

Fat Girl FUNERAL



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Information to be included in book before it starts:

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Mission Statement

I help busy on-the-go professionals lose more than fifty pounds in less than six months so that they can have the energy to enjoy a better quality of life, more self-confidence in achieving their goals, and the freedom to wear whatever they want and feel amazing in it.

I help people achieve their goals by:

- teaching how to identify their mistakes and overcome them;
- teaching how to know their triggers and create bulletproof strategies to beat emotional eating;
- teaching how to build the right support network and why it is important for long-term success;
- teaching how to handle the haters;
- teaching about nutrition, how the body works, and how to eat well to improve their metabolism;

- teaching how to exercise effectively even when they do not have time;
- teaching timesaving strategies to overcome stress and learn how to not let stress cause weight gain;
- teaching how to change their mind-set to foster long-lasting success.

Chapter 1

My Journey

I'd like to start this book by sharing a secret. Even though I am a doctor, I do not have superpowers.

This seems to be a common misconception about doctors—that we are perfect, do not have any problems, and we know everything. I have struggled with weight loss in the same way that my patients have, and in all that I do in my practice, being relatable and vulnerable is one of my main goals.

It was not always this way. Growing up, it seemed that I had it all for a while. In school, I was the student that everybody knew was going to become a doctor. I felt I had this red-carpet plan that was leading me to my “dream job” of becoming a doctor and saving lives just as they do on television. The whole idea of being able to help people in the way that doctors do was so special to me, and it was something I always knew I was destined for. Getting there was just a matter of process.

Now after all the years of college, medical school, and residency, basically eleven years of training, I find myself in a completely different place than I thought I would be, but it is also the place I know I am meant to be. It is funny how life works out that way.

A few years into my career as an internal medicine doctor, I realized that the reality of medicine was not about saving lives. I was actually spending most of my time prescribing medicine, telling people they had diabetes, and generally trying to decide which pills or procedures could help my patients cope with their problems. I did not really feel that I was helping people, which is why I had decided to pursue a medical career in the first place.

My day-to-day activities were consumed with symptom suppression, but that was not helping people become healthier. It was just a temporary fix. The more I did this, the more insight I gained into realizing how our medical system often has it wrong. If we are really going to help people be healthy, we need to focus on the root of the problem.

Then consider the logistics of the job. The company I worked for allowed me 15-minute windows to see my patients, but most of them showed up late, so by the time I was able to see them, I would have about five minutes left, which was barely enough time to write a prescription let alone get to the root of their health issues.

I spent my days rushing around seeing my patients back-to-back-to-back. I also had emails to respond to, notes to catch up on, lab results to look at, phone calls to make, and emergencies to deal with. I was working 12+ hour days and not getting home until late in the evening. Then I would have to do it all over again the next day.

I was only a few years into my career, and I was quickly burning out. I even reduced my hours to a part-time schedule of four days a week as opposed to five, but that ended up being worse because I would just use that extra unpaid day to play catch-up. I was always buried in paperwork and did not feel I was making any real difference in the lives or health outcomes of my patients. I was just giving them a short-term fix only to have them return for a new one a few months later.

I was supposed to be living my dream as a doctor, but my reality was far from it. Not only was I not living my purpose, but I also did not feel as though I was helping my patients in the way they needed to be helped, which was not how I wanted to live.

My moment of clarity came one day while driving on I-225. If you live in Colorado, you know it is one of the worst highways in the state because there is always traffic. It was late in the evening, and I was still far from my house. I started to realize that if I had a child to go home to I would barely get to see them, and I would be exhausted in the process. I knew that my current life was not sustainable. I knew I needed to make a change and get control of my life.

I did not know what I was going to do, but I decided I *was* going to change my life. This is how it works with my patients as well. Many of them have these moments of clarity when they decide they must do something different in terms of their weight. They may not know what they need to do, but they have visualized the outcome and committed to achieving their goal, which is necessary for any challenge in life. Determining how to do something is always just a matter of process. It is the commitment to that outcome that is most important.

When we commit to changing our lives whether it is to get to a healthy weight or reestablish a sense of purpose in our career, it is not as if the change will happen right away. It takes intent, and it takes time. My transition to my new outcome did not happen right away. It, too, was a process that involved varying degrees of depression for me.

There were days when it was very hard for me to get out of bed in the morning because I just did not want to go to work. My husband is also a doctor, so thankfully he was able

to relate to me and knew how I felt. He would give me a big hug in the morning and just encourage me to put my head down and get through the day. He helped by assuring me that on the weekend we would have fun and relax, but I was truly living the definition of “physician burnout.”

“Physician burnout” is a common outcome for many doctors. I wanted to become a doctor because I wanted to help people, but as I tell many of my patients, you cannot help others if you are suffering. Physician burnout is something that can cause some doctors to get to the point of suicide, and while I was not at that point, I certainly was not in a good place. I knew that the longer I continued to do what I was doing, the worse my condition would get and the worse my contribution to my patients’ well-being would be. In all that we do, we need to care for ourselves as we care for others.

As I began charting how to change my career, I started combing the Internet looking for an alternate job in the same field. I felt I was in a prison and was willing to accept any way out. The more I looked, the more I felt that if I just took a different physician job I would really just be signing up for the same problems in a different place.

This is when I really had to do some serious soul-searching. I said, “OK, I am open to the signs. Give me a sign, whatever it is. I am here to change. Please send some solution my way.”

That sign ended up being an advertisement on the Internet for a weekend event called “The Millionaire Mind” hosted by T. Harv Eker. I already knew who he was because he wrote a book called *Secrets of the Millionaire Mind*, and it profoundly affected me when I read it. Now here he was popping back into my life in the form of this advertisement. What I learned from reading his book was that the answer was usually not to work harder but work smarter. This book totally changed my world and my conception about who I was, what my purpose was, how I needed to think about my finances, and what it meant to be successful.

When I saw the advertisement for his free event, I immediately enrolled. It ended up being one of the best weekends of my life.

At this event, they shared a parable. It was about a farmer who had this beautiful tree that bore lots of leaves and fruit. It was really just a gorgeous tree, and people drove from far away just to see it. After one particularly bad winter, the farmer started to panic because the tree did not replenish its fruit, and he worried that the crowds would stop coming. He thought he had a solution, so he decided to try and fool people by taping some leaves and fruit to the tree to make it appear healthy. Much to his dismay, though, as soon as a windy day came along, the leaves and fruit were blown away, and he was once again left with a bare tree.

The farmer sat by his tree and started crying out of helplessness. Then a neighbor came by and said, “If you want the tree to be healthy, stop using tape and instead focus on the roots. If you do that, the tree will bloom.”

That was my aha moment. I literally jumped out of my seat. This story resonated with me so closely. When I was looking for other jobs, I was basically trying to tape the leaves back on the tree when I should have been working on my “roots.”

I knew I needed to work on my “roots,” but I did not necessarily know what that meant. I went home from the conference and really started to contemplate what I was good at doing, what I wanted to contribute to the world, and how I wanted to add value.

These reflections took me back to my childhood. What did I really enjoy? What was natural to me?

I knew I enjoyed being part of a team. I knew I enjoyed motivating people, and I enjoyed helping people more than anything.

What I learned at the conference was that I did not need to adhere to the traditional definition of what it meant to be a doctor to be able to help people in the way I wanted to. I could create my own business and rewrite my own script for how I was going to live my purpose and help people. Sometimes the problems or challenges we face in our lives are really just a product of the lens through which we are looking at them. I had grown up with this narrow view of what it meant to be a doctor, and so I was using that same narrow view to try and come up with ways I could be a doctor. When I started to brainstorm options from an expanded perspective, good things started to happen.

I was allowing the universe to help me in ways I had previously been closed to. That very day I came across a website called “Income MD.” This site was designed to help doctors like myself transition from physician burnout toward a fulfilling business where they could do things differently but still use their skills and training as a doctor while also helping people. It was run by Dr. Mike Woo-Ming, and he was my little ounce of hope because he made me see that I did not need to give up being a doctor to be able to love my work.

I went to his workshop in San Diego, and he told me about a friend of his who runs a weight loss clinic in Texas. He connected us, and when I spoke with her, she said, “I do weight loss. I have the best job ever because I help people get happy, healthy, confident, and off their medications. I help them overcome their knee pain and move into the direction of their best selves.”

This conversation was very inspirational because I had never really met anybody who actually loved their job and had determined how to align their work with their purpose. I had always believed that a job was a means to an end, and that it was supposed to be

unpleasant, which was just another example of the narrow perspective I was using to frame the way I understood what it meant to be a doctor.

Our conversation was transformational for me. As soon as it was over, I knew what direction I needed to follow in my career.

That was the beginning of my journey into weight loss. I consulted the Denver Small Business Development Center, enrolled in a small business basics class, and connected with a counselor named Wendy King, who helped me clarify my business model, my marketing, and everything else I needed to put into place to be able to open my own clinic and start changing people's lives for the better.

I did not quit my job right away. I continued working there for the next year while spending every spare moment I had putting the pieces of my business into place. I had a secret underground operation going where I was planning my escape. I even wrote out my resignation letter long before the three months I was required to give just to make sure I had it worded perfectly. This is a great example of first knowing where you are going and then deciding how to get there.

In April 2012, I submitted that resignation letter, and my last day of work was a few months later in July. In September of that year, I officially opened the doors to my weight loss clinic. While I was planning my escape from my job, I also became engaged and then married, so I was very busy.

I remember very clearly when I opened the doors to my clinic. I can honestly say that it was a moment of pure bliss—not just because it meant I did not have to work the job I disliked so much anymore but because I was finally connecting with the person I was meant to be. This does not mean that I did not have fear and doubt. I did, but this is normal when embarking on something new. When you know, though, that what you are doing is exactly what you are supposed to be doing, it is so much easier to overlook the negative and focus only on the positive.

Now that I was living directly in my purpose, I would be able to wholeheartedly give my all to my patients to ensure they would get all the help and value they needed and deserved. What was especially great was that I did not need to give up my medical license or stop being a doctor. Because I allowed myself to expand my perspective of what it meant to be a doctor and what it meant to help people with their health outcomes, I was able to come up with solutions to my challenges that I had not previously thought possible. This is the same tactic I use with my patients. I get them to change their ideas about what is possible, and when they do, they are able to achieve outcomes they once thought impossible.

Looking back, I can see that my time as an internal medicine doctor was part of the journey I needed to go on because it led me on the path to do what I was meant to do.

My background in understanding how the body works, people's medical history, and medication has really allowed me to help my patients lose weight and become healthier on a whole new level. Had it not been for my previous experience in internal medicine, I would not be as effective as I am today for my patients.

The first year of my practice was very memorable. I even won an "Inspire Award" because I had a patient, whose identity I am still unsure of, who nominated me for it. The most significant part of winning that award was that it was a sign I was on the right track and doing what I was meant to be doing. Opening my clinic was one of the biggest so-called risks of my life because I had given up a secure six-figure salary to open myself up to being the best version of myself while also helping others be the best version of themselves, and this award was just one of the many signs I had telling me I had made the right decision.

It is easy to reflect on events in your life and make sense of how they fit together and why they were supposed to happen the way they did. When I was going through it, I had a lot of internal doubt and uncertainty, but looking back I can see that those emotions were necessary to push me to get to the place I was meant to be. Remembering what it felt like when I was just starting out is the fuel that makes me so excited to get out of bed every morning and help my patients. Work does not feel like work anymore. I truly love what I do.

Besides helping my patients transform themselves, I also now have a much better work/life balance. I have more freedom to pursue what is important to me outside my career. I get to spend more quality time with my daughter, Haley. I drop her off and pick her up from school. I only work half-days on Wednesdays, I take Fridays off, and I can go on a vacation whenever I want to.

This freedom and control over my life and work has given me a level of balance I never thought possible, and being balanced in this way allows me to serve my patients at the very highest level. As I say time and time again, you can only show up at your best for others if you first take care of yourself, and this is what I am now able to do.

My connection to the work I was doing increased during my pregnancy when I started to have my own struggles with weight. During that time, I gained forty pounds. Even though that is normal for someone my size, I felt it was a lot, and I started to really feel that I was overweight. I started to understand my patients and the realities of what they were going through on a level I had previously not felt. After the delivery, I lost only ten pounds, so for the first time in my life, I had to get on a program to get my body back to what I felt was a healthy place. This led me to start following my own program.

My daughter was born in November 2014, and I started working on my program the following January. It took me three months to lose forty pounds. What is great about my program is that you do not need to have a clear schedule to be able to follow it. When I

was doing it, I was busier than ever: I had a newborn baby and a business to run, so I was sleeping about three hours a night. I was spending all my time adjusting to the realities of motherhood and had very little time to exercise, the point being that my program is designed for the busy person. It worked for me, and it can work for you.

When I built my program, I did so with the realities of today's world in mind. We live in a society that is so fast paced. With social media, technology, work demands, and travel, it seems as though we never have enough time for ourselves anymore. We are in an economy where people have a lot of demands. I have crafted and perfected a program that fits people like me who do not have time to count calories, spend hours at the gym every day, and be in the kitchen cooking nutritious meals all the time.

The problem I have seen is that people all over the country tend to put health at the end of their priorities list. The obesity rate is increasing, and our health is declining. More people today have diabetes than ever before. They also have higher cholesterol levels and suffer more heart attacks than in the past. My program is about placing health higher on our list of priorities, but that does not mean it needs to take precedence over everything else in our lives. My program is designed for people who have a busy life and are unable to just put their lives on pause.

I am on a mission to help people transform their lives, and I am using food and weight loss as my form of medicine. I am done with the symptom-suppression approach and am now focused on the root of people's health problems. I want people to bloom just like that beautiful tree. Being connected to that higher mission is what motivates me to continue to grow my clinic so that I can continually help more and more people.

I have experienced what so many of my patients are experiencing, and that makes me uniquely qualified to help them. When my patients tell me their knees hurt when they run, they cannot breathe after walking one block, they are uncomfortable in their clothes, they do not like what they see in the mirror, that it is hard for them to travel, and that they cannot keep up with their children, I understand because I have seen it from the perspective of my work as an internal medicine doctor, and I have felt that way myself. I was able to come out of that journey on the other side as the healthiest version of myself, and I can help people achieve the same results in their life.

I believe that everything in our life is related to our health. If a person is healthy and feels good about themselves, that sets them up for success in all other parts of their life. Being healthy is truly the root of all success. If a person is healthy, they will have good relationships, a good career, be more in control of their finances, and will just be happier. My mission is not just about helping people lose weight. It is about transforming them into the very best version of themselves.

Chapter 2

The Triangle of Health Formula

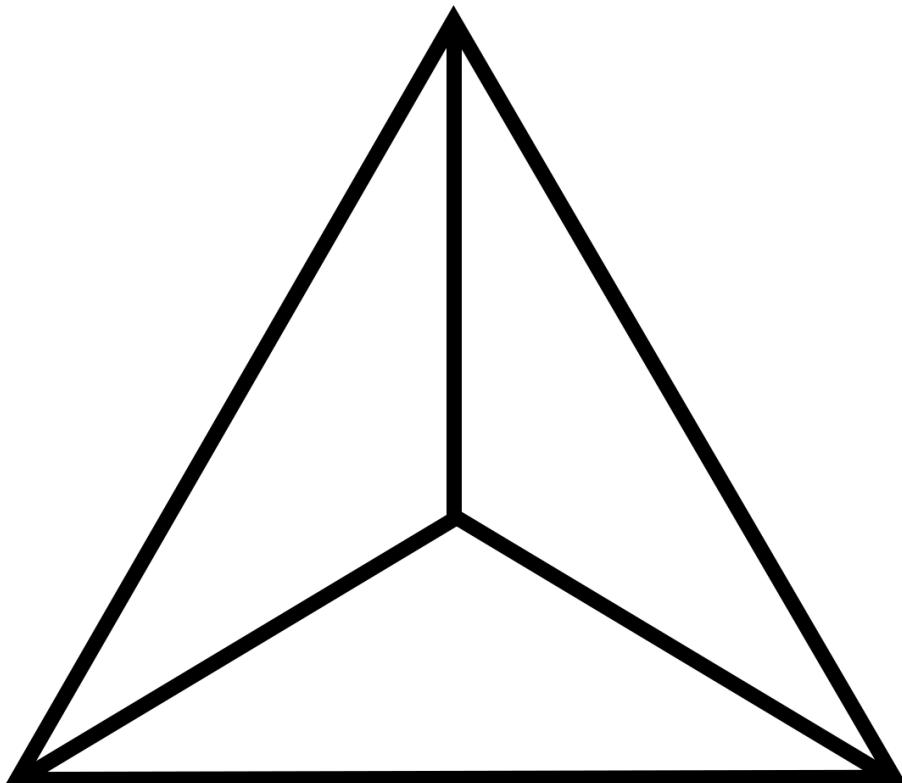
Anything worth having in life takes work, and health is no exception. Yet, the weight loss industry is full of marketers that promote programs and solutions that are akin to get-rich-quick schemes. Just as you are unlikely to get rich overnight, you are not likely to reach your weight loss goals by simply buying a quick-fix program, and the reason is that there is much more to it.

Before you think about starting any type of diet or exercise program, you need to make sure your foundation is solid. As with everything in life, you cannot build anything sustainable on a weak foundation, which is why many of the programs that people try do not work. They are not based on creating a solid foundation for weight loss. Without a foundation, it does not matter what you do. You will not get the long-term results you are seeking.

I credit Kelly Roach, my business coach, for helping me develop this approach using the derivative mind-set before mechanics. When she said that to me, a light bulb went off in my head. I said to myself, “Mind-set comes before mechanics, which also comes before movement.”

This led me to develop the basis for the foundation that I build with my patients. I call it the *triangle of health formula*.

Mechanics



The reason for a triangle is that all three categories are dependent on one another. You cannot work on just one corner if you want to achieve the weight loss results you seek. You need to work on all three. This is the foundation I am talking about. When you approach weight loss using this three-pronged approach, that creates a foundation for success.

A great example of this is the New Year's resolution. People often resolve to get fit in the new year, so they join a gym, work out furiously for a week or two, and expect results. The problem with this approach is that it is only one pronged, not three. In other words, there is no foundation to this approach. You can have the *movement*, but

without the corresponding *mechanics* and *mind-set*, you won't achieve the results you want. Working out furiously every day might keep you from gaining weight, but it is not going to truly fix your overall health problems since it is not going to really fix the root of the problem.

Mind-set

To be able to really "fix" anything, you need to get your mind right. Thoughts lead to feelings, feelings lead to action, and action leads to results. One of the main reasons why people are unable to reach their weight goals is because they have not managed to control their mind. If you continue to have a negative perception of yourself that you are fat, you are going to feel fat, and if you feel fat, your actions will mimic those of a fat person, and you will continue to engage in other actions that will keep you heavier than you want to be.

Maybe you are too tired to exercise, you look in the mirror, and criticize yourself, which is an example of how your "fat" mind-set can really become a barrier to reaching your goals. I have literally seen patients go through the whole process of gastric bypass surgery where they go from three hundred pounds down to half that, but then before long, they go back to their original weight and come back to me wondering how it happened. I tell them, "You forgot to fix the most important component—mind-set—and no amount of surgery can fix that."

That is why mind-set is one of the core principles that we emphasize in my clinic even before focusing on mechanics or movement. If you are going to be successful in other areas or weight loss and health, it is absolutely critical that you have the right mind-set. You need to be able to look at yourself in the mirror and feel confident about the person you are going to become. You need to be able to look in the mirror and see the reflection of yourself at a healthy weight even before you get there in real life.

I suggest to my patients that they do this by really focusing on the people around them. I tell them to hang out with the coworker who goes to the gym after work, sign up for the local running group, become a member of that inspirational Facebook group, or just do whatever you need to do to help shift your mind-set from that of a fat person to a healthy person. When your mind gets fit, your body has no choice but to follow.

When I work on mind-set with my patients, some of them assume it is something that can be quickly covered before moving on to the other components of the triangle of health, but that is not the case. Mind-set is something that needs to be worked on constantly. The most successful people in the world, whether they are business leaders, athletes, or anything else, are those who spend the most time on mind-set coaching, and there is a very good reason for that. Mind-set is always a work in progress.

Mechanics

This involves learning about your body from a medical point of view. When you eat, you need to know how your body will be affected so that you can respond accordingly. You need to know about limiting sugars, carbohydrates, and alcohol and when to be eating such things as healthy fats and proteins to change your metabolism in your favor.

I see the body as a machine, and as a weight loss doctor, I see myself as the mechanic of the body. What you put into it will affect how it operates. I am able to go under the hood so to speak, check the lab work, and see any medical conditions that may serve as obstacles to weight loss. Then I can overcome them.

The classic example of a *mechanical* obstacle that can be seen by going “under the hood” is the thyroid, which is a gland in your neck that is responsible for driving your metabolism. If your thyroid isn’t functioning properly, it does not matter how many hours you spend at the gym. You will not get the results you want until you address the mechanics of your abnormal thyroid.

Mechanics is not just about looking at the functioning of your organs. It is about looking at the big picture, which includes your environment, something that is often overlooked. I have had patients who grew up in such places as Louisiana or Texas, where the culture is very much about food and driving instead of walking. This is different from Colorado where I live, where the culture is much more about being active—e.g., hiking, skiing, and being outdoors. Dealing with the environmental barriers to weight loss is part of the mechanical approach.

Movement

Movement is also critical. If you are going to get to a healthy weight and then stay there, you need to move your body. I have come across patients who think they can lose the weight they want and keep it off without paying much attention to movement, but this is just not the case, as it is an essential component of a sustainable, long-term approach.

This idea of movement is something that many patients tend to shy away from because they have not determined how to make it work for them. I hear such phrases as “I do not like going to the gym,” but you have options to just start moving.

I find that many people just need a little coaching on how to get started, be habitual, and continue to move. Movement does not need to be something scary, but many overweight people seem to feel this way. Something as simple as going for an evening walk around the neighborhood at night can yield tremendous results not just because of the movement and calories burned but because it helps create a habit and works to debunk the idea that movement is this scary thing.

What is also great about movement is that it creates momentum. I have had patients come into my office and declare that they are incapable of any type of exercise. This is a mind-set issue as well, but I create a plan that works for them. This plan is progressive, and before they know it, they are moving in ways they never thought possible. The point is that you must not let any predetermined ideas about what is possible for you and what is not get in the way of starting to exercise. The goal is not to compete with anybody else. The goal is to just get moving in ways you have not done before, and when you do that, the results will be amazing.

To achieve long-term good health and maintain an optimal weight, it is critical to use an approach with these three points of the triangle: mind-set, mechanics, and movement. If you do not focus on all three of these points, any weight loss plan is not going to achieve its potential.

For many people, losing weight is not actually the problem. It is keeping it off. I have so many patients come to me with the classic story, “I have been losing and gaining the same forty pounds for twenty years. I just have no idea how to keep it off.”

The answer always comes down to the triangle of health. People who cannot maintain their weight loss are the ones who are neglecting one or more of the points on the triangle. For many of them, they have only been focusing on one point. For example, they say, “Well, I have been walking a mile every night, but I cannot seem to get the results I want.”

If you focus on only one or two points on the triangle, the results will come and go, but if you understand it as a three-pronged approach, then the results will come, and the results will stay.

This is what makes my clinic in Denver unique. We have a doctor, a nutrition specialist, and a fitness expert all under the same roof. We cover all three points of the triangle of health, and that is why our patients get such great results.

Chapter 3

Begin with the End in Mind

I chose the name for this chapter based on one of the chapters in Steven Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. I was actually in a leadership program in college when I was introduced to this book as part of the curriculum, and the concept of starting with the end in mind was my favorite part, it is a concept that has really shaped the approach I take in helping my patients achieve weight loss and the results they seek.

Once again the New Year's resolution example is helpful. People begin a new year by frequently going to a gym. Even though that is a goal, it does not quite have the true clarity that a goal needs to be successful in the long term because it only includes the start, not the finish.

When I start working with my patients, one of the first questions I ask is, "What is your end goal? How much weight do you need to lose?"

When having this discussion, I base it on the average of previous results from my patients. On average, we can help people lose fifty pounds in about six months, meaning that if a patient starts with me and says they need to lose fifty pounds, I will use a timeline of six months to lose that weight.

I break it down. If my patient wants to lose fifty pounds in six months, that is eight to ten pounds a month, which is two to two-and-a-half pounds a week. By breaking it down this way, I really define where the patient is going and how they will use small, achievable steps to be successful.

I do not stop here though. I take it one step further. I ask them what that fifty pounds means to them. I want them to explain *why* they want to lose that weight and *what* it will do for them.

- What will you look like?
- What size clothing will you be wearing?
- How will you feel when you are fifty pounds lighter?
- What will your friends say about you?
- What activities will you be able to do that you could not do before?

I get my patients to be specific so that they can really visualize it.

Questions like these make it more real. This is all about transformation. Fifty pounds is just a number, but being able to do something that you could not do before is a *transformation*, and that is the real reason my patients find themselves in my clinic looking for support to achieve their goals.

When you are clear and specific about what the transformation at the end will look like, the process gains a whole new level of clarity and becomes easier to work.

Here's a useful way to look at it. If you plan a vacation, you need to plan *where* you are going before you plan *how* you will get there. You do not buy your flights and book your hotel before you decide where you are going. You start with the destination and then build the process around it. If you do not know where you are going, the process of trying to book flights and a hotel will become very confusing, and you will likely just give up before you accomplish anything meaningful. You will have lost motivation and focus,

and that will cause you to just quit. You will not end up going on the vacation you have been dreaming about.

The more specific you are about your end result, the easier it becomes to create a road map to reaching that goal in achievable steps. This is a reflection of one of the biggest obstacles I get from my patients: overwhelm and motivation.

It is very hard to stay committed to an end goal when that goal seems unattainable.

Perhaps I first learned this lesson from *The Karate Kid*, one of my favorite movies.

“First learn stand, then learn fly. Nature rule, Daniel-san, not mine.” — Mr. Miyagi

This bit of wisdom from Mr. Miyagi is exactly right. His student Daniel desperately wanted to quickly become an expert at the crane kick, but Miyagi did not start there. He knew the importance of progression. He insisted that there is a specific order that must be followed, and if Daniel followed it, he would ultimately find success. Had Daniel tried to learn the crane kick at the beginning, he would have failed, but Miyagi taught Daniel progressively more difficult moves, techniques, and blocks to build up his skills and confidence, and only then did he teach the crane kick.

Losing weight and getting healthy is no different.

If you are fifty pounds overweight, you are not going to run a marathon tomorrow. Instead, you must learn to walk a mile, then two, and then ten, and once you have progressed in that order, running a marathon will seem an achievable goal.

This is why I focus so much on the *meaning* of losing weight. I think many people get caught up in the details of the struggle and that being on a diet is not a whole lot of fun, but if you actually understand the meaning behind it all—what that transformation is—then you can stay motivated. Even though it will take work and discomfort, you know *where* you are going, and you know that getting there will be worth the struggle and effort.

If we do not have a clear vision of where we are going, we can so easily give up along the way. If we can clearly visualize the greatness that we will achieve when we get what we want, however, it becomes much easier to stay motivated and focused throughout the process, whatever that process requires of us.

Chapter 4

Retrain the Brain

This gets back to the importance of mind-set. To achieve the weight loss results my patients seek, they need to reprogram their mind to think differently, which can mean different things, but mind-set work is something everybody needs to do.

The common misconception about losing weight and keeping it off is that it is a two-step process in that order.

Actually, it is a three-step process: losing the weight, keeping it off, and making it habitual.

I argue that the habit stage is the most important of the three because it is the one most people skip and, therefore, is the one that requires the most attention.

When a person begins the weight loss journey, they do what they need to do. They count calories, make time to exercise, and go out of their way to remove the negative influences in their life and replace them with positive ones. If, however, you are still counting calories, still finding the time and motivation to exercise, and still having to actively avoid your fast-food-loving friends, you have not made it habitual yet, and if it is not habitual, it is not likely to stick.

For something to be habitual, it needs to be automatic. I work with my patients to move beyond *learning* and *doing* and transition into *being*, which is the point where making healthy decisions is an automatic process.

This is the point where you do not remember the last time you had to log your food consumption. It is the point when you stop eating when you are full is just normal and not something you need to force yourself to do.

It is the point at which you naturally pack exercise clothes in your suitcase when you go on vacation as opposed to having to remind yourself to do it because you know you *really should* find the time and motivation to work out while at the beach.

It all comes down to reprogramming the brain to make healthy decisions on its own as opposed to needing to be reminded to do so. It is never easy to reprogram ourselves to do anything, so it is to be expected that the beginning of this process is challenging and will require us to overcome those moments of hesitation. With each step in the direction of habit, however, the action becomes easier, momentum is built, and before we know it, we are far closer to achieving our goals than we ever thought possible.

There is no secret to it. Healthy people do things differently than unhealthy people, so the key is to study the behaviors of healthy people and emulate those actions. It is like Hollywood actors. When they take on a role, they often live the character in their regular life so that they are able to perform at a very high level when the cameras are rolling. These actors immerse themselves in their characters from the minute they wake

up to the minute they go to sleep so that they are able to emulate that character to their fullest potential. To be healthy, the same process applies. We need to take on the role of a healthy person from the minute we wake up to the minute we go to sleep until that role becomes who we are.

In my own personal journey, I am making decisions today much differently than I was five years ago. Back then, I was just a beginner. If I had the same mind-set now as I did five years ago, I would not be growing my business because back then I did not employ the same growth and abundance mind-set.

As the well-known quote goes, “Successful people make decisions based on where they want to be, not where they are.”

I challenge my patients to always be asking themselves, “What would the healthy version of myself be doing in this situation?”

A great way to start the process of retraining the mind is by filling it with the types of messages that are aligned with the type of person you want to become. I recommend starting by doing such things as reading magazines and books that promote a healthy lifestyle, but sometimes people resist this suggestion.

It can be uncomfortable for someone who struggles with their weight to look at a fitness magazine just as it can be uncomfortable to look at your bank account balance when you know you do not have very much money, but there is another way to look at it. When they are trying to accomplish something, many successful people use aspirational motivation. If looking at a fitness magazine causes negative feelings, just flip that mind-set and force it to elicit the opposite reaction. Before you know it, those fitness models will be inspiring you instead of bringing you down.

I also recommend paying close attention to whom you spend time with. If such people are active, such as training for a 5K race, going to the mountains regularly, or enrolled in recreational sports leagues, this will go a long way to reprogram your brain into wanting to participate in similar activities. This is human nature, but the trick is keeping these people in your circle of influence. The flip side is that the opposite works as well. If we spend our time around inactive and sedentary people, we will gravitate toward those same actions.

A good example of this is a conversation I had with one of my patients. She was out at a burrito shop for lunch with her friend one day, and as they were both eating, she noticed that she had finished her large burrito in the same amount of time that her friend had eaten only half of hers. This is reflective of a different relationship to food. This small occurrence ended up being an eye-opening experience for my patient, as she became much more aware of how different people have trained their minds to have different habits regarding their lifestyle and eating patterns.

That is the underlying message of this chapter. Losing weight, keeping it off, and staying healthy is about reprogramming the mind to *be* healthy and to make *habitual* the actions that will lead to that outcome. When we start out, it takes a conscious effort to do what we need to do to lose weight, but over time, if we can turn those actions into behaviors and make them our new normal, then that is really the key to achieving the goals we are seeking.

The difference between someone who has trained their mind to be healthy and someone who has not is subtle but also profound. For my patients, this task can seem daunting at first, but before they know it, they are eating only when they are hungry. They are planning their meals in advance. They will pack exercise clothes in their workbag, not turn to food to comfort them when they are upset, and similar behaviors. We do not need to have a problematic relationship with food. It is just a matter of training ourselves to relate to food in a positive and healthy way.

Reprogramming our mind to be healthy is an essential step on what is a long-term journey. Whatever we put into our mind will completely dictate how we act with our body, and that is why I work hard to make sure my patients are programming themselves to be healthy because when they do, only good things can happen.

Chapter 5

Success in Community

This is actually one of my favorite topics because it is so important. If I could give my patients just one tip on the journey to weight loss, it would be that you need to be very careful about whom you spend your time with.

As Jim Rohn said, “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”

The opposite of that is *guilty by association*. Rohn taught me to be a lot more conscious of how I spend my time and with whom, which is the same advice I give my patients. You will mimic the actions and behaviors of those you are around, so it makes sense that you should try to be with people who will cause you to do what will result in what you want to achieve.

Not everybody has these types of people in their network, but when I hear my patients tell me that, I insist that they must build their network because this component is so important in the weight loss journey. For many people, expanding their network can be hard and uncomfortable, but I have seen how critical it is for success. Just one person can change your life, and this person does not need to be a fitness addict or a poster person for health. They just need to be a little ahead of you in the weight loss journey.

In fact, if you are just starting out, you probably do not want to choose people to get encouragement from who seem to be perfect because they might actually have the opposite effect. In many cases, the best people to be around are those who have experienced what you are experiencing and who have achieved the results you want to achieve even if they are only a few steps ahead. They are the people who are on the same path as you are and from whom you can learn and gain momentum.

Living a healthy life does not need to be a chore. It is not all about waking up two hours earlier than normal to go to the gym when you are still half asleep. Make healthy living a part of your lifestyle, and find people who want to live that lifestyle with you. That could mean going to the mountains for the weekend to go skiing, which is something I love to do since I live in Denver, or it could mean setting a goal of running a 5K race and training for it one step at a time.

Living a healthy life should be fun, and you should find people with whom you can have fun living that lifestyle. It is also not all about finding activities to do. It is also about the other small things, such as having lunch with people who would rather go out for a healthy salad than a bucket of fried chicken. The people who have the most success are the ones who find ways to make this process enjoyable.

When you surround yourself with people who are aligned with the results you want to achieve in your life, it leads to a very natural but instant chemical change in your body. You will quickly mirror the goals and values of such people. This principle does not apply just to weight loss but also to everything you want to achieve in your life, such as in the area of finances, a career, and even politics. If you want to be rich, spend your time with rich people, and they will elevate you to their level.

Once again, it all gets back to mind-set, which is the underlying theme of this book. When you change the way you see the world, the world will change to become the version of itself that you envision it to be. There is more than one side to the coin, so if you find yourself being burdened by the changes you need to make, see if there is a way you can flip that mind-set and make it fun instead of being burdensome.

Most of my patients live in what I call the guilty-by-association world. Many of them grew up in an environment where their entire family struggled with weight. Their parents were each two hundred pounds or more, and that was their norm. They have grown up with the mind-set of obesity, making it all the more difficult to change, but what you want most in life is often difficult to achieve, so that should never be a reason not to pursue what we want.

I find this is very much a regional issue in the United States. Those who live in parts of the country with fewer options for outdoor recreation—who do not have access to, e.g., parks, mountains, and lakes, become more comfortable living in an artificial environment, for example, their home, car, and being at work. In such an environment,

for example, the Midwest and the South, everybody struggles with weight, which causes the problem to spread.

I grew up in Kansas and saw it firsthand. Being overweight was common, and the desire to lose that weight was not as pervasive as it is in an active place, such as Denver, where I live now. It is natural that we mimic the behaviors of those who are around us because we are social beings. The power of cultivating an environment that is conducive to the outcomes we want to achieve is immense.

When a patient comes to my clinic and tells me that they have struggled with weight all their life, I ask them about the environment where they grew up. I hear such things as “my family is big-boned” or “I was always told to clean my plate because there were people in the world that did not have food.” This confirms what I already knew before asking the question. They had been programmed to be big based on their environment.

I have two different stories that highlight this concept.

The first is the sandbox story. When you grew up, you grew up in a sandbox, and you developed friends in that sandbox. You all liked each other, played with each other, had things in common, and your fellow sandbox friends were the people who made up your inner circle.

Then one day you realized that you wanted a change. Something made you feel that your weight was holding you back from enjoying the life you wanted to live. You wanted to live life at a higher level. You wanted to be healthier and happier, so you decided to venture out of that sandbox where you had been so comfortable and search for a solution.

This caused you to notice another sandbox down the road, and the people there seemed to be more like the type of person you wanted to be. So you start hanging out in that sandbox. You tell your old friends that you are just going to see what the other sandbox is like but that you will be back.

You start spending all your time in this new sandbox, and the children there welcome you with open arms. They are not like the children in the old sandbox. They like to bike, swim, and go on active vacations. They are successful and happy in their careers, and they enjoy everything that life has to offer. The more time you spend in this new sandbox, the more your eyes open to the possibilities of being a different and more positive version of yourself. Before you know it, you are spending all your time with these new friends because they cause you to be the person you want to be instead of your old friends who just caused you to be unhappy because they were unhappy.

What has happened is that you have changed your internal chemistry just by spending time with different people. You have reprogrammed yourself to have different

expectations about what is normal and what is possible, and upon realizing this change, you start to set new expectations for yourself—expectations that are often incompatible with your old way of life.

One day you decide to check back with your old friends just to see how they are doing. You are excited to tell them about all you have been up to. You are excited to share your secret about the other sandbox, knowing that they, too, can improve their lives by changing their environment.

You say, “Hey, everybody, you have got to check out this other sandbox because they are happy. They have a lot of energy, and they are doing great.” Then the children in the first sandbox say, “Who are you? You are not one of them. You are one of us.”

This is the story of what happens with so many of my patients. They do not necessarily struggle with failure. They struggle with success because they have been spending their time with the people from the original sandbox—people who stood in the way of their success. For people who grew up in the original sandbox, it can be uncomfortable to change their environment, but it is a critical step on the journey to a new life.

What makes it so hard is that the people in the original sandbox are those you probably love the most. They are the ones you are closest to in your life—your parents, best friends, and coworkers. They are the ones who say, “Hey, let’s go get some fast food,” “Life is too short to diet,” or “When are you going to stop starving yourself?”

I tell my patients that if you change just one thing in your life, change your environment and the people you are influenced by. Eating well is important, exercising is important, but more important is your mind-set because when your mind is right, you are in control, and when your mind is not right, you are out of control. You can shape your mind in a positive way by ensuring that the five people you spend the most time with are going to influence you in a way that will push you in the direction of the person you want to be, not the person you used to be.

As I have mentioned, you do not need to surround yourself with people who are perfect. Just surround yourself with people who are trying to achieve the same things as you are—people who will support you and motivate you to be your best self, not your old self. It is important to have a cheering section in your life—those who will support you no matter what—but it is more important to have a group of people who will call you out if you slip. Those are the people you want, and you can repay the favor by being their accountability partner as well.

If you want your support network to call you out, you need to be clear that you want them to do that. You need to give them permission in advance to keep you accountable because if you do not, there is a good chance they will choose to be polite instead of purposeful, and they will not keep you on track in the way you need them to do.

Curating the people you spend time with is necessary, but it is also hard. What I see happen regularly is that my patients will do this, and that will either strengthen the relationships they already had, or they will need to move on from them. My patients become so successful that they start to see how important a value system is in their life, which causes them to see more clearly how others in their life are living. This can be hard because it can result in uncomfortable realizations, such as seeing people in their life who they thought they were compatible with actually are not.

I have seen situations where, for example, a spouse is threatened by their partner's success, and they try to sabotage it. I believe this happens because one person's success can often become a reflection of someone else's failures. I tell my patients that if the relationship was meant to be, the people will grow alongside one another, and if it was not, they will grow out of it.

On the other hand, I have seen situations where one person's success will motivate other people in amazing ways. Maybe one partner takes the leap and endeavors to get healthy, and then their spouse follows suit, and all of a sudden they are both on this incredible journey and transformation and accomplishing goals they had never thought possible.

I believe that success in reaching your goals whether it be in weight loss or anything else comes down to a number. The more positive people you surround yourself with, the more successful you will be. That is why cultivating a community is so important because many of us need an external force of motivation. We need external accountability. Let us use the example of my spinning class. If my instructor knows I attend class every Friday but for some reason I decide not to show up, she is going to notice that I am not there, which, in effect, makes her my external force of accountability because I do not want to let her down since she is *relying* on me to be there.

The same effect works in my business. I have a business coach, and she expects to hear from me every week. This keeps me accountable because I need to show her progress every time I connect with her. She is *relying* on me to do so. She sees the progress I am making and pushes me to also elevate myself out of complacency and toward the next level of achievement.

When we depend only on ourselves for motivation, we can easily let ourselves off the hook, and then we will not reach our goals, but when we add an external person, someone outside of you who is *relying* on you to do what you say you are going to do, it changes the equation. It is a lot more comfortable to let ourselves down than it is to let someone else down.

This is one of many reasons why my clinic is so successful for my patients. My team and I serve as external sources of accountability for our them, so our patients do not want to let us down when they come in for their appointments. It is this built-in support and accountability that allows my patients to regularly lose from fifty to a hundred pounds using my program.

I have created an environment and community that fosters success. I have even hired people to be on my team who are not necessarily the fittest people in the world—many of them have struggled with weight issues in their own way—but that makes them relatable and effective. Many of the people on my team actually did my program, achieved great results, and wanted to be part of the community, so they decided to join the team to not only help others achieve the same results but also so that they could maintain their own results by staying part of the community.

I live by and run my clinic by the same philosophy I promote. My office is an environment that is very conducive to weight loss success. We talk about health, we eat well, and we all stay active together. It would be hard for anybody who was part of our community to not achieve healthy results.

If you want to lose weight and keep it off, you need to build a community of like-minded and positive people in your life. If you do that, success in whatever you want to accomplish will be a natural outcome.

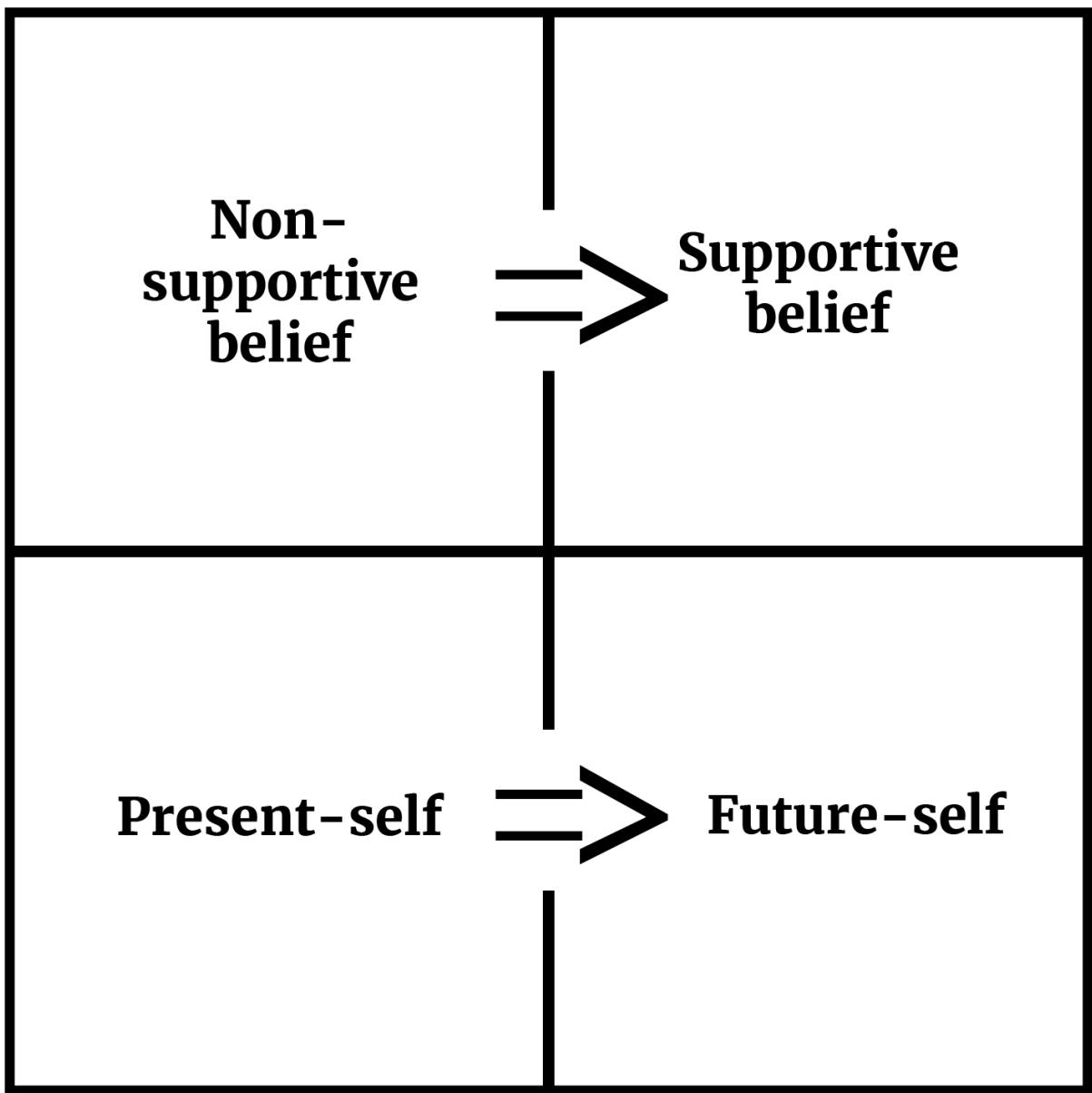
Chapter 6

Your Belief System

Everything we do in our lives is shaped by the stories we are consciously or subconsciously telling ourselves about the world we live in. Some stories make a lot of sense. If we were burned by a hot stove before, we developed the story that hot stoves are to be avoided, but many of the stories are much less rooted in reality, and so we need to revisit them and often change them. These stories are our beliefs.

I spend a lot of time with my patients creating a belief system within them that is conducive to getting the weight loss results they are seeking because, as I have already said, thoughts lead to feelings, which lead to actions, which lead to results.

I think about belief in terms of four quadrants.



The top of the quadrant is about shifting your belief system from nonsupportive to supportive beliefs. Let us say, for example, that you tell yourself that since you have always been fat you will always be fat. This is nothing more than a story. It is a thought you have told yourself for years and years, which has led you to feel that *you are* a fat person. When you allow yourself you just believe that *you are* fat, your actions will follow, which results in *allowing* yourself to just sit on the couch for hours at a time instead of being active because it is more comfortable. You justify it by telling yourself that *you are* fat, and fat people are *supposed* to sit on the couch. The result is that you are fat, and you stay fat.

The trick is to identify these nonsupportive beliefs and shift them to supportive beliefs. Using that same example, we can shift the belief from “I am fat” to “I am capable of losing weight. I can be healthy.”

I have my patients go through an exercise where they write down all the nonsupportive beliefs they hold about themselves. This is easy for many people because they have actually spent a lot of time in front of the mirror repeating these beliefs to themselves either out loud or in their mind.

Examples of these types of beliefs can be “I hate my love handles,” “I am big-boned,” “I stink at dieting,” or “I am not good enough.”

Nonsupportive beliefs are those stories that have been repeated so often that they just become normal. If you are reading this, I challenge you to really examine your beliefs that have come to be so normal but are actually nonsupportive. These beliefs need to be reconstructed into supportive beliefs.

I have a personal story that highlights the impact of negative beliefs and the importance of reconstructing those beliefs.

When I was in first grade, I was being considered for the gifted class. I went to school with my mother to apply for it. When we went in, the teacher grabbed me by the hand, sat me at a desk, and gave me a blank piece of paper, some crayons, and colored pencils. She said she was just going to talk to my mother for a bit, and that I should just draw something. I did not realize that the task of drawing something was actually my test, so I just drew two eyes and a smile a bunch of times on the sheet.

She gave me a bit of time to complete it and then came over and took the sheet from me and went to the back of the room where my mother was. I guess I was not creative enough with my drawing, which led the teacher to decide I was not smart enough for the gifted program.

I overheard the teacher tell my mother that I was “not smart enough” and would not be able to keep up with the other students in the gifted program.

My mom did not know I overheard these comments, and from that moment on and for a long time afterward, I had to live with the nonsupportive belief that I was not smart. I told myself that I was not smart, and then I existed within that narrative.

From a very young age, everybody knew I wanted to be a doctor, and I would always get straight A's. All the other children would tell me that I was so smart, but I would reply that I wasn't. In fact, I was the opposite and had to compensate by working twice as hard as everyone else just to get the same results.

For the longest time, I told myself and others that I was not smart, and I would have to work extra hard just to keep up. I labelled myself as a hard worker but not someone who was smart even though I got perfect marks in high school and was the valedictorian in college. Even in medical school, I just told myself that I was an average, hardworking person surrounded by people who were all so much smarter than I was.

One comment from my teacher when I was seven years old led to nearly two decades of my having a negative, nonsupportive belief about myself that hindered me in so many ways. I wonder what more I would have been able to accomplish if I had not been obstructed by those negative thoughts about myself for so long.

It was not until adulthood when I started investing in my own personal development that I learned how to shed that story of myself and reconstruct those nonsupportive beliefs into supportive beliefs. I just changed the internal dialogue from “you are not smart” to “you are smart, and you can do anything you set your mind to.”

This belief system reset did not happen right away. I had to tell myself over and over that I was not the person I had been telling myself I was for so long. That change in my belief system empowered me to start my own business and be the person I am today.

Changing our belief system is a process, not an event, and there is really no end to it. I continue to work hard to ensure that my belief system is optimized so that I am in the best position I can be to push myself to the next level and reach my goals. There is always a next level that is possible, and regardless of where we are in the moment, there is a belief system standing in the way of us getting there. When we get good and take control of our beliefs, anything is possible.

When we accept a negative thought about who we are, we believe it to be true at the time, but then we archive it in our brain and keep accessing those thoughts time and time again in the future. Those thoughts lead to feelings, which then lead to actions. It is not until we actively and purposely delete those thoughts that we are able to reshape our belief system about who we are and become the best version of our self.

This leads to the bottom two quadrants, which are present self and future self.

You want to think about yourself in terms of the person you want to be, not in terms of the person you are trying to grow out of. If you want to have a healthy weight, start to adopt the thinking patterns of a person who is already there.

“What would the healthy version of myself do in this situation?”

“Would I order the salad or the cheeseburger?”

“Would I pack my workout clothes in my bag before leaving the house in the morning?”

"Would I spend time with my active friends or my inactive friends?"

To become the best version of your future self, you need to make decisions based on where you want to be, not on where you are. I ask my patients, "How different are you to the very cell of your body fifty pounds lighter compared with the current you?"

Once again this is all about reconstructing your belief system that has previously been tainted by your environment and the paradigm you existed in. It is time to clean up that database and create a new one to start operating on so that it is in alignment with where you want to be.

Chapter 7

Why People Yo-yo Diet and How to Avoid Getting Caught in the Trap

We live in a society that is fueled by instant gratification. People want and need immediate results. They have this need to feel good right away. Just as with most things in life, though, good results cannot be had overnight. They require long-term vision and execution.

People yo-yo diet because they are doing so in a reactive state. They will hear about the latest fad diet, such as a new juicing diet, and they will just immerse themselves in it on a short-term basis. They will drink nothing but juice for a week and maybe even lose a few pounds in the process but soon realize that they don't want to live this way and then return to doing what they were doing before, and nothing will change.

The following week they will try something else new they have heard about, such as intermittent fasting, and go three days without eating. The same thing will then happen. They might lose a few pounds, but it will not take much to throw them off course, and before long, they will be off that new diet and back to the way it was before.

Actions like these are the product of a reactive mind-set. To get past this vicious cycle of yo-yo dieting, it is necessary to go back to your inner *why*. What is the underlying reason why you want to accomplish certain results? Your *why* needs to be the foundation for your actions as opposed to reacting to this or that.

What happens is that people know what they need to do because they have gone through such programs as Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig. They know they need to count calories and exercise more, and some people do actually get to the point where they know what to do and actually lose that ten pounds, or they are really dedicated and might lose fifteen pounds. Those who are really successful in the long term, though, have a deeper understanding of their core reason for doing what they want to do.

I can tell who will be successful in my program in the first ten minutes of our conversation.

I ask them, “Why are you here?”

Those who give me a deep meaning, such as, “I need to be there for my kids,” “I want to be alive when my kids graduate,” or “I do not want to end up having kidney failure and be on dialysis for years like my mom,” are those I know have a strong *why* and will be successful because they really want it, and there is a strong reason underlying that desire.

These reasons are much stronger than, “My high school reunion is coming up, and I want to look good for it,” or “I am getting married in six months and need to fit into a smaller dress.”

Short-term reasons can be good short-term motivators, but they are not going to result in sustained action and results.

It is the same with my business. My patients ask me how I became a weight loss doctor, and it goes back to my *why*. I was a lost soul who realized that I no longer wanted to be an internal medicine doctor. Even after all those years of training, I still felt that I was a failure. It reached the point where I hated what I was doing since I was just writing prescriptions and dealing with the symptoms of people’s problems, not their root causes. I got into weight loss because in my previous role as a doctor I was not helping people, and I was not living the best version of myself. That is my *why*, and that is why I have been successful.

The essence of my *why* is helping people transform their lives. Knowing that my work has made an impact in someone’s life, that they can spend more quality time with their family, live longer, and be happier is what gets me out of bed with a smile in the morning and motivates me to get better and be able to serve more people in what I do. I have a strong *why*, which is why I have been successful in my practice. The same applies to my patients and their goal of losing weight and becoming healthier versions of themselves.

I helped my very first patient lose one hundred pounds in ten months, which was a special accomplishment for both of us. What I realized through helping her and since realized as I have helped all my patients is that I am not only helping them transform their lives but also transforming my own life. With every person I help, I become more aligned with the person and doctor I was meant to be. When I was practicing before, I was not happy because I was not living as my authentic self and doing what I was meant to be doing. Now that I have identified my strong *why*, I am doing the work I was meant to do. I have become more aligned with my true self with every person I help transform. It is definitely a mutually beneficial relationship.

I am really an advocate for all those who feel trapped or stuck because I understand. I have been there. I tell my patients they are doing an injustice to the world by not being the best version of who they were meant to be. I see excess fat as a wall that keeps people from truly sharing their gifts and talents with the world. For this reason, I like to dig deep with each patient. I want to know what their best self looks like. I want to know their real *why*, and then I work with them to put a plan into place to make it a reality.

If someone comes into my office and weighs three hundred pounds, I feel I have this special ability to see them at a healthy weight. I know where I want to take them, which is why I am so successful at transforming lives. Just like my example of booking a trip, you need to know where you are going before determining how to get there. I am able to align my inner *why* with their inner *why*, and in doing so, I am able to free people from their place of being stuck. I empower them to access their true reason for wanting to achieve the transformation in their life they want to achieve.

The answer then to the yo-yo diet is to peel back the layers of a person to get beyond the superficial and short-term motivations and reveal their true *why*. When you do that, anything is possible.

Chapter 8

Why Diets Fail

The main reason why diets fail is that people are attempting to diet without having all the tools they need for success. The concept of dieting is not broken, but many people are not dieting in the right way and not getting the results they expect.

The body is a machine, and like any machine, you need to know the full picture of what is going on to be able to get the best performance. If all you had was a hammer, you would not be able to properly fix a car engine because you would not have the tools you needed.

Many people try dieting before first identifying any metabolic barriers that might be in place that will influence how effective a diet will be; in other words, they try to fix the problem without having the proper tools to work with.

As previously mentioned, I am a doctor and have a deeper understanding of how the body works, almost as if it were a machine, than other people. I see myself as the mechanic of the body and am able to see the full picture of what is going on in the body. In many cases, this allows me to see why a certain diet is not working for a certain person. I can see what tools are missing.

When people decide they want to take an active approach to losing weight and transforming their life, I recommend they start with certain metabolic lab workups because someone can be perfect with their diet and exercise, but if they have a certain medical condition, it needs to be properly identified and treated. Otherwise, it can be a severe obstacle to that person achieving the results they want.

One of the most important systems that needs to be checked is the thyroid. This gland in your neck is important for controlling your metabolism. If it is not functioning as it should, your weight loss journey will become more complicated. This is a very common issue. Patients will tell me that they cannot seem to lose weight, and after performing tests on their thyroid, we may find that it is functioning with some abnormality. There are ways to treat an abnormal thyroid but only if the problem is first identified.

Many of my patients and people in general make the mistake of blaming their weight troubles on stress or lack of sleep. This may be the case, but often these people have not undergone the proper metabolic tests and therefore do not know what is truly going on in their body. For many people, there is more to the story than just stress or lack of sleep. Some simple bloodwork will give a lot of insight into those problems.

Besides the thyroid, another system that often prevents people from getting the results they want is blood sugar. This is especially true for people who have a history of blood sugar issues, such as diabetes. There is also a special condition called polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) that causes insulin resistance, which is a very similar metabolic condition to diabetes. If you have a condition that is standing in the way of progress, the best tool you can have to overcome that condition is being aware of it.

It is very common for women to gain a lot of weight in a short period of time. They do not try to deal with the problem until they have gained an extra fifty pounds or so, and then they go to the doctor to try to determine what is going on with their body. They then realize they have been living with a certain condition that has caused it. They are able to deal with the problem more effectively when they know what is going on, but if they had been tested earlier, they would not need to live with those extra fifty pounds. I recommend that all people stay current on their blood sugar levels because it is such an important system in our body.

If you have too much blood sugar in your body, it is not processed or turned into energy, and the hormone known as insulin takes that sugar and stores it in fat cells instead in the form of a fat known as triglycerides. It ends up in your liver, and patients can actually develop a pretty serious medical condition called nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, which means the liver is taking on so much fat that it is no longer able to function properly. This is very similar to the type of liver dysfunction that comes from too much alcohol consumption. Liver failure is a very serious condition that can be life threatening.

Liver dysfunction can be the silent killer because it is something that does not always come with noticeable symptoms, so someone can seldom detect it on their own. It really must be identified by a doctor using proper tests. An overweight person is at a much higher risk of this type of illness, so it is highly advised to have these tests done regularly.

After the thyroid and blood sugar, it is necessary to consider hormones. Many of my female patients will tell me that their “hormones are off,” and there may be some truth to that, especially as they go through different stages of life, such as after menopause, when a hormonal imbalance occurs. This can cause a woman to be more susceptible to increased fat storage. In my practice, I do not generally promote hormone replacement therapy in the traditional sense, but I do promote a nutritional approach to hormone therapy where a woman can get those hormones functioning better based on the food they eat.

Hormones can be much more easily managed when a person has a healthy weight. The most important hormone we look at is the thyroid, but we also look at the cortisol hormone, which is the stress hormone. We look, too, at estrogen, which for many females is the hormone they struggle with, and, finally, we pay close attention to insulin, which is the hormone that causes people to be overweight.

One of the real problems in this country and around the world is that we are obsessed with sugar. It is in everything we eat, and it is very hard to avoid. Sugar is probably the most addictive drug in the country, and unlike other harmful drugs, sugar can be obtained anywhere and everywhere. There is no age restriction on it, and it comes in so many different (and delicious) forms. It also sneaks into foods, such as fruits, that we just assume are completely healthy because they are natural.

Natural foods are generally healthy, but many of them, such as apples, oranges, and honey, all contain fructose, which needs to be consumed in moderation. Many companies take advantage of this and claim their foods, such as protein and energy foods, are “all natural” and therefore are assumed to be healthy, but they are loaded with fructose. That is why it is important to look beyond the marketing and instead look at the nutritional information label to be able to uncover sugar in its various forms.

One of the causes of this so-called sugar epidemic is that we are often tired and in search of quick sources of energy. Sugar does provide us with short-term energy, which is why we gravitate toward it. We also get sugar from carbohydrates. When we eat carbohydrates, they are broken down into sugar, and then insulin goes into the bloodstream. Insulin sends the sugar to the various cells in the muscle tissue around the body so that it can be used as energy. This is the energy that allows you to keep going throughout your day.

What happens, though, if we eat a high level of carbohydrates is that too much sugar is generated, and there is no more space for it in the muscle tissue, so it is sent to the liver. The liver receives this excess sugar and does not know what to do with it, so it turns it into fat and stores it.

If you are overweight, you actually have an increased tendency to create more excess sugar in your body. If you are sedentary, perhaps you work eight hours a day, commute two hours a day in your car, and then spend the evenings watching television, you are not burning very much sugar at all, and it just ends up being stored as fat.

At my clinic, I work with my patients to help them identify alternative and better sources of energy other than sugar and carbohydrates. Proteins and fats are more sustainable sources of energy that we should be using more of when we need a boost. It is like the difference between a sprinter and a marathoner. The sugar will give you a short burst of energy followed by a crash, whereas the protein and fat will give you more sustained energy that does not result in a crash.

To get the energy you need to get through your day, you should be relying on healthier options instead of sugar and carbohydrates.

Relying on fat as an energy source is the most sustainable of the three (fat, protein, carbohydrates/sugars) because it does the most to help you feel full and satisfied throughout the day. It gives you that long-lasting energy. Fat also breaks down into a chemical called ketones, which is an alternative source of fuel compared with sugar. This chemical state is called nutritional ketosis and is what I call the “holy grail of weight loss” because it means we have trained the body to search for fat as its main source of fuel, so it creates ketones as its main source of energy.

This is not something we practice in our office, but you can purchase ketone urine strips at many pharmacies or online. They allow you to easily test your urine to see if you are producing ketones, which effectively is validation that your body is breaking down fat as its primary source of fuel.

All the medical information I have presented so far in this chapter gets back to the reason why diets typically fail. They are not rooted in a proper understanding of what is going on in the body. This highlights the importance of really knowing what you are doing before attempting to lose weight because many factors that affect weight go beyond simply eating and exercising. That is why it is very useful to have a medical doctor as part of your strategy for losing weight.

People need to know what they need to do or need to check before they begin their weight loss program. They also need to calculate their capacity to lose weight.

A common phrase is “no one diet fits all,” which simply means that no one body type fits every diet. For example, a tall male is going to have a different metabolic rate or ability to burn calories than a short woman. A man generally has more muscle structure, so their hormones are going to be different because of testosterone levels. There is also the matter of genetic disposition, as that, too, will affect a person’s metabolic rate.

People need to know their basal metabolic rate. The general formula for determining this figure can be easily found on the Internet, but this will not be as accurate as that measured by a doctor. You need to know how many calories you burn a day just by living your normal life. Once you understand this, you can know how many calories you need to eat (or not eat) to be able to lose your desired weight.

For example, the average basal metabolic rate for a woman is fourteen hundred calories per day. The general assumption is that if you want to lose one pound a week, you need to have a five hundred calorie per day deficit. If this average woman consumed nine hundred calories per day, she would lose one pound a week. This is just a base example, as the calculation changes with exercise and other lifestyle decisions.

Another major reason diets do not work is that people do not know their capacity to burn calories. Even though they may think they are “cutting calories,” they still are not doing it in a way that is giving them the deficiency they require to get the results they want.

Most people are not actually aware of how much they eat. Very few come into my office really knowing what they eat each day. Without an accurate picture of how many calories you are consuming, it will be impossible to devise an effective plan to lose weight.

For these reasons, it is safe to say that the main reason why diets fail is because people do not examine their metabolic condition from a medical perspective. They also do not know their capacity to burn calories.

Stress and anxiety also contribute to unhealthy eating. If people have a bad day or if they are very busy, they will often forego healthy nutritional choices and replace them with less healthy decisions. For example, a person may be rushed and replace a healthy breakfast with fast food. Or they had a stressful or anxiety-filled day and decided to eat comfort food rather than something healthy. Whatever the situation, it is common for emotional eating to get in the way of healthy eating, and we often don’t even realize it.

When you eat, it is essential to be present and focus on what you are doing. It is not as common as it used to be for people to stop what they are doing and just eat. Now we often eat while doing other things, such as driving, watching television, or working. If you are not really focused while you are eating, you are not in a good position to be aware of what you are consuming, and you are not able to appreciate the importance of

eating and how it affects our health. If we deny ourselves the opportunity to appreciate food for what it is, we do not respect it in the way we ought to and the way we need to if we are going to have a positive relationship with it. When we are distracted, it is very easy to sneak in a few hundred extra calories often without even realizing what we are doing.

Diets also fail because people want a quick-fix solution instead of a long-term, more sustainable one. They do not realize that the diet they chose to follow because they saw someone else doing it is not well suited for them (or the other person). It is not a solution that will result in long-term results. It is the shiny object syndrome, but this does not usually work the way we want. Dieting is not a quick fix. It is a process based in medical science and expertise, not something that can be approached using fad-based tactics.

Concerning dieting, people have it wrong because they think of it in terms of deprivation. People frame the concept of dieting in terms of “I cannot” or “I shouldn’t,” and that is why I teach people to reframe that by saying, “I choose.” Deprivation is not a sustainable approach and often results in people giving up, but when you give yourself the opportunity to decide, the results are much more positive. There is a difference between saying, “I am going to cut out sugar” and “I am going to actively make better choices.”

It no longer becomes an issue of “I cannot.” Instead, it becomes “I choose.”

Some patients ask if they can drink alcohol when they are working with my program, and I tell them that they are in control. I do not want to dictate to people what they can and cannot do. I want to teach them how to take control of their weight and their health so that they are empowered to make the best contextual decisions possible. If my patient wants to drink alcohol, they can. They just need to take accountability for it and understand that it will affect their desired results.

When people are told what to do, they are less likely to be successful, but when they are given choices, they are much more likely to reach their goals. If a plan is rigid and people deviate from what they are supposed to do, it can be seen as a failure, and then people give themselves an excuse to quit. If some level of flexibility is built into it, however, failure becomes less tangible, and people are more likely to veer back on course as opposed to simply giving up.

Remember the metaphor of tools. As a weight loss doctor, my job is to work with my patients to give them the tools they need to achieve the results they seek. When many of my patients start with me, they do not seem to know why what they have been doing has not been working for them, which may be dieting or something else. As we go through the ins and outs of what they have been doing, however, it becomes clear that they just did not have the right tools. It is not about me fixing the machine. It is about

me equipping my patients with the right tools so that they are empowered to make the changes themselves. When my patients learn what they need to do and change to be able to take control of their own health and well-being, the results can be amazing and lifelong.

Chapter 9

Emotional Eating

I teach my patients that if they can eat just to satisfy their hunger they will be able to manage their weight, but if they do it for emotional reasons, it will be much more challenging.

For many people, eating is about more than satisfying hunger. It is used as a means to fill a void. This is human nature. We all lean on varying degrees of substances and behaviors to find comfort, and for many of my patients, they use food as a way to make themselves feel better. In a sense, they are using food just like a drug as a means to change the way they feel. What happens when we treat food like a drug is that it basically suppresses or puts a temporary fix on an emotion that we just do not want to deal with, and when we repeatedly do that, we make it a habit, and habits can be hard to break.

Because there is a lack of awareness with the issue of emotional eating, it is easy to do it without realizing you are doing it. I have patients who will say, "I eat healthy. I eat a light breakfast, a salad at lunch, and maybe some fish at dinner," but they do not seem to be aware of what else they eat, such as the nightly dessert with their spouse or the midafternoon sugar infusion besides the calorie-rich coffee drinks they order several times a week and the unhealthy meal they have with their coworkers once a week. Emotional eating can be easy to overlook and easy to compound.

When we think of food in terms of a relationship, it can be easier to think about. Food is really something we interact with on a daily basis, and we can change the way we undertake this interaction.

I love the analogy of the ex-boyfriend. You broke up, but for whatever reason, much like food, you allow that relationship to creep back in. Your ex might send you a text that says, "Hi," just enough to open that door a little bit, and before you know it, you are engaging in behaviors that you know are not in your best interest. Just as with a relationship, it is the emotional aspect of it that causes you to do things that you know you should not but you do anyway. It is a cycle, but you always come to the same conclusion. It is all or nothing. There is no middle ground.

One of the lessons I teach in my clinic is that food is not the enemy. People will say, "I love food so much," and I tell them that it is OK to love food. Loving food is not a

weakness. Food is essential, but being obsessed over food is something I work with my patients.

I once had a patient from the culinary world. She said to me, "There is no way that I am going to be able to be on a diet. I just love food too much."

I told her that she did not need to see it in that way. It is all right to love food, but you do not need to obsess over it. It is all about redefining how we relate to food. I teach people to enjoy their food, which gets back to the idea of being present. When you are eating, do not be on your smartphone, watch television, or work. Be present and enjoy what you eat when you eat it, and that will help you to improve your relationship with it. When you are present, you will be able to better connect with your body and know when it is telling you that you are full.

Once again, we can use the parallel of a relationship between two people. Arguably, the most successful relationships are the ones where the two people have learned a healthy way to relate to one another. If one person is obsessed with the other and does not give them the space they need to flourish, it is likely that bad things will happen in the context of that relationship. In any relationship, whether it is between two people or a person and food, there is a middle ground, or comfort zone, and the goal is to find it and focus on staying there. It is then that the best results will develop.

I also want people to be aware of *why* they are eating. Is it for physical hunger or some other emotional reason? When you find yourself eating, look at the clock. If it is 3:00 p.m. and you are eating, is it because you are hungry or bored? Do you really need to break up your afternoon with some food? Maybe all you need is a conversation or a walk. Late at night is common too. If it is almost time for bed and you find yourself eating, ask yourself whether it is because you are actually hungry or if there is an emotional component to it?

When we are aware of why we are eating, we are able to create alternatives to it. Thinking about the *why* can be an odd thing to do because up to this point it has just been an automatic action—something we do without thought.

As humans, we are capable of engaging in actions we are aware of and those that are just automatic. Try to remember that long commute you had while in your car. You probably cannot remember the specifics because your body and your mind were on autopilot. You just engaged in the actions without really being present in the moment. This is a state we often allow ourselves to fall into when we are taking part in actions that are ordinary and repetitive. This is something we also do when we are eating, but if we can be more present when we eat, we can exert a much higher level of control and manifest much different results.

I explain it to my patients in terms of the comfort zone and panic zone. Emotional eating happens in the panic zone.

Think back to when you were a child. Maybe a classmate hit you, and you got in trouble for it, so you go home upset. You go home in a state of panic because you are not in control of your emotions. Your mom feels bad for you, so she says, "Sweetie, I am going to take you out for ice cream to make you feel better." You love ice cream, and in this situation it gives you the control you seek to have again, and you start to feel better. What has happened, though, is that you have created a new pathway to get back into your comfort zone. Then a week later, you get a bad grade on a test, and your mom says, "Sweetie, I will make you your favorite meal."

Many of us from when we were young have learned to use food to get us from a state of panic back to our comfort zone, and it is a habit that stays with us throughout adulthood. This is a reality of human nature. We like to be in control. We want things to happen according to our plans.

Panic is what happens when we are not in our comfort zone. For some, panic can be severe, from our heart racing to sweating. For others, it can be much calmer, but the common denominator is that we feel out of control. It is human nature to want to regain control when we are in this situation. When this happens, many of us revert to the pathways that have been ingrained in us since we were young. We regain control by emotional eating. Food gives us comfort, and it can serve as pathway out of panic.

I teach two strategies to cope with panic in a way that does not involve emotional eating.

The first strategy is what I call the "multiple exit" strategy. The key to this strategy is to remember that there are many ways to get out of a panic zone and back into a state of control. When I work with my patients, I ask them to list three to five other ways that they can use to get back into a state of control. They are often simple, such as just taking ten minutes to breathe and drink a glass of water. Another exit would be to go for a walk or call a friend and talk it out. The point is that we can exit a state of panic in many ways and get back into the control zone that do not require us to turn to emotional eating.

The most important rule for this strategy is that the "exit" needs to be immediate. It needs to be something you can do right away. For example, going to the gym would not be a good exit because it is not something that can be done right away. It requires packing a bag, and getting there. Something such as drinking water, going for a walk, or calling a friend you can do immediately and is something that will help you immediately exit from that state of panic. I also think that such strategies as going to the gym are effective for changing our state, but they do not solve that problem in the moment. If we cannot solve that problem in the moment, when we are very prone to making

emotional decisions, we are at a much higher risk of making decisions in that same moment that are not aligned with our overall objectives.

I have my patients come up with a list of exit strategies because this approach is more effective when a person has many different ways to get out of the panic zone. They teach themselves to cycle through the various ways. Some days you will grab some water, other days you will go for a walk, and other days you will call a friend. The more "exits" we have to lean on, the better equipped we will be to avoid the emotional eating that we sometimes struggle with.

The second strategy is to grow your comfort zone. Some people live in such a small comfort zone that the smallest things are likely to disturb them. Maybe the smallest bit of road rage or running a little bit late. This often requires identifying what is likely to bother you and then taking preventative measures to avoid those triggers.

For example, my husband has a 40-minute commute on one of the worst highways for traffic in the state, and he is a doctor, so he cannot show up late. Instead of leaving forty minutes before work and putting himself in a position where a small problem could throw him into a state of panic, he goes to work an hour and a half early. He knows that whatever happens, he has built in a buffer and will get to work on time, so he is able to stay in his comfort zone, even if something unexpected comes his way.

This idea of time management is something I work on with many of my patients who have a lot of demands on their time. I get them to identify the highest and best use of their time. I have them divide their answers into three columns: A, B, and C. Column A is a top priority. Those are the things that absolutely need to get done. Then column B is lower priority, things that are secondary, and then C column is for those things that can wait.

I find that many of my patients spend far too much time in column C, which is why they find themselves in a state of panic for much of their day. You do not need to spend all day worrying about unimportant emails. You do not need to stress about picking up the dry cleaning on time, and you do not need to go to events that you do not want to be at just because someone invited you. If you spend less time worrying about the unimportant details in life, you will spend more time in your comfort zone and less time in the panic zone.

Part of this is knowing when to outsource so that you can maintain the best use of your time. For example, I do not clean my house. I have a cleaner do that. This gives me an extra few hours on the weekend to enjoy time with my family, and it means I do not need to stress about an artificially large to-do list when I am not at my clinic helping my patients. Creating time puts me in control, increases my comfort zone, and allows me more of an opportunity to avoid panic.

This is the 80/20 rule, or Pareto's Law, which states that in most circumstances 80 percent of the effects come from 20 percent of the causes. Many of my patients are spending much of their time worrying about the causes that are not positively contributing to their life. When we can start to better identify what in our life is yielding what results, we can adapt our behavior to regain levels of control that we never thought possible. When we are more in control, the likelihood of engaging in emotional eating is significantly lessened.

Ultimately, the best way to avoid the perils of emotional eating is to stay in control of our emotions so that we do not need to rely on external influences to regain that sense of emotional control. As I have outlined in this chapter, there are a variety of ways to maintain that control, and different strategies will work for different people. The key is understanding the concept of being in control and being out of control and how those varying levels of control affect our overall behavior and actions.

Being in control does not mean eliminating stress and anxiety altogether because those things will always be there, and stress can be healthy. Healthy levels of stress can help us be ambitious, good parents, and accomplish our goals, but staying in control of that stress and anxiety is what matters. When you are in control, you are in charge, and that is where we want to be.

Just like anything else we do, getting good at avoiding emotional eating and staying in our comfort zone is something that requires practice and commitment so that it becomes habitual. When we create a strategy for leaving the panic zone and spending more time in the comfort zone, amazing things will happen with regard to avoiding emotional eating and reaching our weight loss goals.

Chapter 10

Fat Girl Funeral

I am very fond of the idea of a “fat girl funeral,” but I do not want it to be misinterpreted in a bad way. I intend it to be a direct and tough love statement of truth. I am not implying that fat girls should want a funeral in the traditional sense. It is that I want women to say goodbye to or “bury” their inner fat girl and use that so-called funeral as a way to begin their new healthy life.

While most of my patients are women, I am speaking to men too. For all you men out there, just replace the word and it will work for you too.

This idea of killing our inner fat person is much like the idea of reprogramming our mind, but that chapter was about how you do it, and this chapter is about applying it—what it looks like in action. Of all the chapters, this is the one about losing the weight and keeping it off for good.

We are driven by an inner voice that wants us to be safe at all times, which in many ways is a good thing. The desire to be safe is something that is innate and has been programmed into our genes for thousands of years, but this same mechanism that wants to keep us safe also dissuades us from changing our behavior and veering away from what is known and comfortable.

This idea plays out with weight loss. I have patients who have struggled with their weight all their lives. They actually come into my office and say, "Dr. Tran, I do not know what it feels like to be thin. I am coming in here to lose weight because I know I need to be healthy, but I do not even know what that looks like or how it feels. My entire family is overweight. I grew up in a town where it was a meat and potatoes, food-centric culture. Where do I even start?"

This is the classic scenario that I see in one form or another all the time. So many people grow up in this environment with this type of mentality. They come to believe that they *are* fat, and this prevents them from seeing themselves in any other way. As I have said, if you cannot see yourself in a different way, you will never do the actions required to get you there.

I have had patients who have gone to the extreme of getting gastric bypass surgery, which is the most invasive procedure that a person can have to deal with weight issues. They will undergo the process and then for the next six to twelve months, they will lose weight. I have had patients who have lost a hundred pounds this way, which is great, but I have had others who a few months after the surgery will gain all the weight back, and sometimes even more. They come into my office bewildered. They ask, "How did this happen to me again? How did I go from three hundred pounds to one hundred fifty pounds back to three hundred pounds? I mean, I had the surgery!"

I tell them that the problem is that they never had a fat girl funeral. They may have had a doctor do surgery on them to remove the physical fat, but they did not have anybody go into their mind and remove the inner fat person. The fat person remained, even when the physical body was lighter. Slowly but surely, this inner fat person guided the body back to where it thought it was meant to be, and that is why I insist it is critical that a three-pronged approach to weight loss be used. It is not just about the fat itself. It is about the person and what that person thinks about when they see their reflection in the mirror.

Even though that person managed to get down to one hundred fifty pounds, they never saw themselves as a 150-pound person. They still looked in the mirror and saw a 300-pound person staring back at them. Even though they no longer had the fat, they kept making fun of themselves in their mind for being fat.

Or maybe they took it seriously when their (overweight) friends or family would persuade them to choose a different course of action. "Hey, stop dieting and come get some nachos with us."

If you do not have a funeral for the person you used to be, you will continue to act like that person. Rather than changing your habits, you will just fall back into your old habits. I see all the time that my patients struggle with being at a healthy weight because they no longer fit in with their overweight family and friends. Believe it or not, for many people, there is a certain comfort level in being overweight because you do not stand out, especially when your close circle also struggles with weight issues.

When you are one hundred fifty pounds in a family that is overweight, everybody is going to poke at you because you stand out. "Just have the cake. You should enjoy." "Stop starving yourself." "Girl, you are just big-boned. Embrace it."

The fat girl voice inside you keeps telling you to be safe, to be comfortable, so you fall prey to what others are saying because it is more comfortable to just fit in instead of being different. This is a classic example of what I spoke of before. People in this situation have learned how to *do* healthy but not how to *be* healthy.

It is very common for people to actually be fearful of success more so than failure. People will have some short-term success; for example, they will lose the fifty pounds they wanted to, but then they will start getting the negative messages. "When are you going to stop dieting? You look sick!" Those messages will penetrate their mind because they have not yet created a defense against attacks.

Because people are inherently scared of success, they start to actually listen to these messages. What comes with success are expectations. If you start to succeed in what it is you want to accomplish, people start to expect you to be a certain way, and for many, this is hard to deal with. As I said, it can be easier to blend in than it is to stand out. For someone who has been overweight their whole life, standing out and being the center of attention for the first time can actually work against them. Even though they have accomplished something great, they do not feel great. They feel odd and different, which often causes people to sabotage their own success and instead go back to their old ways.

The fat girl voice inside you says, "Oh, one piece of chocolate will not matter," or "I can go out to eat with my girlfriends. No harm will come of it."

One thing leads to another and then another, and before you know it, you have gained the weight back, all because you did not kill off that inner fat girl. Instead, you allowed that inner fat girl to continue to dictate to you even though you were no longer fat.

If you are going to be successful, you need to leap out of *doing* healthy and transition into *being* healthy, and the way to do this is to have a fat girl funeral. That means saying goodbye to the voice that tells you to do the things that stand in the way of being the person you want to be. It means saying goodbye to the voice within you that tells you that you do not deserve to be the healthy version of yourself. You do not get to wear what you want. You do not deserve to be part of the group of people that spends their time being active and enjoying life. It is about saying goodbye to the negative voices from within that are keeping you from being successful.

It is also about building those defenses. When you say goodbye to the inner fat girl and replace it with an inner healthy girl, you are creating a defense against all those negative messages because those types of messages do not resonate with healthy people. A healthy person knows that it is acceptable to choose salad over fries. They know it is worth it to trade television time for gym time, and they know they do not need to do what everyone else is doing just because everyone else is doing it. In this sense, a strong defense is the best type of offense.

This gets back to what I talked about in a previous chapter. You need to build support and decide who is on your team and will help you reach your goals and who is not. I realize that this can be easier said than done. Creating distance between yourself and the people you have been close to your whole life is not easy.

I tell my patients to pretend they are actors preparing to play a leading role in a big Hollywood film. When actors do this, from the moment they wake up to the moment they go to sleep, they need to be in character because that is the only way they will effectively prepare for that role. It does not matter that they go home and interact with their friends and family. They need to stay in the role at all times if they are going to be the successful movie star they want to be.

For my patients, it is the same thing. You need to play the role of the star you want to become from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to sleep regardless of the people in your life who will challenge you to leave that role. You need to ask yourself, “What would the thin role be?” “How would that person think from the moment they wake up to the moment they go to sleep?”

Part of knowing how that person would act is learning, which means buying the books, reading the magazines, and taking notes. You want to immerse yourself in the health world. This will help reprogram your mind and give you more strength for staying in character throughout the day. It is important to do this with the right aspirational mind-set. You need to be motivated by people who are where you want to be as opposed to being turned off by them because they have something you do not.

Then you can expand on this approach by finding out who among your friends and family is actually healthy. You want to observe their habits. You will start to notice

things you did not see before. Not every one eats fast. Not everyone needs to sample every type of food that is offered at a party, and not everyone needs to go back for seconds just because they can. These are the subtle habits that healthy people engage in that overweight people do not. You will start seeing food from a different perspective, which will cause you to relate to food in a different way. When you get to this point, you will no longer need to count calories. You will just *be* healthy.

This idea of *being* healthy requires a fat girl funeral. Healthy people just *are*; they often grew up in healthy families that prioritized being active. They might have indulged in some fast food every now and then but certainly not often, and they had developed a repertoire of ways to deal with their emotional imbalances. For these people, living healthy is not something they need to think about. It is just the normal because they have programmed themselves to be that way. These are the people we need to mimic, but to do that, we need to move past our inner fat girl because to be healthy we cannot afford to have negative influences pulling us in the other direction. A healthy body requires a healthy mind.

People who are healthy make it a priority. They feel it is just as important as everything else in their life, such as finances, career, and family, so they make time for it. This means they plan their meals so that they can avoid eating junk food out of convenience. They pack their gym clothes in the car in the morning, and instead of spending their weekend on the couch watching television, they plan recreation that gets them moving. These people make a conscious effort to engage in whatever activities will bring health and vitality.

One of the best pieces of advice that I give my patients is to slow down when they eat. It is not a sport, and it is not a race. Food should be savored and enjoyed. It takes your body at least fifteen to twenty minutes to feel full, but slowing down gives your body the proper amount of time to give you the signals that you are full. Then you are able to comfortably stop and not eat past the point of being full. Any bites you take beyond the point of being full are emotional bites, and those are the bites that we need to learn to cut out. When you slow down, you become aware, and an awareness of what you are doing is really the first step in modifying your actions.

Many of us grew up hearing our parents tell us to finish everything on our plate, but as adults, we need to stop following that rule. It is OK to leave food on your plate if you are full. There are all sorts of versions of this type of saying, but they are just the stories that have been written for us in the past. Killing off that inner fat girl is about writing a new story. It is about leaving that old story behind because they know they have the power to rewrite it exactly how they want it to play out.

Something I emphasize with my patients is the importance of self-care. This sounds like an obvious concept, but so many people ignore it and worry about everyone else before worrying about their own well-being. Everybody has a friend, a family member, or a

coworker they want to take care of, but do not forget that you need to include yourself on that list of people you need to consider. It is a very common for people who struggle with their weight to put themselves at the end of the list regarding care. Self-care is something we all need to make a priority because we cannot fill up others if we are not full first.

Another important concept is fulfillment. A certain happiness can be found in relationships, a career, and having healthy finances. I see over and over that people who struggle with weight often struggle with finding fulfillment in different areas of their life. There is a certain emptiness in their life, and they try to fill this void with food. These people work hard and spend their time taking care of others and have nobody to care for them, so they look to food for that care. I work with my patients to really look at this concept of fulfillment to determine where they are falling short, and how they can add to their life in a way that brings them fulfillment but does not rely on food.

Part of having a fat girl funeral is saying goodbye to the fat version of you. This does not mean that you put your fat clothes in the back of your closet. It means that you throw them out or donate them. You have brand-new clothes now. You run 5K races, wear clothes that are made to look good, and you just feel good now. When you have a fat girl funeral, you become a whole new person, and you are not going back to the way you were before. You have officially transcended once you truly *know* that you are not going back and that you are ready to *be* the healthiest and best version of yourself.

I am here to tell you that you can have a fat girl funeral. Nothing is standing in the way except you, but you do not need to do it alone. I am here to support you through every stage of it.

Unlike most funerals, though, it should not be a sad event. It needs to be a celebration!

Chapter 11

Your Best Self

Imagine what life would be like if you had the self-confidence to wear whatever you wanted, the stamina to keep up with your children or grandchildren, or if you could go to sleep at night knowing you are living the best version of yourself.

The transformation you are seeking is just around the corner from where you are now. You just need to take the first step.

I have helped so many people lose the weight they have wanted to, and there is one common denominator with all of them: commitment.

Commitment is all it takes to move from the person you are today to the person you want to be tomorrow. It is not magic, and you do not need to be special to lose weight.

You just need to want it and be willing to take action and make the changes needed to be able to attract that better and healthier version of yourself.

If you are tired of being overweight, not having confidence, not being able to keep up, and not feeling like the person you know you were meant to be and deserve to be, all you need to do is commit. For most people, this is the hardest part. Once you commit to making the change in your life that you want, the rest is just process. It is just a matter of following a step-by-step plan that has already been tried and tested.

There is a common misconception that losing weight is almost impossible, and part of the reason for this is that people want a quick solution. They try a few weight loss programs and maybe a few fad diets but never get the results they were hoping for. So they decide their objective was too hard and not something they would be able to accomplish. The truth, though, is that losing weight is within anybody's reach. It won't happen overnight, however, and it is going to take a longer-term commitment and plan.

Losing weight is most effective when a three-pronged approach is used: mind-set, movement, and mechanics. It is not just about eating well. It is not just about exercising, and it is not just about mind-set. The people who get the best results are those who understand how these three components fit together, and they work to incorporate all three into their approach.

I mentioned at the start of this book that being a weight loss doctor has changed my life because it has allowed me to do what I was meant to be doing, but one of the best parts of what I do is being able to help my patients radically transform the way they are able to live their lives. By helping my patients lose the weight they want, I am putting them in a position to have the freedom to do what they were meant to do in their life, and that is such a special feeling for me.

I love watching my patients thrive, and in this connected world we live in, in many cases, I get to see firsthand how my patients are living the best versions of themselves. For example, I have one patient I helped lose fifty pounds. We are friends on Facebook, and she is always posting about her new life. This in and of itself is great because many people who are living overweight do not like sharing themselves on social media. They are embarrassed about who they are, and they want to hide, so just the fact that she is now eagerly sharing her life is such a step forward.

This patient is living the life she was meant to have. She is skiing and biking with her family and going to her son's baseball games. Her relationship with her husband is better than it has ever been, and she is absolutely beautiful. She is a nurse and has become a role model for many of her coworkers and patients who have seen the results that she has been able to achieve, which has caused them to try to lose weight as well.

Losing weight is not just about looking better and feeling better. It really is a means to be able to create impact. This patient I just spoke of is a better mom, wife, coworker, and role model. She is someone who can help people in ways that she never could before. She is truly living the best version of herself all because she committed herself to becoming that person.

If you are struggling with your weight and want to live differently, I assure you that you, too, can have a fat girl funeral and be a better version of yourself. The only obstacle between where you are today and where you want to be tomorrow is you. You just need to decide that you have had enough and are ready to take action.

Do not feel bad about yourself and do not give up. The best thing you can do for yourself is commit to changing and then getting support to help you. Support is necessary on this journey. The best type of support is the help of a weight loss doctor, but there is more to it than that. You need someone at your side who will believe in you, support you, and keep you accountable.

The best type of support you can get is a doctor who can help you along the way but not just the typical eat less, exercise more type of doctor. You want someone with years of experience who knows how to really dig deep with you, identify your *why*, and see what the future you looks like.

That is what I do with all my patients. I support them in all the ways they need to accomplish their goals. I know it is tough, and it is not your fault that you are where you are today. I know so many factors are involved that have led you to be where you are today.

You are at the point of decision.

You can either continue down the path of least resistance, the path you have already been travelling, or you can choose the road less traveled. The path of least resistance will probably result in your getting the same outcomes you have always received.

If you want something different to happen, if you want to change the direction of your life by losing those extra pounds and being able to live the best version of yourself, you have to do something different. Make a new choice, get the support you need, and allow yourself to attract the opportunity and abundance you deserve in your life.

I am the weight loss doctor who gives you the support you need to get you to where you want to go. Together, we will succeed.

"Jessica's" Success Story

Jessica was one of my very first patients, as she came in the week we first opened the clinic. She was in her mid-30s and grew up in New Mexico. For her, being overweight was normal because everyone in her family struggled with their weight. She came to me because she was very concerned about her health and could not seem to get it under control. She was close to making the decision to have surgery, but she did not want to do that, as it scared her.

I told her I could do everything for her that a surgeon could do. The difference was that I did not need a scalpel to achieve those results.

We started the program, and she lost fifty pounds in six months. There was no struggle. She was amazing and just followed the program as I gave it to her. That is what is great about my program. There are no tricks with it, and you do not need to be special to get results. You just need to do what I tell you to do, and the results will come with action.

When we hit fifty pounds, she said, "Let's just keep going."

She went another four months and ended up losing one hundred pounds in ten months. It was such a great accomplishment not only for her but also for our team that we all went out bowling to celebrate. We gave her balloons and confetti. It is important to celebrate your wins, as that is part of the transformation of the mind. When you celebrate getting healthy, you are helping to reprogram the brain, and you are also engaging in part of the process of having a fat girl funeral.

We had a great time bowling, but I asked her what else she was going to do in her life to celebrate that she had lost a hundred pounds. She replied, "I am going to take my friend on a hot air balloon ride."

This is significant because in New Mexico hot air balloons are very popular, but she had never been able to be on one because there is a weight restriction, and she was never able to pass it. Now that she was a hundred pounds lighter, she could finally do something she had never been able to do before.

This is part of the benefit of losing weight. You are able to do things you never thought you could do whether that may be a hot air balloon, a 5K race, or just being able to spend more time and keep up with your children or grandchildren. Life is meant to be lived to the fullest, and when you are the healthiest version of yourself, all of a sudden you have options you never had before.

Robert's Success Story

Robert came into my office a few years ago. When men come into my office, they are typically concerned about their health and want to make a change. This was the case with Robert. He told me that his health was really slowing him down, and he was worried that he would die young if he did not do something about it. He had two boys who were very active in hockey, and he felt he could not keep up with them. That was his *why*. He wanted to get healthy so that he could be a good dad to his boys and be able to grow old and be there for them as they grew up.

Robert was fully committed to his *why* and therefore fully committed to the program. He did what we told him to do and was able to lose seventy-five pounds in less than six months.

When people are overweight, they are often reluctant to do things that others look forward to doing because they are aware of how their extra weight will affect it. He had previously been reluctant to travel because his size made it hard for him. I told him he needed to celebrate his healthy new life, so he did something he hadn't wanted to do previously. He went on a trip to Europe with his family. He had previously resisted going on such trips, but he ended up having a great time walking around and taking part in all the activities his family was doing.

Besides his trip to Europe, Robert challenged himself by enrolling in a Tough Mudder competition, which is an extreme race full of obstacles. It is not a race he could have even considered when he was living at his previous weight, but he finished the race along with many of his friends who did it with him to help him celebrate his new weight. When I heard what he had done, I was so proud and happy for him because I knew how important it was to transform himself so that he would be able to get the most out of life.

I still see Robert today, and he is doing great because he is able to do all sorts of things he was not able to do before. For him, that has made all the difference. He is closer than ever with his boys because he is able to keep up with them and do things with them that he couldn't do before.

That is what it is all about—losing weight to be able to live life to its fullest and be the best possible version of yourself.

