way you feel, how you treat yourself or the energy it takes to overcome the inertia to change. Most everyone wants to feel energized, invigorated, happy, sexy, healthy and able to live fully. In various informal surveys, people often claim they would do anything — even give their lives — to be slim, fit and more appealing, and the sad fact is most people *are* giving their lives by avoiding what it takes to be healthy and in shape. Are you one of these people?

The good news is there is an easy way to get unstuck. There actually *is* a quick fix, but it isn't one you take or do. It is what you believe, and that fix is painless, surprisingly enjoyable and lasts a lifetime.

Are you ready for a fresh approach? Are you ready to finally succeed? If so, follow me. If not, come back when you are ready. As you will soon discover, success doesn't come when you feel pushed or forced into something you aren't comfortable with, so honor yourself and take the next step when it is right for you.

What Is Getting in Your Way of Succeeding?

We live in a culture that has promoted the very things that has caused us to gain weight, struggle to get fit and feel out of control around food. When that happens, many people also experience low self-esteem and a feeling that something is wrong with them.

Nothing is wrong with you or me. We have drunk the quick-fix Kool-Aid that we now know is poisoned. You aren't alone. Most of us tried it because that was all we were given to drink. What we have been told has steered you down the wrong path and given you the wrong idea of what is supposed to work. We were all once told to follow a low-fat diet, then a low-carb diet as well as hundreds of other diets promoted in the media. Even today, everywhere you turn there are diets, pills, programs, trainers, books, studies and experts offering the slimming answer, and they all differ in what they recommend. Furthermore, despite all these options, two-thirds of the population is still struggling to lose weight. You have to wonder, if the programs and diets are all so good, why is it so few people are succeeding? There are many good reasons for this.

Dieting

One of the main culprits is dieting. Even though most dieters believe diets work *when they are on them,* diets seldom lead to long-term success. According to various informal studies, less than five percent of dieters succeed in keeping off the weight they've lost during a diet for at least two years. The other ninety-five percent, who don't succeed, take a breather between diets, determined that the next time they will stick with it and finally have success.

For those that feel they failed to stick with a diet, know that you didn't fail — the diet failed you. Diets are highly restrictive, and it is inevitable that you will eat something that isn't allowed, which leads you to feel you've blown it or can't stick with it. When you fail at something, it affects how you see yourself and lowers your self-esteem. The more often you diet, the more deeply that belief gets ingrained.

One of my clients shared what failure feels like when she said, "I feel like I've hit bottom. I've done a twelve-step program for food and sugar, but I feel powerless and

out of control. I know what I'm doing isn't healthy, but I can't stop. I don't trust myself. I feel like a failure, and I think something is wrong with me."

In addition, the more you diet, the more likely you are to gain even more weight once you stop dieting. This is because dieting lowers your metabolism, increases fat hoarding and creates an insatiable desire for the foods listed as forbidden. So it is natural and to be expected that you will overeat, or even binge, as soon as the diet ends. In the book *Intuitive Eating*, Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch describe the insatiable desire to make up for what was denied you as "deprivation backlash," and that is a good name for it.

This backlash of overeating then supplies plenty of extra calories to satisfy the body's need to store fat in case there is another food shortage. The more often there is a shortage, the more fat the body wants to store away to ensure survival. Add to this a slower metabolism after a diet (where the body burns fewer calories than before), and you've got a double-whammy when you start eating normally again. The amount of calories burned off is now much lower, so even normal amounts of food — not including deprivation backlash bingeing — will exceed your metabolic rate.

What if I told you that dieting is a leading cause of obesity? I am not alone in believing this is true. A handful of dieticians, physicians and researchers are beginning to say the same thing as they witness continuing weight gain in those who diet repeatedly.

What intrigues me is that when I ask people if they feel diets work; they all say they've had great success with them. I then find out they have dieted repeatedly. If a diet succeeded, then why did these people have to go back on a diet? Success is maintaining the weight loss indefinitely. But the diet mindset convinces you that you succeeded if you lost any weight at all. How does that help if it doesn't last or turns you into an overeater afterward? That is like saying a cell phone works if it gets a signal, even if it loses the signal repeatedly during your calls or only has a signal in certain areas.

Diets don't work, and until you believe that, you will keep trying them and keep drinking the Kool-Aid. They are addictive because they look like a quick fix, and people around you appear to be succeeding with them. But pay attention to how long these other people keep the weight off and ask them how they feel about having to go back on a diet when they no longer feel so good about their success.

Focusing on the Weight

Another culprit getting in the way of feeling and looking your best is the focus on weight and losing a certain number of pounds. Those that finally lose weight and maintain their new shape discover that what matters to them is not really the weight but their health and fitness. Let me say this again. Getting the body you want isn't about the weight, and focusing on the weight is actually the problem. Elizabeth said it well after discovering how good it felt to get fit: "It is now more about how I feel versus what the scale says. I'm more focused on the goal of accomplishing something other than my weight. And I love how good I feel about myself."

Here is the secret that has eluded you and just about everyone else in your shoes: if your main focus is weight loss and reaching a certain number of pounds, then you will be held captive by the scale, believe your weight is your worth and lose focus on what really matters.

When you are obsessed with reaching a number, you are likely to punish or reward yourself based on what the scale says. You are also likely to become obsessed with food, restricting it when you fail to reach the goal and eating more of it when you succeed. But you have less control over what the scale is going to say than you think. You can be up or down a few pounds on any given day because of what or how much you ate or drank, the extent you were recently active, when you last used the bathroom, how hydrated you are or where you are in your menstrual cycle.

When you step on the scale, it could go either way, up or down, and you have no idea which way it is going to go. You hold your breath and dare to look. The number you see will impact how you feel about yourself and your day — or even your whole week — and even worse, it will impact your behavior. If you see a number you are pleased with, you may think, "Hooray! I don't have to diet or try anymore," and you may give in to temptations or unhealthy habits. You may even think you've been so good you deserve a day off and either overeat as a reward or skip your aerobic plans. On the other hand, if the number goes up and you fail to reach your goal, you may be more restrictive in dieting or work out harder to make up for failing. You may feel so badly that you are driven to eat emotionally. These behaviors are self-defeating. Aren't you exhausted by this? Aren't you sick of being jerked around by a number that only you see?

What you don't realize is the scale lies. It is not an accurate reflection of the type of weight that matters. The only weight that matters is the weight of fat. The rest (water, muscle, bone and other tissues), which is about 70 percent of your weight, isn't the problem and isn't what is keeping you overweight. Unfortunately, the scale can't tell the difference between fat and these other things, and even the body mass index (BMI) doesn't give an accurate view of your body's makeup. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to put on a pound of fat, or even half a pound, in a day. To add a pound of

fat would require that you eat an excess of 3,500 calories, above and beyond the 1,500 - 2,000 calories you are already eating and burning in a day.

If I had my way, we would all throw out our scales. I don't own one, and I haven't weighed myself for a couple of years.

When you focus on healthier habits as a way of life to feel energized, alive, fit, healthy and good about yourself, the weight will take care of itself. The more you love yourself at any weight, the less you will care what your weight is, and the easier it will come off. You may even discover your natural body weight makes you happy, even if it is heavier than you thought you could accept. Accepting yourself at "size healthier, size confident and size ideal," as Queen Latifah and Valerie Bertinelli say in recent Jenny Craig advertisements is what is most important. It is wonderful to see this ideal promoted.

Nearly every woman I've talked with who has successfully achieved a healthy lifestyle tells me that she no longer cares about her actual weight. Unlike for men, who tend to be less bothered by excess weight, this tends to be a significant shift in thinking for women. It is those striving to reach a number or to be perfect, including actresses and models who have become society's ultrathin role models, who are unhappy and obsessed. It is always shocking to hear that a celebrity or a model, who looks about as perfect as anyone could ever be, say she hates her thighs or thinks she's too fat.

It is a paradox: the more you want something outside of yourself, the harder it is to attain. By adopting a healthier lifestyle and removing the focus on weight, the more successful you will be at getting what you really want and being the most beautiful you. A great role model for this mindset is Tyra Banks, who is not only a supermodel but also the host of *America's Next Top Model* and her own talk show. She is out to prove that you don't have to be a size 2 or weigh 115 pounds to be considered sexy, beautiful or a cover girl. She is proud not to be super skinny. At 160 pounds, she is showing women that it is more than okay to fill out our curves and love ourselves for our natural beauty and weight. This was a daring stance to take, and it took courage to stand up to the media backlash she got, but she made her point with grace and is a role model for us all.

Working Out

A culprit you may not expect is the workout and how you feel about it. The idea of a workout represents working hard to burn calories, and it encourages the no-painno-gain attitude that leads to injuries, burnout and quitting. When most of us think of doing a workout, we think of gyms, fitness programs or home exercise equipment, and we think of pushing our bodies to the max. We also often think *get in, get out* and focus on how many calories we can burn in a specific number of minutes. This isn't about doing something we look forward to but calculating how soon we can get it behind us so we can be good, burn off our excess calories and say we exercised. This isn't to say all workouts are bad. What can be bad is how we approach them and feel about them.

Let's take this a step further. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word *exercise*? If you are like most people, you think *working out*. Why is that? During the last twenty-five years, as people became busier and gyms sprouted up all over the country in response to our limited schedules, workouts were promoted as the best way to lose weight and get in shape in just thirty to sixty minutes.

This isn't to say that gyms, fitness programs or home equipment are the problem either. They aren't. The problem is our perspective that they represent the only or best options for getting exercise. As a society, we have narrowed the scope of what constitutes exercise and the best way to get fit and burn calories. What if these options were part of a much broader view of what you can do for exercise? The good news is that they are, and this broader view is called being active.

Being active opens the definition of exercising to include any activity that gets your heart rate up for a while. If you love the outdoors, you can garden, walk, Nordic walk, bike, hike, row, kayak, cross-country ski, snow shoe or do anything else that you enjoy. If you prefer being with people, you can choose dancing, aerobic classes, team sports or even tennis. Solitary choices can be home exercise videos, interactive exercise games, Pilates, yoga or using the hula hoop, among others. Now you have lots to choose from, and you can define what being active means to you and stay active at a pace and place that fits your lifestyle.

Putting Yourself Last

A forth culprit is letting obligations and schedules define what gets your time and what matters. As more is expected of you at work, at home or in the community, the first thing to go is often what you need or want to do for yourself. The work-home-life balancing act ends up squeezing life out of the equation for so many of us. Despite all the time-saving devices around us, we no longer have extra hours to grocery shop, prepare healthy meals, eat as a family, leisurely socialize with others after dinner or relax on weekends. Instead most of us feel we are racing from one thing to the next, hardly able to catch a breath before getting to the next thing. Yet we are responsible for creating this busyness, even if it doesn't seem that way.

By letting our calendars run our lives or our commitments run our schedules, we may believe we don't have control of them. But the truth is we do control them and can make time for taking care of ourselves, if we think it is important enough. Furthermore, we often take on more tasks with the belief that we are supposed to sacrifice ourselves for our families or careers. And others around us encourage this belief. I'll never forget what a young mother said when she first took one of my workshops. She told the group, "If I don't sacrifice and put myself last, I won't be a good mother." I'm happy to say she feels the opposite today after discovering that by putting herself first and taking care of her health and her needs, her family is much happier and better off.

As host of the healthy lifestyle talk radio show *Living Your Personal Best* for a number of years, I've talked with many guests who didn't see they were putting themselves last until something happened that got their attention. One guest, Mary, was on the fast track in an exciting career, and she loved the adrenaline of her work and the promotions that propelled her up the ladder. She was a type A personality and wanted to succeed at everything, including her marriage. In her early thirties, she felt like she was falling apart and her body was shutting down. She'd had signs something was wrong, such as when she forgot to bring her dress pants to work and had to wear her fitness clothes to a string of important meetings. Then for six months, she thought she had a bad flu or cold that wouldn't go away, until she learned her sickness was more serious than that. Her immune system had been compromised by her stressful lifestyle, and she had to make significant changes to restore her health. When she looks back, she thanks God that her body warned her so early in her life. Now she has a balanced, fulfilling lifestyle that allows her to put herself first.

Another guest, Debra, was in graduate school and taking a full class load and teaching just as many classes. She didn't initially understand why she felt so depressed and lethargic. She didn't want to eat and began feeling sorry for herself, believing she had no control over her choices. As she spiraled further into depression, she became immobilized. It was an insight from her studies that helped her see that she needed to start moving physically to regain her energy, improve her emotional state and regain control of her life. She learned the importance of body-mind integration and taking responsibility for her health.

The one thing that surprises nearly everyone who finally gets it and starts putting themselves first is how well things actually turn out, and not just for themselves. They discover their families are happier because they are happier. They find they have more energy, so they are more productive and effective at work. They learn that cooking meals and having dinner with their kids inspires more communication and being active as a family improves how everyone feels. Time and again, those who give up

trying to do everything and slow down to be more connected with themselves discover the opposite of what they imagined is true. They will tell you they are grateful for the lesson and new lease on life.

Relying on Willpower

Another culprit to succeeding at getting fit, that may surprise you, is placing too great an emphasis on mind over matter. Who doesn't think the real barrier to losing weight or getting back into shape is lack of willpower? How often do you judge yourself or someone else for lack of willpower when putting on the pounds, pigging out or going for an extra helping of dessert? Guess what — that isn't the issue! Focusing on willpower as a way of forcing yourself to be good creates the opposite effect and leads to being even more out of control.

The more you exert force, or your will, to make yourself do something, the more you will resist. We all resent being told what to do or feeling pressured. When we are given orders to comply with a program, diet or rule, we rebel. Sure, we may follow the rules for a while to look good or avoid being penalized, but it isn't long before we give up and go back to our old way of doing things. Haven't you done this?

Unfortunately, few people understand how the use of force backfires and instead places blame on those who fail to change their ways. Worse yet, the ones being judged are even harder on themselves. Once you see yourself as a hopeless failure or not strong enough to be good, it becomes harder to try in the future. It is a vicious cycle that often ends in self-criticism and despondency. Even sadder is the belief anyone deserves this, much less you.

We are conditioned in our culture, from childhood into adulthood, to accept enforcement and judgment to get us to behave, so this is familiar and expected. Some people even seek people, such as a boot camp leader or a personal trainer, who will force them to comply with what they know they should do because they think that will keep them in line. They even accept or want harsh admonishment and public humiliation when they don't do as they are told, believing this will work and is what they deserve.

One of my clients, Dorothy, kept asking me when we first started working together what I was going to do to force her to meet her goals. She felt she should be punished for bad behavior and that if I was hard on her, she would have an easier time complying with her agreements. No one deserves this. Furthermore, I explained to her it isn't effective. More often than not, the end result is a withdrawal from trying again in the future. I've had other clients ask me if I was going to get mad at them or do something

to make them be good, assuming they've been bad and need to be reprimanded. When I respond by asking them how it would help if I did get angry or try to exert pressure on them, they often admit that my reaction might get them to follow through for a while, but they'd soon be avoiding their goals and our sessions. Force wouldn't help them to change their behaviors, and that is why I don't apply it.

The secret is to stop forcing, bullying, blaming and judging. The method for successfully following through on your goals isn't achieved by willing yourself to behave. It is achieved by choosing activities and foods that are so enjoyable to you physically and emotionally that you willingly select them. Making healthy choices that feel good to you becomes easier when you want more for yourself, feel you deserve better and determine what is best and most enjoyable. Everyone is different in what they find enjoyable and overbearing. You have to know enough about yourself to determine what feels best. For the people who really like and thrive at boot camps, this is a great choice for them.

Once you are motivated for yourself and don't feel threatened by the changes you want to make, your will can be an ally. You can will yourself to get off the couch because you know you will feel better if you go for a short walk. You can will yourself to pay attention to your hunger levels and honor them because then you will be addressing your own needs. You can encourage yourself to prepare meals ahead of time because you know how much easier it will make your week. And instead of fighting it, you will naturally begin to want to do this because it feels good. You won't need your will to help you maintain your new healthy habits, and you won't have your inner rebel trying to throw you off course.

Living in the All or Nothing

One of the most damaging culprits of poor weight loss success — and it is inherent in diets, fitness programs, dietician plans and doctors' orders — is the requirement that you comply fully with the rules and provide proof that you are doing everything exactly as you were told. If you are like most, you do the best you can for a while, and you may even get complimented for following through perfectly. Inevitably, however, you find it harder to follow the guidelines, write everything down and do everything expected of you. When you stop fully complying with the expectations, you probably dread the next appointment, knowing you will get a lecture and a request to do better. And you probably try, yet it often gets harder and harder to comply perfectly.

Well, guess what? No one is perfect. It shouldn't be expected that any of us will ever be able to fully comply with a rigid set of rules. But since it is expected and we can't be perfect, we typically feel guilty and eventually figure what's the use and quit trying at all. We live in an all-or-nothing, good-or-bad, black-or-white culture in which we aren't given room to succeed in the grey zone. That's a problem. Life experiences and choices happen in the grey zone. Situations and events get in the way of perfection, and that doesn't make us bad, lazy or incapable. It makes us human.

Furthermore, by getting caught up in trying to be perfect, we forget what truly matters. When I ask clients to use a food discovery journal, I always get a negative reaction. I expect this because anyone who has filled one out before has done it to demonstrate their compliance with specific nutritional rules and calorie guidelines. But you can use a food journal in a whole new way without rigid rules that is very enlightening and focuses your attention on what is driving your behaviors around food, which is really the issue.

Imagine using a food journal and not having to comply with specific rules. You can use it instead as a discovery tool for how you feel when you eat and what triggers you to overeat or to eat when you aren't hungry. What if you can miss days, create your own format or choose not to write down what you ate — much less measure your foods or count your calories? You can, and you will still gain a lot of insight and information about your eating patterns. I'll explain more about the discovery journal in part 3.

The best approach when creating healthier habits is to build flexibility into the guidelines, allow yourself to make choices that work best in your situation and accept that good is good enough. Good enough is worthy of acknowledgment and applause. With each success, you will likely feel motivated to keep up what you are accomplishing, and you will have a sense of pride that you can really make positive changes.

Believing It Can Wait

Another culprit of unhealthy practices is one you probably know well. It is procrastination. When you are sitting on the sofa watching TV and eating junk food or rushing about doing all the things on your to-do list, it is easy to push away that little voice that says, "I should go for a walk, make a decent dinner or take a soothing bath." Instead you think, "That can wait" or "I'll do that some other time." Your parental voice encourages you to get back on track when you've stopped exercising or eating better, but that other part of you will say "Not today; I'll start tomorrow." And you keep putting off all the things that your body and spirit encourage you to do, believing it can wait. The next thing you know, weeks, months or even years have gone by and you are still putting off making changes.

Part of what is keeping you stuck is the nagging of your parental voice, which you naturally resist. Yet the other voice that resists comes from your belief that exercise and eating healthier really can wait and that another day doesn't matter. While you are right another day doesn't matter, the problem is that people seldom wait just another day. As you continue to put off making changes in your routine, your cholesterol levels, blood pressure and blood sugar levels could well be getting into the danger zones and putting you at risk for disease. Or you could be running yourself into the wall, only to find that out when you can't get up off the floor one day.

The truth is taking better care of your body can't wait. You are putting your health and the lifestyle you take for granted in danger, and you are taking a huge risk in pretending it doesn't matter — possibly more than you fully realize. It isn't just diabetes, heart disease and cancer that can affect you. People who get multiple sclerosis, Lou Gehrig's disease and many other life-altering diseases are increasingly convinced that their unhealthy lifestyles were a cause of their current conditions. I believe I suffered from chronic fatigue because of how I lived my life. Whether our suppositions prove to be true or not, there is no doubt that living in a way that compromises your immune system can be the straw that breaks the camel's back, making it more likely you will contract whatever illness for which you are genetically predisposed. This is why health screenings are so helpful: you can see for yourself what could happen if you don't take action and think instead that a lifestyle change can wait.

Redefining Fitness as a Way of Living

If you haven't had or been around someone with a fit lifestyle, it can be hard to imagine what it really entails or looks like. If you were to ask a hundred people who were living in a fit and healthy way, each would describe their own lifestyle differently, and none of the lifestyles would seem to be the same. As confusing as that might be, the differences are healthy in themselves because they allow for individuality and long-term success. Think about it. No two people like all the same foods or enjoy all the same activities, so why would people have similar healthy habits given the chance to create a lifestyle they could enjoy and easily maintain?

What defines a fit lifestyle best is that it's a way of living and not a fitness program, plan, diet or resolution with a start and stop date. This is a huge shift in thinking from what we've been taught during the twentieth century. Dieting has been popular since the 1920s, and few women have escaped trying them at some point in their lives. The concept of getting into shape since the 1970s has been to reach a target weight, achieved through hard work and uncompromising dedication to specific guidelines,

not the creation of healthier habits. For Irene, one of my clients, this distinction was a revelation to her. She said during one of our sessions, "I'm finally getting it, and it is so much easier than I thought. I always thought exercising and dieting was temporary and that I was either going to be on or off them, but that's a trap. I now have more control and feel less panicked because I have a different perspective."

Approaching Fitness Differently

A fit and healthy lifestyle starts with a change in thinking where the emphasis is on the long-term and allows for the ups and downs and disruptions of real life. Real life is unpredictable and makes perfection impossible, so fitness and healthy living exists in that grey zone, not in the black-and-white of good and bad found in programs emphasizing full compliance. In addition, long-term fitness is achieved through moderation, forgiveness and patience instead of all-out intensity, force or striving for quick results. It requires a completely different mindset, which can be challenging to fully grasp after years of pursuing fitness and dieting to reach a goal.

Living a fit lifestyle also shifts the emphasis from what others think is right for you to what you think is right for yourself. This shift may seem intimidating at first because you may not know how or where to begin. But you will soon learn that you do know where to begin because you know what you do and don't like and you know what does and doesn't feel good. You may be thinking, "Oh, I already know what I'm supposed to do; I just don't do it," but what will surprise you is that most of that "knowledge" is probably not right. There is a reason you aren't able to get started; therefore, what you think you need to do isn't really what you are supposed to do. I know I am turning conventional wisdom on its head but trust I will show you the way.

Having said that, I will also say a fit and healthy lifestyle includes eating healthier foods, being active, getting enough sleep and water, reducing stress, taking a multivitamin and limiting alcohol. This, no doubt, is what you would say you know. What you probably don't know is how to put these habits successfully into practice as part of your daily lifestyle. You don't really know *how* to live healthier in a way that works for you.

You may wonder if you will ever be able to make this shift in thinking about your lifestyle, and that's to be expected. This approach is very different, and you will ease into it on your own terms and at your own pace the more you learn and experience it. In the meantime, be open-minded to the process, and you may discover it grows on you and is just the solution you've been waiting for.

Getting That Great Feeling

There is nothing better than feeling absolutely wonderful. When asked by a clerk, "How are you?" a woman in front of me at a coffee shop once said, "Absolutely wonderful!" She clearly meant it. She was smiling and relaxed, and she had that spring in her step that said she was indeed having a super day and felt great about herself. Wow! How often do you hear that or feel that for yourself? Even I felt a twinge of jealously as I realized I didn't happen to feel absolutely wonderful that morning, and I wanted to experience that. Who doesn't want to feel that good inside and out?

Unfortunately for so many people, feeling great seems far outside the realm of their reality. Life just isn't like that and hasn't been like that for years. Think back to a time when you felt invincible, confident, energetic and able to do anything. When was the last time you felt really great physically and mentally? If it has been way too long or you can't even think of a time, don't despair. It is still possible to feel this. If hasn't been that long, relive the feelings. By bringing them back into your reality, they will be powerful motivators to keep your healthy lifestyle on track.

Those that succeed in creating a fit way of living discover to their delight that it feels really good. They had no idea it could be so wonderful to have greater energy, stamina, strength, fitness and health. And once they tasted the freedom that comes from being able to do most anything and feeling good about themselves, they were motivated to keep up their new routines and to do even more for themselves.

The transformation is like finding precious gems after chiseling through hard rock. You get hooked and want more of those beauties. The transformation can even lead to a love for chiseling other types of rock to create a work of art. Who knows where the process will take you? There are thousands of people, myself included, who discovered an unexpected passion for fitness after creating a realistic and enjoyable fitness routine that became part of their lives.

Doing It for You

Doing something for yourself is totally different than doing it for someone else. When you do something for another person, you often feel you should do it because you don't want to let them down. Making lifestyle changes for someone else can backfire, though, because you will come to resist the changes and the person requesting them. However, if you are at the point where you are willing to make the change and see the benefits, then having someone else to hold you accountable will really help.

The toughest part of creating a healthy and fit lifestyle is getting started and sticking with it. A new lifestyle takes longer to fully adopt than simply creating one small new habit, because there are so many aspects to what you do throughout the day tied to your health and fitness. You may be ready to make the changes and be willing to do anything, yet the reality is you can only change so much at a time. Other people don't know what is realistic for you and may suggest too many changes at once and expect too much, and soon you may pressure yourself to comply with their wishes and feeling resentful.

It matters what role you and others decide to play in your lifestyle changes. If you let those around you tell you what you should do, you will struggle to succeed on your own terms, and you will almost assuredly fail to meet their standards. On the other hand, if you set clear boundaries and make it clear you know what you are doing and are only interested in having someone's support under certain conditions, then you will give yourself the right to start off slowly and discover what works best for you to reach your longer-term vision.

Needing accountability to succeed isn't a character flaw or indicative of how successful you can eventually be. It is being honest that creating and maintaining changes — even small ones — are tough, and that without accountability, you can easily slide back into what is more familiar and comfortable. Picking the right person to account to for your actions can make or break your ability to succeed. If you choose someone who judges you harshly when you don't follow through, you will feel pressured to perform and tempted to lie. Soon you will give up, believing you can't meet the person's expectations and can't succeed. But if you have someone who never judges you but is there instead to be witness, helping you examine what works and what doesn't, and celebrate your successes, then you have a support system to keep you going.

In time, you will have a eureka moment, as my mother had after a couple of years of working with me. She realized she was exercising for herself because she wanted to. "I am no longer doing this for you," she proudly said during one of our calls. "I am now doing it for me." I was so excited for her. She no longer needed me to hold her accountable, which had made such a difference in helping her get started and stay on track up to that point. When she turned the corner, she could recognize the antsy feeling when she wasn't moving enough, and she really wanted to get out for a walk or go to the gym she enjoyed. She also valued how good she felt and how far she had come, and she didn't want to lose that sense of well-being and accomplishment.

Are You Ready to Change Your Mindset?

There is no point trying to adopt lifestyle changes if you aren't really ready, as I've said before, because all you will do is try instead of commit. Trying leads to frustration, disappointment in yourself and the determination you just can't really do it. It takes a commitment to succeed even if you've learned a process that makes the change easier.

Very often what keeps you from being ready is what you believe and feel from past experiences. You may not believe the payoff is worth the effort until the price becomes too high to stay where you are. When you have that defining moment, don't let it pass you by. That is the time to take action.

Getting Resolved

For many of us, a commitment to fitness and a healthy lifestyle comes when something happens that we can't ignore. There comes a moment when you are either humiliated enough, scared enough or frustrated enough to have a defining moment where you resolve to change immediately. The defining moment can happen in an instant.

My defining moment came when I was standing in front of my mirror after putting on five dress sizes in just fifteen months and recovering from yet another three-month round of being bedridden with chronic fatigue. What came to mind was if I didn't change my ways, I might never feel or look better. I thought if I didn't act soon, it may become too late to do anything about it. That was a wake-up call I couldn't ignore, and I didn't. Nearly everyone with a fitness or healthy-lifestyle success story had a pivotal moment that led to a resolve to make a lifestyle change.

What these people will also most likely tell you is that the wake-up call that got them to respond wasn't the first one they experienced. Before we act, there is often a series of experiences that have the potential to be the one event that changes our perspective. It is the accumulation of these experiences that gives you the feeling you are being hit over the head by a two-by-four when the next event comes along. The resolve to take action is also a matter of letting the last event become the defining moment that changes your behavior and motivates you to overcome your numbness and inertia. This moment is what propels you to make healthy lifestyle changes that are hard to make without a catalyst. For Brittany, the defining moment was the diagnosis of skin cancer; Nick's was testicular cancer. Elizabeth's wake-up call was not being able to keep up with her kids; Charise's was taking a diabetes survey in a magazine and seeing she was at high risk; Theresa's was the photo of herself at a wedding.

If you don't take action when you have this experience, whatever resolve you have will slip away. The moment can leave nearly as quickly as it came, so when it does happen, keep it by taking some action. Taking action doesn't have to be a big step. Anything that moves you out of inaction will help you hold onto that fragile resolve. With each step you take, you build momentum and create new thoughts and behaviors that solidify changes in your life.

Even if you don't have that defining moment, you can use this book or this paragraph in its place. You can look back at missed opportunities and realize that today is the day to take a small step toward changing the way you take care of yourself. And that first little step, starting with a decision and doing one thing to put yourself in action — like taking a short walk — will start the ball rolling as if you had experienced a major wake-up call.

Taking Stock

What you will likely discover when you have a wake-up call is just how out of balance you've been and how much more you want for yourself. You may find out that you've been suffering in many ways, and you just didn't notice it before. Suffering is more than a physical or emotional experience; it is also mental and spiritual. The more we suffer, the more we pull away from experiencing how much it hurts, and when you stop feeling the pain, you also stop feeling anything else. You either feel or you don't feel, and the less you feel, the more disconnected you become from yourself and what matters to you. This is how you shift into denial about how overweight, sick, uncomfortable, unhappy or scared you are.

The real problem that keeps many people from living a healthier life is what they believe about themselves and how they've repressed their emotions. Their undermining beliefs and repressed emotions are the baggage they carry around, whether they realize it or not. It is our beliefs and feelings that drive our behaviors. So any baggage about your body, self-image, food or activity will prevent you from doing the things you claim you want to do for yourself, such as having more work-life-health balance, choosing healthy options or following your heart and dreams.

If you have a lot of mental or emotional baggage, you may drive yourself into the ground by overdoing, attempting to reach unattainable goals, beating yourself up, feeling unworthy and shutting down. This was my story. On the outside, you may look and function as if everything is fine, but it isn't. And until a crisis occurs, you may not even know something's wrong. You will live in denial. Worse, if you don't feel good about yourself, you probably won't be willing to put effort into changing. I had a client

once who stopped seeing me after a few weeks, claiming she didn't feel she deserved to be good to herself. She wasn't able to stick around long enough to let the process help her change that perspective. She needed to go through her own healing first, so I wished her well, knowing she had to follow her own inner guidance.

Taking stock is an opportunity to consciously check in with yourself to uncover how you really feel and what your heart and soul are telling you. This doesn't happen in a day, but it can start then. To fully uncover what is inside can take months or even years, and it can often involve journaling, help from various types of practitioners or healers and spiritual introspection. Discovery journaling, which I mentioned earlier and is introduced later in this book, is one tool you can use to gain insight into and release some of the baggage.

Loving Yourself

If you have come to believe you are unable to follow through, guilty for not getting it right, bad at dieting or fitness programs, too fat to be loved or even unworthy of doing what it takes to change, understand that this isn't the real you talking. This is only what you have come to believe and feel is true because of past experiences, what others have told you and unrealistic expectations. This doesn't negate your feelings, which are real and which you have a right to express. Instead negative feelings about yourself indicate the need to release self-critical beliefs and create new ones aligned with who you really are. We are all capable of succeeding. We are not what we look like, and we are all worth the effort, no matter what others might have said or you have subsequently told yourself.

If you were to ask your friends and family what they love most about you, you will probably hear that you have many qualities that they cherish and wish you could see in yourself. Try it. Ask people close to you what five things they love or really like about you and write them down. Accept what your loved ones are saying, and appreciate that you really are special, capable and gifted. Now ask yourself what five things you love about yourself and really listen. You may be surprised by how many things make you special and what you learn about why you deserve to love yourself even more than you do.

Instead of focusing on what you don't like about yourself, you can focus on all the things that are positive. The more you remind yourself of why you make a difference and what makes you loved by others, the easier it is to feel more love for yourself. At first it may seem as if the positive qualities are about someone other than you, so to bring these qualities closer to home, think of yourself as a child or young adult with all these

characteristics. You have always been uniquely and wonderfully you, and through a younger set of eyes, you may be able to feel how true this is. The more you love yourself, the more you will respect and want to do what is best for you. When this happens, you will be open to taking better care of yourself physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Breaking Free

Change requires enough optimism, determination and desire to break free of feeling indifferent and ambivalent. When you feel hopeless or stuck, it is hard to muster any interest in taking action or making a change. And it doesn't take much to become resigned and feel hopeless after being stressed or temporarily derailed from making progress, experiencing repeated failures or getting depressed. Once despondent it can take considerable effort to overcome inertia and take the first step toward action.

What gives you the extra strength needed to break free is the hope that this time will be different. You have probably tried everything you thought would work, and you may question if this book or anything else out there will really work for you. That is understandable. You have probably been through a lot, judged for not doing enough and convinced that you are destined to be the way you are. Only with hope that there really is a better way than what you've already tried will you give it your all one more time.

When Maria came to me, she was very concerned about her health and had reached a point where she knew it was critical to do something about it. She didn't have the stamina she needed to support her speaking and travel schedule, and she noticed that during the past six months she hadn't been feeling at that well. She was at risk for heart disease because of her weight, and she knew in her heart that she had to take better care of herself. But she couldn't get herself to go to the gym where she had a membership, nor could she avoid the carbohydrates she loved or make time to eat when she needed food. Instead, she let her health slide and looked the other way. She felt helpless in her ability to stick with better behaviors and struggled within herself over what to do. She held out hope I could teach her a better way to take back control of her lifestyle and break free from her unhealthy behaviors.

There is one other thing that will help you break free: believing you have the right to set boundaries, be treated with respect and be given an emotionally safe environment to put your toes back in the water. Without this, you could find yourself overwhelmed, pushed too far and giving up. You know yourself and your feelings better than anyone else does. You know what is realistic for you, what you can really do and what you need. Now is the time to stand up for yourself and to set limits that best serve you without concern for what anyone else thinks is right.

Part Two

A New Way of Thinking about Eating, Exercise & Self-Care

The 3 Cs for Regaining Confidence and Control



A New Way of Thinking about Eating, Exercise & Self-Care

The 3 Cs for Regaining Confidence and Control

In this section you will be introduced to a new way of relating to food, fitness and well-being that will allow you to regain pleasure in eating, activity and making yourself a priority. What I will share with you is the secret to making healthy and fit choices, and the secret isn't radical or complicated. Instead, it is surprisingly simple, obvious, freeing and eye-opening. Even better, it will help you find your own path to regaining health, happiness and well-being that is enjoyable and easy to follow, instead of restrictive and unpleasant.

The secret is found in what I call the 3 Cs: consciousness, clarity and choices. These concepts will give you confidence that you can be in control and make the best choices for yourself when it comes to food, activities, and how you feel. They will also help you stay motivated and on track in your journey of living a healthier and happier life.

You've been taught a lot about eating, exercise and healthcare, but the one thing you haven't been taught is the thing that will give you the confidence and control to succeed. That one thing is how to govern your emotional and mental mindset, or how you think and feel about things. Your mindset, tucked away in your subconscious, drives your attitude toward and behaviors around taking care of yourself and making healthier choices.

Sue discovered her own mindset when she came to understand what was getting in the way of meeting her exercise goals. She said, "The problem is between my ears, and what I feed my mind." She observed how she'd been resisting her exercise routine, and as she observed where the resistance was coming from, she saw it was stemming from her beliefs about herself, exercise and her age. When she changed her beliefs, she changed her thinking and overcame the resistance.

What changed her mind was having insight into her beliefs and recognizing she could think differently. You can do the same. I'm going to show you a new way to look at your own experiences and see them in a new light so you can feel inspired and motivated to make healthier choices and stick with them.

You will learn how to work with what is going on inside your head by addressing old patterns, limiting beliefs and negative thoughts that don't support you, and then creating new beliefs and strategies that will help you succeed. It is a process of working from the inside out instead of being told what to do from the outside in. The 3 Cs give you the tools needed to change your behaviors through self-awareness, self-reflection, ah-ha insights, positive thinking, affirming beliefs and self-motivating choices.

Consciousness without Judgment

You can't change the way you do things or make different choices about your habits if you aren't conscious of what you are doing in the first place. For example, if you are overeating but not paying attention, you won't be aware enough of how you really feel to stop eating. You will subconsciously keep on chewing away.

Think about it. How often do you overeat to the point of being horribly full? Do you then wonder why you couldn't stop — or worse, do you beat yourself up because you didn't stop? Do you even know what being full or overly full feels like? Most people overeat regularly, believing that is just the way it is for them, and they don't register how uncomfortable being full really makes them feel. We tune out surprisingly well what we don't want to process, feel or deal with.

I remember when my client Brandy discovered just how awful being full really felt. She overate most nights of the week, usually ending up on the couch asleep. She didn't even think about it. It is just what she did, and the part she struggled with the most was waking up around two in the morning and making her way groggily upstairs to bed. As we began to work together, she started to pay attention to how she felt physically when she ate, and she observed that she started off eating to feel better but ended up feeling sick. She didn't like how horrible it felt, and she was amazed she hadn't really noticed this before. The feeling was so unpleasant to her that she found it easy to stop overeating after that. Now, years later, she still avoids overeating.

We also tune things out about our activity and lifestyle habits, where doing something unhealthy is often just a subconscious behavior. If you end up watching TV, doing chores or working instead of exercising or preparing healthy meals, you are subconsciously choosing to avoid a healthier behavior. You may make these choices out of habit or avoidance even though you know you will feel badly about it later. You may even feel the choice is outside of your control.

This is how Penny felt when she called me looking for help to get back into shape. She had not been focused on fitness since her son was born nearly five years before, and she didn't see anyway she could fit exercise into her schedule. She worked all day, and when she got home, she didn't feel she could leave again to go to the gym without feeling guilty or upsetting her kids.

In our discussions we focused on exploring her options. She talked to her husband about ways she could make time for herself, which he was eager to help her do. She realized that she felt guilty about taking any time away from her kids, and that was holding her back. She also explored ways to involve the kids in activities on the weekends, as well as ways she could leave work fifteen minutes early and arrive home fifteen minutes later to fit something in after work. The new strategy seemed doable.

In Brittany's case, she found dealing with her kids easier when they watched TV. In the evenings, the whole family would eat dinner while watching their favorite shows. They would start off with the main course and then bring in various desserts or popcorn until the kids had to go off and do their homework. Then she and her husband would finish off what was left. Brittany had no idea how much food she was eating while in front of the TV, but she did know it didn't feel very good. Breaking this habit wasn't easy. She decided to have the family eat at the dinner table, and what surprised her was how willing the kids were to make the change and have a chance to talk about school. It was she and her husband that felt pulled back to the TV, and that, she finally understood, was because in the TV room, they could hide from the problems in their marriage.

By tuning out and avoiding feelings, you can't be mindful of the choices you are making and of their consequences. Instead, you have excuses about why you couldn't have made the choices, such as working long hours and too many commitments, or because you have a family or are a single parent. Those reasons aren't what really keep you from finding time to take care of yourself. What is keeping you from finding time is choosing to make other choices without fully realizing it and often saying yes to things that you later wish you could have said no to.

Saying no was hard for my client Abigail, who had been struggling with her priorities. She often found herself saying yes to people at work or where she volunteered, which took time away from what really mattered to her: her family, health and spiritual well-being. As we talked about this, she began to see a connection between wanting to please others and how she had tried to please her father, who had not paid attention to her and had left her wanting acknowledgment and appreciation. She had never made the connection before, and once she understood it, she found it easier to say no to things that didn't matter enough. By becoming conscious of what was driving her

to say yes, she no longer had to beat herself up for taking on too much, and she found her voice to say no much more easily.

It is hard to be conscious of what you don't want to see or own up to, as these things are usually accompanied by painful emotions and judgment at the hands of your inner critic. We are so self-critical that to avoid the guilt and shame, we often look the other way. When you harshly judge your behaviors, you often won't want to face them, and this leads to living less consciously and more in denial at your own expense.

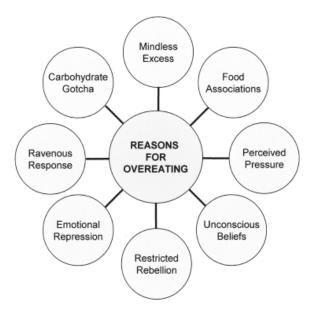
Seeing Behaviors through a New Lens

Most of us have been taught to believe that our behaviors define us and that what you do is who you are. If you eat a dozen brownies, you did a bad thing, and you are bad by default. This has been further drummed into our heads by how we talk to ourselves and one another about our behaviors toward food and fitness. How often have you said to yourself or to someone else, "I was bad yesterday. I didn't work out, I didn't stick to my diet, I didn't do as much or as little as I said I would. I am so bad. I can't be good. I don't know if I can do this," or something similar?

Clients are always quick to tell me at the start of a session, "I was so bad last week because ..." or "I failed to do what I was supposed to." They weren't bad. They didn't fail. Nor does it make sense to judge your behavior as good or bad. That doesn't serve you, help you or change anything. Think about it: even if you say you did something bad or you are bad, you probably still do it. It doesn't change your behavior to focus on it or reinforce it. In fact, you will probably do what was "bad" even more just to prove yourself right. You will be as bad or as incapable of following through as you tell yourself you are.

Rather than focusing on whether your behavior was right or wrong, good or bad, it is better to have an understanding of what drove you to have that behavior in the first place. There can be any number of reasons, many of which you don't control. What you can't control are the curve balls thrown at you during the day, such as emergencies, other people's plans and getting ill. What you can control are your choices, but to make better choices, sometimes you need better information, more awareness of the situation you are in and the knowledge of why you feel driven to make the choices you do.

For example, there can be many different explanations for overeating. Here are eight possible reasons:



- A Ravenous Response: If you wait to eat until you are ravenous, you will inevitably overeat. You will feel like you can't stop yourself because physiologically and psychologically you are driven to make up for the lack of food earlier in the day or the meal you skipped a few hours ago.
- The Carbohydrate Gotcha: If you only eat carbohydrates particularly simple carbohydrates, such as pastries or white bread, which are digested very quickly for your meal or snack, you won't realize you've overdone it until you have eaten way too much.
- Mindless Excess: If you are focused on something like a TV show, a book, work or a conversation when you eat, you won't be aware of when you get full.
- Food Associations: If you tend to eat when you aren't hungry or eat too much when you get home from work, celebrate great news, complete a difficult project or feel sick, for example, you may be eating because you associate food with similar situations from your past.
- Perceived Pressure: If you think you have to eat or to continue eating because others are eating, food is presented to you, your spouse is still eating or everyone else is having dessert, then you may be allowing other people to have power over your decisions.

- Subconscious Beliefs: If you eat everything on your plate as you were told to do, always have dessert after dinner, feel you can't get enough, eat more food than you want because it is readily available or it might be thrown away, you are applying subconscious beliefs about food you probably grew up with.
- Restricted Rebellion: If you think you will be restricted from having enough food in the near future or you won't get to have any more of the wonderful food you are eating now, you will feel compelled to eat all of it while you can, even to the point of feeling sick. This is an emotional reaction to believing you will be restricted and deprived. The same thing happens when you have been restricted in the past and didn't get enough, whether that was during childhood or a recent diet. Another term for this is "deprivation backlash," as I mentioned earlier.
- Emotional Repression: If you are feeling upset, sad or anxious, food can be a coping mechanism you will turn to in place of really feeling what is happening. To bury the feelings, you will overeat and use food as a pacifier for your feelings and as a way of getting your needs met quickly. This is called "emotional eating," which is somewhat of a misnomer because it is really repression eating.

With this new understanding about what might be driving you to overeat, you may have immediate insights about your behaviors. But the choices you make aren't as obvious as you might think. We are all complicated, and what is really driving your behavior may not be what you initially believe, or your initial insight may be just the tip of the iceberg. The reason could also be a mix of things: it could first appear as a ravenous response that is masking a subconscious belief and a restrictive rebellion pattern.

I've found that many people believe they have emotional eating issues, and very often they do. But just as often, they are confusing emotional eating with other causes, which limits their ability to see what else may the source of their eating behaviors. I've also worked with people who weren't dealing with emotional eating issues at all, and it would have been a disservice to start off looking for them.

Instead of jumping to conclusions and assumptions about your behaviors, become curious about them as if you are a neutral observer without any reason for judgment. Notice times when you are still eating despite feeling full and think, "Isn't that interesting." Also pay attention when you reach for food if you aren't hungry and consider if there is a reason for that. Notice I didn't say a bad reason. What is driving

your behaviors has nothing to do with being good or bad. These drivers are simply things to recognize and understand as you gain greater clarity.

For Gail, letting go of judgment was hard to do. She felt so guilty whenever she overate and was quick to tell me how bad she had been. I would remind her that what mattered wasn't that her behavior was bad but instead what was driving her to keep eating. Instead of judging herself, I asked her to be curious and get in touch with what she was thinking or feeling before and during eating, or even afterward if she couldn't be mindful sooner. She was being triggered to eat and needed to understand why.

This also applies to other behaviors that aren't healthy or best for you. Be mindful when you skip a walk or decide not to go to the gym and take note — without making yourself wrong. Be aware when you end the day and haven't had much water or have drunk lots of alcohol. Take another look when you are getting agitated, snapping at people or pushing yourself to the limit. Think, okay, that happened, and there is a reason behind it worth understanding. With that understanding, you can begin to make small changes that will help you behave in a way that honors you and your body.

Ending the Judgment

Judgment is a reflection of what you believe to be true about yourself. When we judge ourselves, we are repeating the negative self-talk and beliefs that devalue our worth. Judgment affects your self-esteem and often creates feelings that are hard to face, which can lead to emotional eating, stress and depression.

Feeling judged is painful, no matter if it is ourselves or someone else that inspires us to feel that way. This is why judgment makes it so hard to be objective. You can't be neutral and curious if you feel judged, guilty or shamed. When you feel that way, all you want to do is look the other way and avoid the source of criticism.

We don't only judge ourselves harshly; we also target others. But what you may not realize is when you judge others, you actually judge yourself. Have you ever seen an overweight person getting a double order of french fries or something else you think isn't healthy? Did you then think, "Look at that fatso. She shouldn't be doing that. Doesn't she know better?" Then consider this: if she doesn't care what you think, then she doesn't take on your judgment. Instead you are the one being affected, and that judgment of the other person becomes a reflection of your own self-judgment. Perhaps you aren't in the best shape either, and what you are ordering isn't always so healthy. None of us is perfect, and we tend to harshly judge in others the things we don't like or feel good about in ourselves.

Judgment is like pointing a finger at someone and having three of your fingers pointing back at you. As you judge someone, the words and feelings are also reflected back at you.

Now, if you turn this around and believe someone is judging you: you can only be affected if you allow yourself to feel judged and take that judgment on. By taking it on, you assume the harsh judgment you have about yourself is validated. You may even assume someone is judging you who isn't, by interpreting their look or behavior as having something to do with you, your weight or your choices.

Misinterpreted self-judgment is what happened to Diana, who had assumed in high school that she wasn't liked because she was fat. It was the story she carried around with her. If someone didn't seem to warm up to her, their actions validated how unworthy she was because of her weight. Years later at a class reunion, she found herself talking to one of the guys who had shown no interest in her back in school. She learned she wasn't liked for a totally different reason that had nothing to do with her weight. It was her attitude. She was stunned. She had interpreted everything for years through the lens of being too fat, only to find out it was her shame about her weight that pushed people away.

When you no longer judge yourself, you are released from the shame and can focus on other things. Have you ever noticed how thin people who have overweight friends seem oblivious to their friends' size, or how those who are overweight and proud of it don't treat their weight as an issue? If you love your body and yourself the way you are, you won't focus on size but on enjoying life and those around you. The more you practice non-judgment, the less you judge yourself in all facets of your life.

Granted, non-judgment isn't easy in a culture that promotes ultrathin figures and celebrity perfection. Yet there is a growing number of famous role models who are proud to be who they are and to accept all of themselves, including Oprah, Whoopi Goldberg, Emme, Queen Latifah and Mo'Nique, who launched a line of clothes called Big, Beautiful and Loving It. Less well-known yet just as powerful is Meg Barnhouse, who is a writer, minister and singersongwriter. Meg is also proud to accept her size and to smash her self-critic and others' ideals of being thin. When Meg was on my radio show, she talked about looking at pictures of herself years younger when she thought she had been too fat and realizing how beautiful she really was. She realized that seeing herself as fat had been coming from her judgmental state of mind.

A good daily practice is to become conscious of your behaviors, and to respond to them by thinking, "Isn't that interesting." As you come to appreciate that your behaviors

are not good or bad, you will realize there is always a story behind them and you are doing the best you can. From this perspective, you will have more compassion for yourself and will be open to learning your inner story and seeing what is keeping you from doing something healthier.

What is Your Consciousness Level?	Consciousness
	Level
Rate how conscious you are of each activity from 0 to 5.	
0 = not conscious; 5 = very conscious	<u>0–5</u>
I know when I get hungry.	
I eat when I am hungry.	
I eat at set times, regardless of how hungry I am.	
I know when you start to feel.	
I have a hard time stopping my eating even when I am getting full.	

I am aware of my self-talk throughout the day.

I know what being full feels like.

I know how often I label myself bad or unworthy.

I have an idea of when or how often I judge myself.

I know what story I am carrying about myself.

I am aware of how much physical activity I have done this week.

I notice how much energy I have during the day.

I am aware of how I physically feel throughout the day.

I know I have a choice about whether I have enough time forfitness.

I know what drives my decisions about exercise.

I notice if I blame myself for less than perfect behavior.

Score	60-80	You have great awareness of your body, behaviors and physical needs.
Score	40-60	You have good awareness of how you feel and what you are doing.
Score	20–40	You have limited awareness of yourself and your behaviors.

As you think about your answers and score, don't judge them. Just think, "Isn't that interesting," and be curious. The less awareness you have, the more you will likely learn about yourself in the pages ahead.

Clarity through Understanding

Once you are conscious of what you are doing without judging it, you can be open to fully investigating and understanding what is triggering behaviors that aren't helping you succeed. This self-awareness is an opportunity to be curious and learn more about yourself and what is driving you to make choices that don't feel good.

Gaining self-awareness is *not* about trying to figure out why you don't do as you should, make bad choices or are not good at something. That kind of thinking is what got you here in the first place. It is time to banish "should," "bad" and "not good at" from your vocabulary. These words distract you from being open to finding out what is really making it hard for you to live the life you really want.

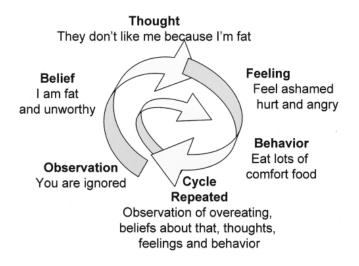
Some of your behaviors will adjust quite easily as you pay more attention to what you are doing and how you feel physically. When many people get in touch with their feeling of fullness, they find they don't want to feel that way anymore. They discover, as Brandy did, that feeling full is too uncomfortable, and they intuitively stop eating before getting to that point. Choosing to eat without distractions, like TV or driving, also makes it easier to stop.

Doreen, another one of my clients, amazed herself and her friends when she visited them for dinner a couple of weeks after she began paying attention to her hunger and fullness. They had Newman's Hint O' Mint cookies for dessert, which Doreen loved and often couldn't stop eating. She had enjoyed the meal, felt satisfied afterward, and when the plate of cookies went around she took one. Her friends each took three, but she wanted to start with just one for a change. She found herself paying more attention to how good the cookie tasted instead of devouring it and missing the experience. When she finished it, she realized that she didn't need another one. She wanted to remain satisfied instead of eating unconsciously and becoming too full.

The following week, Doreen bought one of those gigantic cookies while out walking with a friend. After a few bites, she tossed it in the trash. She found that she really didn't want any more than she had eaten. Her girlfriend was speechless. Doreen was not one to pass up cookies, much less not finish one or, even more shocking, to throw it away. But Doreen felt empowered and done with the cookie.

Becoming conscious is easy. It is harder to address the thoughts, beliefs and feelings you don't realize you are having that drive your behaviors toward food, fitness and taking care of yourself.

Imagine observing that someone is ignoring you. That leads you to think you are being ignored because you are fat, which reinforces how unworthy you feel you are. You will probably feel hurt and ashamed and, to soothe yourself, turn to your favorite comfort foods. When you realize how much you've eaten, you may feel even more guilty and shameful, which will drive you to eat even more, further validating how unlikable and undeserving you really are. This is classic emotional eating, and it demonstrates that your beliefs and feelings are the subconscious drivers of your behavior.



Another example (which is one we've all experienced) happens when you eat too much and think you have blown your diet. This thought validates the belief that you can't control yourself and will never be able to lose weight. You feel hopeless and disgusted, and then you look for something else to eat, which proves your belief right.

This cycle may seem obvious once it is explained, but when it is happening, you often aren't aware of the beliefs or feelings that lead to the overeating (or any other unhealthy behaviors). In the moment, all you know is you can't get enough food, you've eaten too much, you wish you hadn't, and you feel out of control.

What is shocking about this series of events is most of what we observe is filtered by what we choose to see. Our thoughts about our observations are seldom based on actual facts but on our interpretation of events from the past or expectations about the future. Those thoughts then validate the beliefs we learned from our parents, teachers, peers and society, which in turn causes feelings that we don't realize we are having. Those feelings then lead to behaviors we judge as good or bad.

Yet in the moment that we choose to respond with a specific behavior, we are often unaware of any cause but the circumstances we're reacting to, and we usually think we are doing the best we can. And we are. After the moment has passed, however, we attack our behavior and ourselves, forgetting we didn't see any other option when we made a decision or that we made a choice that seemed like the right one at the time.

My client Anita had chosen to clean out her closets and de-clutter her house when she had some time off from work rather than begin exercising. She had been under a lot of stress, and organizing was something that calmed her and helped her transition to being at home for a while. When she made this decision, she did it consciously and told me that this had to be done and was more important to her than exercising. Yet a couple of weeks later, she complained that she wasn't losing weight and was really bad for not getting in enough time for exercise. I reminded her that at the time she chose not to exercise, she was fine with her decision, and it served her best to clean out her closets. To judge that action harshly now was not going to support her in reaching her goals.

It is pointless, damaging and draining to judge behaviors — your own or anyone else's — because they are based on many things you may not fully understand. If you did understand what really caused your behavior, you would have more compassion. Recognize that what you are doing is triggered by your beliefs and feelings, which for most of us lie hidden in the subconscious. These beliefs and feelings cannot easily be labeled right or wrong, good or bad, black or white, just as it doesn't make sense to label your eating, activity or self-care behaviors this way.

Observing Your Behaviors

The only way to stop the cycle is to know when you are behaving in a way that doesn't serve your goals or make you feel good. Since it is hard to be in touch with your beliefs and feelings, the easiest place to start is by becoming aware of what it is you are doing or how you physically feel as a result of your behavior. If you are full yet still eating, being conscious of the full feeling can help you see what you are doing.

Initially you may only be aware of your behaviors hours after you did or didn't do something, but the more you practice being in touch with yourself, the sooner you will notice them. For example, at first you may realize you skipped going for a walk the day afterward because you felt a bit sluggish. The next time you skip your walk, you may realize it the same day and find a way to do something about it that night. And the following time, you may notice just as you are changing your plans and catch yourself in time to go for that walk.

Joellen is an example of someone who was so busy during the day that her behavior choices didn't fully register until she was getting ready for bed. She would overeat at lunch, eat Fritos as she ran out the door to go home from work and mindlessly consume snack foods for dinner while catching up with paperwork or emails. Yet as the weeks went by and we talked more about hunger levels, she started to notice them sooner. She began noticing within an hour of when she overate because she started observing that she didn't feel so well. This insight led her to be more aware as she ate, and this awareness helped her uncover what was driving her food choices.

Kathy had a different experience. She had days when she was highly conscious and other days when she was tuned out. The more she practiced being aware, the easier it got, but if she let her self-awareness slide for too long, then she completely forgot about paying attention.

It takes effort to remind yourself to pay attention, so it helps to have something that supports you in being conscious. Journals or logs are probably the most helpful because they give you a visible reminder and a place to record what you are doing or experiencing. There is no one way to keep a journal, and most people like to come up with their own approach. In part 3, I will introduce you to the hunger scale, discovery journal and fitness journal, which are very helpful in gaining greater awareness.

Getting In Touch with Your Feelings

As you become conscious of your behaviors, you can start to question what is driving them. Feelings are the primary cause of emotional eating, resisting being active and neglecting yourself. Beliefs fuel the intensity of your emotions and affect your reasoning about your eating, exercise and well-being behaviors. Feelings or beliefs or both can impact your behavior. We'll start with feelings.

You may already be in touch with how you feel. If so, you'll be able to recognize when certain feelings cause certain behaviors. We all get annoyed, disappointed, upset, sad and stressed, just for starters, and we have needs that are associated with these feelings that aren't always met, such as a need for respect. One of the reasons these feelings aren't addressed is that we live in a culture where letting feelings be known isn't welcomed, or we are too busy or exhausted to bring them up. A way to soothe the feelings and feel better is to turn to food, alcohol or even drugs for emotional comfort.

That is just what Melanie did when she got overcharged by her contractor. She found herself heading straight to the refrigerator after a call with the customer service manager, who told her she not only had not been overbilled but she was also being

charged with a late fee for not paying on time. She was furious as she pulled out pie leftover from the night before and the whipped cream. She calmed down as the food did its magic and decided to pay the bill and accept there was nothing else she could do, but the problem was not fully resolved. Underneath her calm, she was still seething and choosing not to deal with it. And that night, she binged on dessert to the point of almost being sick.

Emotional overeating and drinking commonly occur at night. Feelings most often want to come to the surface at the end of the day when you are finally getting a breather from the demands of work or your family. But if this still isn't a good time to bring up your feelings or you don't have a way to share and address them, then food and drinking is where you may turn. By recognizing your feelings and why you are having them, you can identify what will help you resolve the problem and how you can best get your needs addressed.

My client Roger had lost his brother to heart disease at an early age. This frightened him. His father had also died of a heart attack, and Roger didn't feel his body was functioning as well as it should be in his mid forties. The loss of his brother was also painful because he and his brother had taken over their father's business, and now Roger had to keep it going alone. But he kept up the business, worked out at the gym before work and afterward went home to his wife and kids. Once home, he would have a few drinks, eat dinner around 6:30 and then keep on eating. He couldn't seem to stop, even though he would eventually become uncomfortably full to the point of being almost ill.

What he needed was some time to relieve the tension and stress from the office and get some time to feel replenished and do something for himself that he enjoyed. He loved golf, and he discovered playing some holes of golf or doing some practice shots after work on his way home at a local driving range helped relieve his tension. A half-hour at the range made all the difference, and he would leave feeling refreshed and ready to be with his family. He also started to take twenty minutes after dinner to be by himself or to be with his wife to chat about his day. These changes curbed his drinking and his weeknight overeating.

If you don't find it easy to feel or prefer to keep your feelings to yourself, you may be making your situation worse by avoiding your feelings. Feelings that aren't expressed and released will eventually make themselves known in other ways. One way is turning to food, soda or alcohol in an effort to push the emotions away. Another way may become physical pain or illness when the emotions neurologically affect the chemistry of your body. Or you may find yourself expressing your feelings in ways you don't intend.

Kelley found she lost her temper with her kids for no reason and simmered in anger as she did all the housework after a long day at the office. She did everything for her family, and they didn't seem to appreciate how hard she worked and how much she had sacrificed. When she came to me, she was at the breaking point and felt she had to find a way to take care of herself. She was overweight, bordering on obesity, had high cholesterol and was pre-diabetic. She was sick of doing everything, but she didn't know how to do anything less. How, she asked me, could she change her situation before she grew to hate her husband and her children? She admitted she already hated herself. Since I'm not a psychologist, I didn't attempt to address her marital issues or what in her past led to how she felt. Instead, we focused on her current behaviors, what got in the way of believing she was entitled to make time for her well-being, and ways she could make positive changes that supported her needs.

What she began to discover as she looked at why she didn't choose to put herself first were her false beliefs that she came last in the family, had to carry the responsibility as a breadwinner and needed to be the perfect wife and ideal mother she never had. These beliefs were stretching her too thin and making it impossible to have a life she enjoyed, which made her angry and resentful. These were the feelings she couldn't admit to herself, yet her family was well aware that she wasn't happy and felt somehow responsible for her unhappiness and at a loss for how to improve things. The change needed to start within her.

She decided that she would ask her family to give her fifteen minutes each night to go in her bedroom and close the door for some quiet time. She used this time to do some journaling to process the day and express her feelings. She also made an appointment for a massage. Immediately she felt calmer. She was getting some space to breathe and get in touch with her needs. She started to journal about perfectionism and realized it wasn't what it was cracked up to be and that it didn't really matter as much as she imagined. In our sessions we discussed whether good was good enough, and she began to see that in many areas, it wasn't necessary to aim for perfection and that yes, good was good enough much of the time.

As Kelley began to do more for herself, her family seemed happier and calmer, mirroring the changes in her. They encouraged her to keep doing whatever she needed to feel better, and her husband offered to take care of the housework in the evening so she could attend some yoga and exercise classes. She began losing weight and was able to stop taking her medications, and to her amazement, the love and laughter returned to her marriage and family life. She learned that she had been repressing feelings that were tied to beliefs that didn't support what she really wanted in her life. She also learned that she didn't have to do everything and that her family was happy to help if she let them.

The more you know what you are feeling and allow yourself to express those emotions, the less your feelings run your behaviors, and the better you feel. This can seem frightening because the more you hold on to emotions, the more overwhelming they may seem, and the more you validate them with additional experiences. The natural inclination is to avoid emotions altogether, and, unfortunately, this is encouraged. We are taught to keep our feelings to ourselves, focus on the task at hand and suck it up. And after years of this conditioning, you may have sucked up so much emotion you might be afraid you will explode if you bring any of them up.

Many diabetics I have worked with are in this situation. They get so overwhelmed by feelings about the disease, their bodies and themselves that they shut down and go into denial. What they are facing is scary, and their struggle to manage the disease is often debilitating. On the one hand, diabetics know they have to change their lifestyles to manage their disease, while on the other, they find it incredibly difficult to comply with the list of lifestyle changes they are supposed to do. And when they can't seem to keep up with these changes, they feel guilty, incapable and bad about themselves. After repeating this experience and feeling like a failure or something is terribly wrong with them, it gets harder to get back on track.

Often, it becomes easier to eat comfort foods, skip medications, reduce the frequency of monitoring glucose levels, and pretend the disease doesn't matter. Yet making these choices creates feelings of guilt and a sense of shame, which get repressed. And the more they repress, the less they feel, and the more their health doesn't seem to matter to them. It is not uncommon for diabetics in this state of mind to avoid seeing their doctors. They don't want to get a lecture about the consequences of their actions. They don't want to feel ashamed and belittled for their behavior. Of course they know the ramifications of their choices. They know what the doctor will tell them. They know they have to do better. And that only makes them feel worse and leads to emotional eating and depression. It is no wonder a high percentage of diabetics repress their feelings and pretend everything is fine to the point of going numb. They just don't want to think about the disease. Because diabetes is a silent destroyer with minimal symptoms for the first few years, they can pretend it doesn't really exist.

One of my diabetic clients was so ambivalent that whenever I reminder her that she had diabetes, she would say, "Oh, that's right. I forgot that. It always surprises me when you remind me of that because I don't think of myself as diabetic." Her condition wasn't real for her, even though she also had all the symptoms of syndrome X, which is even more serious than just having diabetes and occurs when you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high triglycerides and high blood sugars. She chose not to let the disease register in her mind. She just couldn't take the diagnosis seriously.

Contributing to her mindset was her low self-esteem and a belief that even if she did take care of herself, she would die anyway. The more we discussed her denial of diabetes, the more she looked at these beliefs and got clear on why it did matter to her to have a higher quality life and to be alive for her daughter. She still struggles with her denial, but she has the tools now to identify her feelings and beliefs, and acknowledge the disease so she can make healthier choices.

Another client, Julian, also struggled with denial. He laughed about it, yet he was actually terrified. He had not been able to get his blood sugar levels under control for years, and while he went through periods when he precisely followed all the protocols, he also went through times when he hardly monitored his glucose and binged on junk food. At both times, he felt at a loss because nothing seemed to work, and he felt guilty for not being the model patient, the good eater or the man who could still tackle and get the girls as he did as the football hero back in college.

What doesn't help someone in denial is to remind them that they will pay a consequence for what they are doing. They know diabetes is a terrible way to die and they are on the fast track to death. But to remind them of this not only angers them, it is also the best way to push them further into denial.

Instead, these people need a way to get in touch with what they feel gently and safely without any judgment or fear of repercussions. It is scary to face feelings that carry a lot of pain and anxiety, yet keeping them buried actually makes them appear more frightening than they really are.

An easy way to start to address these feelings, whether you are diabetic, someone dealing with emotional eating or one with feelings that get in the way of making healthier choices, is to acknowledge that your feelings exist. Bring your emotions out into the light and validate what you are really dealing with inside. Acknowledgment helps you start expressing what you are feeling subconsciously so you can start to release those feelings. This step, while initially frightening, can actually give you relief and stop the repression that is keeping you stuck. As one my clients pointed out after a good cry, the actual experience of feeling is not as bad as you think it will be. Yes, you may cry and sob, feel your chest and jaw tighten, clench your fists or even feel a bit sick to your stomach, yet you will also notice you feel better after the emotions get released. You may even feel a sense of relief and completeness. You are opening the door to reclaiming yourself and taking back control of those repressed feelings that have subconsciously driven your behaviors.

The exercise for acknowledging feelings and the source of those feelings that Ifind most effective and gentle is one I adapted from Linda Spangle's book, *Life is Hard, Food is Easy,* which provides simple and straightforward steps for dealing with emotional eating.

The exercise is this:

When you find yourself overeating, eating when you aren't hungry, avoiding being aerobically active, not taking your medication or vitamins or neglecting yourself, or when you are feeling back pain, a headache or you are dealing with an illness that lingers too long, ask yourself the following:

I am feeling	because
<u> </u>	
and what else	
I am feeling	because
and what else	
I am feeling	because
and what else	
I am feeling	because
and what else	
I am feeling	because

Don't stop with the first feeling that comes to mind unless you are sure there isn't more to that feeling. In most cases the feeling closest to the surface is a superficial cause of your emotional eating or other behavior. The dominant feeling in play, triggered by the current event, is often more deeply repressed. If you don't get to the bottom of what you feel, you may continue your behaviors in an effort to avoid those deeper feelings. Dig down four or five layers to see what other feelings are buried that is adding fuel to the feeling you first identified.

One of my clients, Christina, was bingeing on sugary foods at work, and she didn't understand why she kept doing that. Here's what she learned when she did this exercise:

I am feeling frightened about losing my job because I know others can do it better.

I am feeling anxious about what my boss thinks because he doesn't acknowledge my work.

I am feeling concerned because I may not be adequate.

I am feeling inadequate because I need approval.

I am feeling I am never good enough because I could never please my father.

Christina was amazed that her overeating had anything to do with her upbringing, yet it made total sense when she saw it in black-and-white. She realized that her father's expectations were one thing, and her ability to do her job was another. She learned that her job was not in danger just because her boss did things that reminded her of her father. This insight helped her be clearer about what was causing her feelings and that she needed to address some old issues with her dad.

By identifying the cause of a feeling and why you are having it, you are also getting at what your needs are. You may need to deal with someone, have a conversation, address an incomplete issue, do something for yourself or change your situation. You may need to do several things, and by looking at all the issues you are dealing with, you get insights into how you can help yourself without turning to food or taking your problems out on yourself.

This approach helps you to identify and release your feelings, understand what created them (which are very often your beliefs) and then figure out what you need to do for yourself. The objective isn't to bring up your feelings so you can go back into your past and try to work them out, as you would in therapy. The objective is to identify the feeling instead of reaching for a distraction such as food or drink. However, if you find you have a need or desire to revisit your past or find that feeling your emotions creates anxiety or other concerns, please consider seeing a professional psychotherapist for assistance.

Identifying Your Beliefs

Beliefs aren't all that easy to identify. Some may be obvious, but many are so ingrained we can't notice them. You may have gone through years of therapy or had considerable healing work and believe you have eradicated your negative beliefs, but they may still linger or be so buried that they are hard to get at. Most of us carry deeply held subconscious beliefs created during the early years of our lives.

I am a good example of this. I started going to therapy when I was eighteen to address issues that started in my childhood, and I continued seeing a therapist until my early forties. In my sessions, I went back and faced many of my feelings, broke free of my shame and got comfortable with myself. Yet it was my last therapist that opened my eyes to my beliefs, which were keeping me stuck. He asked me to do a homework assignment and come back with what I thought was true about my life, myself and my choices. He wanted me to write down my beliefs. As I did this, I found myself surprised by what I was writing. I had so many beliefs that were limiting me, and I could see that my lifestyle and choices were based on them. This was such an eye-opener, and I began to replace those beliefs with new ones that were more positive and aligned with what I wanted in my life. Over the years, I have learned to look into any disappointing or negative experience to further uncover limiting beliefs that have silently made my decisions and created my reality.

A way to zero in on your beliefs is to listen to what you are saying to yourself. Your thoughts are a window into your subconscious, where your beliefs are in charge.

If you spent a day listening to what you said to yourself, you would be shocked by what your inner voice chatters on about, particular when you do things that raise your belief system's critical eye. When I started listening to myself, I discovered I exaggerated and was down right cruel. When I spilled a little bit of coffee while driving, I heard, "Look what you've done! You spilled coffee all over the place." But that wasn't true at all. I didn't spill very much, and it was no big deal. In really hearing what I was saying, I recognized that I was repeating the tone and severity of what was said to me as a child.

As I continued to listen during the next few weeks, I also heard myself say, "How could you be so stupid?"; "I will never be good enough at this"; "Why would anyone want me around?"; "What is wrong with me?"; "I can't do this, so what's the use"; and "You idiot." I couldn't believe I was saying things I knew weren't true, much less things that hurt me so badly. I wouldn't ever say such things to anyone else, no matter how upset they made me. Yet by criticizing myself with harsh judgments over and over again, these criticisms were being locked in as my truth and my story. These distorted views impacted how I felt about myself, how I resisted trying new things, and how close I would let people get to me.

Once I really paid attention to what I was saying internally, I could stop myself midsentence and confront the criticism. I began saying, "Wait a minute, that isn't true," and I then replaced those words with more compassionate and loving ones. It wasn't long before I realized I was seldom criticizing myself, and I was starting to say, "No big

deal; everyone has a bad day. Not a problem; that's okay." When I said that, I felt much lighter about what had happened.

Find out what you are saying to yourself by really paying attention when something seems to go wrong or when you do something that isn't perfect. The more you begin to notice and hear your negative self-talk, the more highly tuned you will be any time you criticize yourself. Be prepared to hear the worst. You may even discover you say nasty things about yourself to others who wish you wouldn't be so hard on yourself. People always used to say to me, "Don't be so hard on yourself" or "You don't really mean that." When people say words like this to you, recognize these are indicators that your self-talk is so ingrained you don't even keep it to yourself. Sadly, when you share your self-criticism with others, it can put you further into denial. You might laugh and say, "Yes, I do mean it," without realizing how damaging this response really is. In truth, it separates you from the part of you stung by the remark.

You can often see your negative self-image or critical comments more easily when another person denigrates him or herself. In one of my workshops, a participant referred to himself as a big, fat, disgusting cow, which was painful for the other participants to hear. I asked if he really saw himself that way, and he said no, not really. I encouraged him to listen for the times when he judged himself and to stop when he heard those things — to even say stop if that helped — and check in to the real truth. A week later, he said he was not beating himself up so much and felt more energized. He learned that negative thoughts drain your energy.

Thoughts also validate our beliefs, which represents your understanding and perspective of what you think is true about yourself and the world around you. They provide the basis for how you determine right from wrong and how things should be done. Beliefs are formed by what you are surrounded by and the messages you hear repeatedly as you grow up and go out into the world. They come primarily from your parents and secondarily from your teachers, friends, local customs and the media. Some beliefs are formed to help you survive painful experiences or from your interpretation of how you were treated. Even though you didn't choose which ones to absorb or don't realize you created them to protect yourself, you subconsciously hold them as sacred. These beliefs then become the underlying determinant of what you think and do, even if you once rebelled against them.

Some of the beliefs I took on to protect myself as a child were sabotaging my ability to succeed as an adult, and they stemmed from being surrounded by family members, neighbors and classmates who harshly judged or made fun of me. I came to believe it was not safe to be seen or heard, so I focused on protecting myself from being hurt

again and kept people from getting close. Eventually, I understood that it was my beliefs that were hurting me, not the individuals who were judging me.

Fortunately, you can choose which beliefs serve you and which ones you wish to rewrite to support you, once you know what they are. You get to make the rules now.

You can choose to believe you are unlovable, or you can choose to believe you are lovable and find evidence this new belief is true. You can believe only thin women are beautiful, or you can believe women of any size can be just as lovely. You can believe your favorite foods are bad and therefore you are guilty and bad whenever you eat them, or you can believe it is fine to have your favorite food in moderation.

There are so many things you've been told about food, fitness, your body and what you should do to be healthier, and much of is probably not right or, more importantly, not right for you. For example, you have been told through the media that carbohydrates are bad, boot camps are good and you can't be thin enough. Your mother may have instilled in you the practices of dieting and stepping on the scale everyday. Your friends may have encouraged you to diet because this is what they were doing, and your doctor probably backs this practice up. Those in the know have convinced you that exercising for less than thirty or even forty-five minutes isn't worth your time and that to really get in shape you need to go to the gym. And people, at various times in your life, have led you to believe you are unworthy because you are too fat. Am I far off?

Whatever you have come to believe about yourself and what it takes to be healthy, fit and less heavy needs a second look. First, these beliefs need to be brought out into the open, put in perspective and then kept, changed or discarded.

There are several ways to get in touch with your beliefs. You could spend an hour or so and jot down everything you believe to be true about eating, fitness, health and your body. Another approach is to become aware of your self-talk and see how those thoughts are validating your beliefs. A third way is to investigate your feelings and see what beliefs might be behind them.

And last, but not least, is to use the "I am feeling ... because ..." exercise from page 52.

You may find that you don't seem to feel anything specifically or you don't think your problem is caused by a feeling, so you can also ask yourself what you are *thinking* instead of feeling and see where that takes you.

I am thinkingand	because			
That belief comes from				
and what else				
I am thinking	because			
and				
That belief comes from				
and what else				
I am feeling	because			
(You may also bring up associated feelings)				
and what else				

In this form of the exercise you are getting at your thoughts, their underlying beliefs and where those beliefs were established. Knowing the source of your beliefs can be helpful in understanding why you hold onto then and giving yourself permission to release and replace them.

As you become aware of your beliefs, you can look back to see where they came from to put them in perspective. At some point in your life, they may have served you well. The question now is, do they still serve you, or are they holding you back from living a full and better life?

Tiffany always wanted to eat something the minute she got done working. She started thinking, as she got in the elevator after work, about what she wanted to eat. On her drive home, she would stop and get her favorite cheese sticks, ice cream sandwiches, donuts or whatever she thought looked good. She would start eating her goodies in the car, and once she was home, she would feel compelled to finish them off so she wouldn't have them in the house.

She admitted she didn't stop for food because she was hungry. Instead, she realized, she thought she deserved a reward because she had worked hard during the day. She grew up, as so many of us did, getting food as a reward after school, for doing homework or for getting something else done. She realized she didn't need to get rewarded this way. She could find other ways to reward herself. She also realized this was a habit and she

associated food with ending her work day, which helped her to change her thinking and her behavior.

What was tougher for her was dealing with food after a dinner party. She's Italian and loves to cook and entertain. Yet after her guests left one of her parties, she would find herself eating whatever food was leftover, no matter how much remained. She was compelled to do it, and she didn't really know why. As we talked through it and did the "I am feeling or I am thinking ... because ..." exercise, she said that she couldn't throw food away and couldn't save leftovers, so she really had no other choice. These were beliefs she got from her mother, who drilled it into her head that throwing food out was wasteful and that leftovers created a bad smell in the refrigerator and in the house. This created a no-win situation whenever she cooked. I helped her see that she could now set new rules for her house and choose new beliefs that suited her needs and values. She began to experiment with throwing food out and found a way to justify it by looking at the real costs of eating extra food. These costs included her sugar depressions, the expense of medication for depression and treating pre-diabetes, lost productivity when she was too sick to work the following day and, in the long-term, becoming less healthy.

Creating new beliefs is easier than you might think. We hold our beliefs in our subconscious, which holds onto whatever you tell it to with conviction and repetition. The subconscious is much like a database that has no interest in what data is stored in it. You can replace an old belief with a new one by writing over the file. But you have to rewrite it enough to fully replace the old version. Another analogy that I once heard is the subconscious is like an LP record that has a deep groove where a needle has played over and over. To replace such a deep groove, you have to create another one just as deep by playing the new belief over and over until the needle stays in it and doesn't skip back to the old groove.

When you create a new belief, you need to repeat it and be conscious of it frequently enough that you come to really own it as your truth. Sometimes all it takes is proof that it works for you, and you can eradicate the old fact with a new one overnight. More often, the new belief requires repeating regularly. This repetition is called affirming a new truth. Tiffany created a new belief that throwing out food saved her money. This became her new affirmation.

Affirmations are very helpful in changing beliefs because they reinforce and affirm what you are now choosing to believe as true. They are positive statements that validate what you know is best for you or what you want for yourself, and you read or say them repeatedly over a period of days or weeks until they really sink in and creates

that deeper groove. Your affirmations might be "I am enough"; "I am successful"; "It is best to throw out food I don't need"; or "I can eat my favorite foods whenever I want them in moderation because I can always get more." Note that you can always change these affirmations and improve upon them as you make changes or as you discover what works even better. You may not fully believe these new affirmations initially, but the more you repeat them, the more you reprogram your belief system and the more they will become your new perspective and reality.

Reaching Inner Wisdom

In addition to understanding your thoughts and beliefs (your mental self) and your feelings (your emotional self), you can learn much more about yourself by tuning into your body (your physical self) and listening to your heart and intuition (your spiritual self). Each part of the self is connected with the others, and as you change patterns in one area, you affect the others directly — either positively or negatively.

Our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves offer pathways to our inner wisdom. This wisdom can guide, inspire and motivate you to make positive changes for yourself and help you gain greater clarity about what is important. Many of us have lost our connection to what really matters and what we value. Instead, we focus on all the obligations we take on and what has to be done. We get caught up in our schedule of to-dos and lose sight of our purpose, passion and preferences.

When we live out of integrity with our values, we don't listen to our hearts. We also shut down mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. I know this firsthand because I am a former workaholic and a daughter trying to please my father. I made choices that were about pleasing others and trying to be what I thought others would respect and value. I was completely disconnected from my feelings, beliefs, body and soul for most of my life. I was convinced I couldn't rely on my own inner wisdom because I didn't think I had any.

Yet we all have wisdom. For each of us, the journey to fully connect with our bodies and our true selves takes different paths and evolves at a different pace. For some it starts with physical awareness, which opens the door for greater insight. For others it starts with a spiritual or emotional opening. Fortunately, any connection with yourself gives you more access to your inner wisdom and helps you make choices that are more aligned with your needs and wants.

Tuning in to Your Body

Your body sends you lots of signals in the form of pain, discomfort, hunger, fullness, low energy and weight gain. Many of us disregard these signals and deny they exist. When you do this, you set yourself up to feel even worse, and you put your body at risk for injury, illness and disease. These signals are a reminder to take care of yourself. Additional signals come from medical tests that indicate when hormones are out of balance, cholesterol or blood pressure is too high or blood sugar levels are in the danger zone.

Your body also lets you know that you are out of balance when it is overweight or when body fat and muscle are out of proportion. If your lean body mass is low because you have a high percentage of fat, your metabolism will slow down and you won't feel energized. When you lose your muscle, you won't be able to lift as much, you won't look toned and you will have less shock absorption in your knees and joints. When your hormones are out of balance, you will notice that you don't feel as well as when they are in balance.

Georgette was finding she didn't feel well for two weeks of each month and thought the feeling might be tied to premenstrual syndrome because she craved more sugar and salt. Yet she also noticed that if she didn't eat every few hours, she would feel faint, and being active always made her feel better. She had been tested for diabetes regularly, but she was always told that she was fine and just had hypoglycemia (a condition in which blood sugar levels dip very low). As we talked about her observations in one of our sessions, I suggested she monitor her blood glucose to see if her low levels were in response to extremely high blood sugar readings after she ate. Bingo. She discovered that was exactly what was going on. She had reactive hypoglycemia. So she began eating more balanced meals to regulate her blood sugars, and immediately she experienced a difference in how she felt.

Pain is another signal you need to pay close attention to, particularly if its cause has gone undiagnosed. Many people walk around for months or even years with pain from overusing a muscle, having postural imbalances or living with an injury. They just live with the pain and ultimately become more inactive and both emotionally and physically debilitated. I did the same thing a number of years ago. I tore a tendon while exercising after disregarding the aches that gave me an initial warning, and the physical therapist I went to see said I had been an injury waiting to happen. If you disregard or accept pain, you too may be susceptible to injury.

Lucinda could barely get up or down a flight of stairs and walked as if she were crippled. She'd been getting worse for years, and it frightened her. She wasn't old enough to be so out of shape, and she blamed herself for letting her condition go on for so long. As a result of her feelings, she wouldn't go to the doctor. She was too embarrassed and afraid of what she would learn. Instead she became increasingly housebound and dependent on her husband and children, which was the last thing she wanted. Her pride and fear were so strong that she subconsciously chose a restricted and poor quality of life over getting the help she needed. With a better understanding of what was driving her behavior, she did see her doctor, who prescribed physical therapy exercises to minimize the pain and get her moving again.

Feeling full or ravenously hungry are also important signals. There is no better appetite suppressant than feeling full, but if you don't stop to notice when you get full, you will end up overeating. For some people, this is a nightly occurrence. On the flip side, it is equally common to ignore hunger signals. You may choose not to eat when you get hungry because you believe not eating is a way to lose weight, you are too busy to stop or that food isn't readily available when you feel hungry. Ignoring either signal (fullness or hunger) slows down metabolism, leads to weight gain, negatively impacts blood sugar levels and creates carbohydrate cravings and bingeing.

Stress has its own signals. Being stressed because you are trying to do too much or you are not taking care of yourself, can lead to anxiety, insomnia, chronic pain, headaches, illness or other maladies. Stress can also lead you to feel helpless, out of control or over reactive. The symptoms of stress are red flags telling you that you aren't taking care of your physical or emotional needs.

For years I lived with my chronic fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome, daily nausea, severe back pain and then significant weight gain. I knew I worked too much and was unhappy in a relationship, but I didn't understand that my physical symptoms were tied to my choices. My reaction to these signals was to just keep putting one foot in front of the other and do what I felt I had to do each day. I didn't look at my symptoms as anything but physical problems that I was helpless to do anything about. I couldn't have been more wrong. They had everything to do with the way I was running my life and my unwillingness to see how my choices played a role in my health.

Instead I turned to doctors, but they couldn't help me. I even went to see a renowned specialist in Philadelphia for a series of gastrointestinal tests that lasted several days to get a better opinion about why I was chronically nauseated. The physician found nothing abnormal and wondered whether I was under considerable stress. I said no, not really, and left the building frustrated. I was truly blind to what was happening

in my life. It took multiple rounds of being bedridden for months at a time before I started to see that I was pushing myself too hard and not taking care of myself. I hadn't been very active, taken a vacation or worked less than ten-to-twelve hours a day in years. The problem was that being under enormous stress was normal to me, so I couldn't see it. Not until I changed my lifestyle and made my health a priority did my symptoms completely disappear.

Margot wasn't so lucky, as she shared once with the listeners on my radio show. She was a type A go-getter who didn't let anything stop her from doing what she had to do in her career. Even waking up one morning and finding that she couldn't see out of one eye did not stop her from going to her appointments. Nor did she stop when she noticed weakness in her legs. She didn't stop until her body made it very clear she didn't have a choice but to stop, and she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She finally got the message loud and clear, and to this day, she believes that her illness is a result of living a life of chronic stress. Many others who have debilitating illnesses have wondered the same thing. This hasn't been proven, yet it is likely that these people suppressed their immune systems' abilities to ward off the onset of their diseases.

You don't have to wind up in the hospital, receive a diagnosis of disease, get sick or get derailed by an injury to start paying attention. Get to know what your body is wisely trying to tell you and then determine the best course of action. It doesn't matter if someone else thinks you should push yourself to an extreme measure if you know, or even suspect, that action isn't right for you.

Listening to Your Heart

When you take the time to reflect on what really matters to you, instead of what you are supposed to do or how you need to earn a living, you get reconnected to your values and your heart. When most people do this, they find what they value is: being happy, fulfilling their purpose, giving back to society, helping others, enjoying themselves, feeling content, being healthy and fit to do anything they want, and having freedom to make their own choices.

Similarly, when people are surveyed about their dreams, the most common dreams are fulfilling a purpose and being slim, fit or healthy. These dreams go hand in hand; you can't easily live out your dream for fulfillment if you don't have your health or you aren't fit enough to pursue your purpose. Additionally, without your dreams, you may lose your desire to live and your spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health. You won't care to take good care of yourself, if you don't have hopes and dreams.

Feeling good about oneself and having an ability to contribute to others, is something most people long for, even when these desires are repressed. As you get older, your inner dreams come into your consciousness and help you see the contrast between how you are currently living and what your heart and soul desire. For some people, it takes a midlife crisis, medical trauma or serious illness to see what matters. For others, who never acknowledge their dreams, they will often further repress their needs. They may give up and succumb to depression, self-pity and disease.

My midlife crisis occurred the last time I was bedridden. I was getting burned out on my career, to which I had given most of my life. I was terrified I no longer felt the passion for my high tech career, as a highly respected industry analyst. I had loved the industry and my role in it, and it had been my identity for more than twenty years. I couldn't imagine doing anything else, yet part of me no longer cared about being an analyst. I had burned the candle at both ends for too long, and I was physically a wreck. I was also gaining a significant amount of weight and was unable to control the weight gain with dieting, which also terrified me. It was one of the darkest and scariest times of my life, and it took a yearlong sabbatical of self-care to understand what interested and mattered to me. I spent that year exercising regularly, gardening, cooking healthy meals and doing some volunteer projects. These became new passions for me, and these activities helped me get in touch with what I really cared about, which was my health and a healthy lifestyle.

For those like me, who have survived great suffering and been awakened to their own truth, they too have pulled themselves out of their darkness with a determination to live and thrive. These people don't take things for granted, and they don't give up. They tend to value everything they have, even if their physical bodies have been compromised. There are countless stories of people who have been in wheelchairs, given little time to live or been told they will never function again, who have found inner strength, perseverance and healing practices to bring their bodies back into a state of health no one would have expected. These people focus on having the best lives they can, taking better care of themselves and feeling grateful for their lessons.

Margot says she is grateful now that she has multiple sclerosis because she discovered the importance of living a balanced lifestyle and taking good care of herself. She has also done what most would say is impossible. She has slowly and steadily regained her strength and no longer spends her days in a wheelchair. She can now walk again, swim and go to Curves. She got strong by connecting to her spiritual center, visualizing herself moving, asking for help, believing in herself and experimenting with different types of movement programs.

Maureen Whitehouse, author of *Soul-Full Eating*, and Marian Baker, who wrote *Wake Up Inspired*, were also guests on my show. They shared their own stories of how they overcame being out of balance and then connected with their inner wisdom. Maureen was a former international model, who starved herself to compete with other models in an industry that was in conflict with her values. She did some soul searching and began to question what starving and her other forms of dysfunctional eating were doing to her body and to herself. She realized in the process of that soul searching she had lost herself to the profession. That realization provided the shift to regain her authenticity and honor her spirit. She then had greater health and happiness, and she was able to model successfully for many more years.

Marian was at the top of her game as an advertising executive, when she began to feel something was very wrong. She knew the feeling was more than the physical symptoms she was dealing with. She was getting a persistent sensation that something wasn't right, as if her insides were knocking and asking, "can we talk?" She felt restless, out of balance and unfulfilled. This feeling put her on a healing quest, which led her to discover how to open up to what her heart was telling her and follow its guidance. She experienced many insights and a shift in perspective. She discovered that her physical health was inseparable from her spiritual and mental well-being, and that she needed to focus on her self-care and quality of life.

My mentor, Marcia Wieder, followed her heart out of a high-powered position in Washington, D.C. to San Francisco where she pursued her passion for making dreams come true. She wrote *Making Your Dreams Come True, Doing Less and Having More,* and *Dreams are Whispers from the Soul.* She also developed the first certification Dream Coach® program, and she has trained hundreds of coaches, including me, how to guide people in discovering their purpose and be in action to follow their dreams. Her training is now the foundation of her organization Dream University®. She is happier than she could have once imagined, and she is living her life in alignment with her heart.

When you listen to your heart and connect to your spiritually, you often discover you want to live your life more fully, contribute to others through your purpose and follow your dreams. You become more connected with all parts of your being and discover the need for alignment between your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual states. And when that happens, you are guided more easily by your inner wisdom, and you are more inclined toward healthier choices and a healthy way of living.

Choices without Deprivation or a Need for Perfection

Knowing yourself well helps you to make choices that are best for you and gives you the confidence to stand up for your own way of doing things. This self-determination is important in a world of unlimited options, conflicting advice, varying types of experts and a wide array of fitness, health and diet programs.

By choosing things you enjoy most, you have a greater chance of wanting to do them. This is what Nick Yphantides, a physician who nearly lost his life from being unhealthy and severely obese, realized after he was diagnosed with testicular cancer and took a sabbatical across America in pursuit of baseball games and a healthier lifestyle. He focused on being active and making healthier choices during his trip, and he came to understand that being healthy isn't about dieting or exercising. It is about living and having fun. His insights transformed his thinking and choices, and when he got back he was 270 pounds lighter. He wrote *My Big Fat Greek Diet* in order to share his story and help others discover a more enjoyable approach to healthy living than dieting and exercising.

Many people are discovering the same thing. Shann started working out in a gym when she first realized her lifestyle was out of control. Going to the gym helped get her moving, but it didn't hold her interest. She decided what she really wanted was a way to relax, be outdoors and have more fun and variety. She started to do yoga and Pilates, then she added martial arts and months later she included running and snowboarding into her activities. Her goal wasn't to achieve perfection. It was to give herself permission to take care of herself doing what she liked best, and from this permission she discovered how to enjoy being healthy and active.

Discovering Choices

Despite what you've been told, there are no bad foods and there are lots of ways to be aerobic to burn fat. You don't have to use gym equipment or go to the gym for exercise, unless that works for you. You don't have to give up chocolate or your favorite foods, unless they don't agree with you. It is a myth you have to eat a certain way to lose weight or work out using specific types of routines to get back into shape and be fit. If it were true, more people would be successful.

What works is finding foods and activities you like that are healthier than what you are eating and doing now. You don't have to make drastic changes or push yourself to choose things you don't want. That is exactly what doesn't work for most people.

The best way to improve your eating habits, for example, is to focus on what you want to eat and then to make small adjustments in how it is prepared so it is healthier. When

clients ask me what they should have for their meals, I turn it around and ask them what they enjoy eating for breakfast, lunch, dinner and various snacks. Then I explain they can find ways to eat those things in a healthier way by reducing the saturated fat and simple carbohydrates. This is easily done by substituting some of the ingredients, finding foods with less of these nutrients, or switching to healthier brands.

When I take clients to the grocery store to learn how to select healthier foods they will enjoy, we often start by finding foods for breakfast. When I met Mandy at the store, I asked her what she liked to eat in the morning and she said, "I love eggs, bacon and toast, but I know I can't have these because of the carbohydrates and fat" I told her the belief she couldn't have these foods may not be true, and I suggested we go look at her bacon options. There were many different types of bacon, from lean turkey bacon to thick slabs of smoked bacon, and I told her to pick out a couple of the leanest options — with the least amount of saturated fat — she would want to try. The goal was tofind leaner bacon she liked, and the only way to find out was to buy them and taste them. The bacon she didn't like, I recommended she throw out instead of feeling obligated to eat it.

As we found with the bacon, there were several options for eggs with less saturated fat, from egg substitutes to eggs higher in Omega 3. She could also choose to cook with more egg whites than yolks to reduce the amount of fat. In the bread isle, we found dozens of whole grain breads that were high in complex carbohydrates. We also looked for cereals for higher amounts of complex carbohydrates and lower amounts of sugar, which we found the specialty cereal section. I gave her some rules of thumb to make her cereal selections, which was five or less grams of sugar per serving and at least three grams of fiber and of protein. We put in her cart any cereal that met those criteria and that she might like, and when we were done, she picked just four of them to take home to try. She discovered she liked many of these healthier options, and they tasted just as good as the cereal that was much higher in simple carbohydrates.

The similar approach can be used to choose fitness activities that are enjoyable. If you love to hike, explore the most enjoyable way you can do that within your fitness ability. If you prefer volleyball, pick that activity. If you love to dance, focus on selecting a type you enjoy. Be imaginative and think outside the box. A great resource is the magazine *Experience Life*, which has the most open-minded and delightful perspective on fitness. Each month the magazine has exciting stories about people being active in every way imaginable, including kayaking, soccer, skiing, hiking, martial arts, swimming, running, basketball, dance, tennis and yoga.

Once, when I was working at a booth at a diabetes conference, a woman approached and asked me what she could do in the winter months when it was too cold for

walking. She didn't have much money to buy equipment or join classes, so she didn't do any activity during the winter. I asked her what she had enjoyed doing when she was younger, and she said not much. Yet as we kept talking, I learned she had been the hula hoop queen back in junior high. I told her she could get a great aerobic workout with a hula hoop, and it wouldn't cost her more than a few dollars or take up much space at home. She was delighted. She remembered loving her hula hoop, and when I later saw her in the bathroom, she was beaming with excitement. She said she had been thinking about the hula hoop since we talked earlier that day, and she couldn't wait to get started.

Any activity that gets you moving and keeps your heart rate up in the fat-burning zone is a wonderful way to be aerobic. Information about the aerobic fat-burning zone is on page 92. If you want to be active outdoors, there are lots of things you can do. If you prefer being part of a group, there are many types of outdoor classes, walking groups and fitness programs. Instead of thinking about what exercise or a workout is supposed to be, think of what sounds like fun and where you can go to do it.

For people with physical limitations, there are probably more options than you imagine, including ways to be aerobic sitting in a chair. Chair aerobics is basically raising and waving your arms in a rhythmic motion while moving your legs back and forth as you stay seated, and those motions will get your heart rate up into the aerobic zone. I was surprised just how much exertion is involved when I tried it for myself.

Overcoming Deprivation

No doubt, at one time or another, you've been told very specifically what you should and shouldn't eat or do by your parents, doctor, nutritionist, trainer or friends or from magazine articles. Most likely you attempted to do just as you were told, up until you unintentionally deviated from these instructions or felt driven to do the opposite of what you were told. If so, you were reacting in a predictable manner.

When you are told you can't have something, you want it more. When you are forced to do something you don't like to do, you will likely drag your feet or do what's been asked under duress, and then very often you will find a way to quit doing it at all. Most people resent and rebel against being deprived of what they want or for how they want to feel.

When you rebel against a restriction, you will tend to do the opposite of what is being enforced. Think of a diet you've been on and the list of foods that were not allowed. If they were foods you loved, you likely felt a pang for them that developed

into a craving or obsession. As soon as you could get your hands on these foods, you probably overindulged as if you couldn't get enough. When you overindulge, it is as if your inner teenager is rebelling against a restrictive parent, and knowing the behavior is really bad, you eat even more. It is common for dieters to overeat when a diet ends and for those on highly restrictive diets to further binge. Some dieters get into a cycle of dieting and bingeing for years, which can wreck havoc on their metabolism and their self-esteem.

Mary, another guest on my show, started restricting her food intake back in high school when she began obsessing about her weight. Her restriction led to days of skipping all meals only to overeat or binge the following days. The fasting and bingeing became a roller coaster of feeling self-righteous on the up days and self-hatred on the down ones. While she restricted herself to gain control over her body, she only got heavier and more depressed. She rode this dieting-deprivation ride for years, unaware that she had an unhealthy relationship with food and was perpetually stuck in a pattern of disordered eating.

Having an unhealthy relationship can also happen with exercise. If you agree to do a fitness program or you purchase a piece of equipment you really don't enjoy, you will likely hate doing it and dread the next time you are supposed to do it. Soon you will be skipping appointments or using the equipment as a place on which to hang things. Exercising or not, you won't feel good about either, and you will be inclined to deny these feelings. Inevitability, just as with a diet, you will probably quit and do nothing. Doing nothing and resisting the idea of working out is a form of deprivation backlash. You are depriving yourself of enjoyment or doing something you prefer, and once you experience the backlash of resistance and ambivalence it may take months or years to be motivated to get active again.

Resistance and ambivalence happens frequently to people who hoped a boot camp would whip them back into shape. I got a call from Lynn after she had enrolled her family in a boot camp program. She was concerned by their behavior when the program ended. She had hired a trainer to come to the house, and the first thing the trainer did was clear out the foods not allowed on the program. Then he created a daily boot camp program that included a severely restricted diet plan and an intense fitness regimen similar to what is done for the TV reality shows.

After a few months, the family began to rebel and Lynn decided the program was expecting too much of her family and stopped it. What happened next she didn't anticipate. Everyone started to binge on junk food and resist doing any type of physical activity. The success they each had doing the boot camp was being replaced

with significant weight gain, lower energy and feelings of guilt. The whole experience left a bad taste in their mouths, and Lynn was scared it was going to be impossible to encourage healthier behaviors again.

The moral of the story is instead of being restrictive and depriving yourself of enjoyment, give yourself permission to choose enjoyable healthy options.

Rethinking Perfection

It is nearly impossible to be perfect, yet perfection is what many of us have come to expect of ourselves. We expect that when we've been given a diet or fitness regimen to follow, we are required to fully and perfectly comply with the rules. We are taught repeatedly in our lives to either do something right or face the consequences. Most of us have been berated, asked to account for why we didn't do as was asked, and threatened with a penalty.

What if you were expected to do less and celebrated for small improvements instead? What if you were satisfied to set smaller goals that were realistic enough to always succeed? And what if you were allowed to pick what you wanted to do because only you know yourself best and what you can really achieve?

This freedom of taking baby steps and having personal choice is how Anne, a guest on my show, succeeded to get fit beyond her wildest imagination. Her initial goal was to lose five pounds, and she was happy with that goal. She wanted to fit back into a size 26 pant comfortably, which had become too snug. She surprised herself by losing twenty pounds after three months of walking on the treadmill, so she set another goal for five more pounds. She easily reached that goal and kept setting new goals that were within her reach. She never pushed herself to lose a hundred pounds, yet four years later she had lost a total of ninety-three pounds and realized how far she had come. What kept her going was feeling successful and having choices. She didn't want to be told what to do, and instead, she asked for guidance and then made her own decisions based on what felt right to her. Anne allowed herself to set small goals that were realistic and to make choices that best suited her. Because of that permission, she surpassed her own expectations and discovered a passion for fitness that led to body-building competitions and size 4 outfits.

Giving yourself permission to choose activities you enjoy, the pace you feel comfortable with and goals you can reach, changes the rules of fitness. This fresh perspective is just what many people need to succeed at getting fit and healthy. Instead of expecting yourself to perfectly adhere to someone else's overbearing demands, pick a fitness

activity and an amount of time you can do fairly easily and progress to doing more from that point — one small success after another. Soon enough you will be achieving more than you thought possible, and you will have a lot to be proud of.

Confidence and Control are Priceless

Feeling confident and in control is what most of us want, and when you have those feelings you also feel invincible, energized and good about yourself. Self-corfidence also changes your attitude. You become more positive and focused on what you can do rather than on what you should do. Clients often tell me they have achieved this confidence while working with me, after having integrated the three Cs into their lifestyle.

Once you have achieved greater confidence and control in your behaviors toward food, exercising and self-care, it becomes easier to trust your own inner wisdom and give yourself what you need. You also stop feeling pressured by other people's rules, shoulds or judgment. You now know best.