

The Joy of Being Your Ideal Size

In This Chapter

- ◆ The U.S. obesity epidemic
- ◆ Health risks of being overweight or obese
- ◆ Preparation for weight loss
- ◆ Very real benefits of living at your ideal size

Picture yourself the way you want to look. That's the image to hold in your head as you read this book. It's also the self-image you should keep for the rest of your life—because that's the way you *can* look!

For now, however, you've got a weight issue. Perhaps you're carrying 15 pounds and a few more inches than your ideal. Maybe it's 50 pounds or more. Perhaps you've tried different diets and food plans, along with various exercise regimes. Most likely, your long-term results have been disappointing. While you may have lost weight at times, eventually something happened and you regained the weight, perhaps even more than you lost. Worse, you are at a loss to know why your best efforts have failed.

You know there must be a solution to your weight issue. After all, aren't there plenty of people who both enjoy food and stay at their ideal size, the size that is realistic for them? The good news is that you can be one of them! That's the fundamental message of this book.

A Nation Getting Fatter

You are not alone. The U.S. population is larger than ever before in history. Gradually we have become a land of “supersized” individuals. Over 65 percent of American adults are *overweight* or obese today. That means over 97.1 million adults in the United States are unsuccessful at managing their weight.



Lean Lingo

The medical definition of **overweight** is having a body mass index (BMI) of between 25 and 29.9. If your BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9, you are within the normal weight range. If your BMI is higher than 29.9, you are considered to be obese. To calculate your BMI, multiply your weight in pounds by 704.5, divide the result by your height in inches, and then divide that result by your height in inches a second time. See Chapter 3 for more information on BMI.

The U.S. population has been getting progressively weightier for the past four decades. The overweight and obese population has increased from 24.4 percent in 1960 to 65 percent in 2001.

Here's how it breaks down:

24.4% in 1960-62

24.9% in 1971-74

25.4% in 1976-80

34.8% in 1988-94

65% in 2001

The trend is not slowing. More and more people are getting bigger. The Centers for Disease Control considers obesity to be a frightening medical epidemic. In 2000, a total of 97.1 million U.S. adults met the criteria for being overweight, and 39.8 million U.S. adults met the criteria for obesity. About 19.6 million men and 19.2 million women are obese. That's a 61 percent increase since 1991—in just 9 years. In 1991,

only 4 of 45 states that participated in a National Institute of Health study had obesity rates of 15 to 19 percent of their adult populations. By 2000, 49 states—Colorado was the one exception—had rates of 15 percent or greater. Twenty-two of the 50 states had obesity rates of 20 percent or higher.

What's causing our collective chubbiness?

Various pundits place the blame on our sedentary lifestyle, fast food, convenience foods, and processed foods. There simply isn't one cause, nor is there a magic pill or potion that will shrink the population back to size. Being overweight is a condition of lifestyle and poor eating habits, and it can only change when each individual, like you, makes significant and life-enhancing lifestyle changes.

Body of Knowledge

The body mass index (BMI) is not a perfect guide, but it is a useful one. There are a few obvious exceptions to the formula: Athletes with very high muscle mass will have a higher BMI, and people, such as the elderly, who have lost a great amount of muscle mass due to reduced nutritional reserves will have a low BMI.

You Can Buck the Trend

Does it make you feel better that so many others are fighting fat, too? Of course it does. Misery loves company, but you're reading this book because you don't want to be part of that crowd. Don't let the statistics discourage you. It might seem inevitable that a person wouldn't have a fighting chance to buck the trend. If everyone is getting fatter, why shouldn't you expect to be overweight also? Here's the simple answer: because you can be your *ideal size*.

Here are five critical and inspirational points to remember as you use this book and lose those pounds:

1. **You get to choose.** Plenty of people—at least 35 percent of the U.S. population—are *not* overweight. You can be one of them. You are not destined to be fat. You have a choice.
2. **You can learn.** You can master the tried-and-true basics of what and how to eat and how to live as a *thin* person.
3. **You can change.** Many formerly overweight people are enjoying the newfound freedom of being their *ideal size* and enjoying food. If they can do it, so can you.



Lean Lingo

Thin is a loaded word. It means different things to different people. In this book, we use it to describe someone at or near the normal range for BMI. Your **ideal size** is the one that keeps you healthy and makes you happy.



Weighty Warning

Obesity is the cause of death of more than 375,000 U.S. adults each year. A person who is obese or overweight is more likely to develop heart disease, strokes, hypertension, diabetes, and certain cancers, which are leading causes of death.

Body of Knowledge

Only about 15 percent of the female population in the United States are “normal eaters.” This refers to women who eat according to hunger without preoccupation with body size or weight.

4. **You have the desire.** You obviously have an interest in losing weight. Now you just need to develop the motivation and the wisdom to avoid the fads and the gimmicks that lead to failure. You have the wherewithal to do what works.
5. **You can count on us as knowledgeable friends.** In this book, we tell you what works and what doesn't. You're holding in your hands a friendly guide to reach your size goal. We won't be preachy. We'll show you which exercise and eating changes to make, how to learn from the inevitable mistakes, and how to stay on track for the long term.

So be confident. The fact that others—many others—are overweight does not predict your fate. Join those who have learned how to eat, what to eat, and how to exercise. Join those who get into their smaller jeans easily. They experience the joy of being free of having a weight problem. So will you.

Your beliefs are a powerful force, so believe you have your ideal body even though you aren't there already. Believe you are already there. If inconsistent

thoughts or actions arise, change them. To create your ideal size, you must create your thoughts and actions accordingly.

Losing Weight Just Ain't What It Used to Be

As recently as 20 years ago, the common thinking about weight loss was simply to eat fewer calories and do more exercise to burn off the calories, and you would easily get to your ideal size. Few people were successful with this formula, and few can be successful using it today. What research shows is that calories overall don't count as much as which foods you eat and how you eat them. We now know that certain foods stimulate hormones that direct weight gain and loss. These include insulin and cortisol, which are discussed further in Chapters 8 and 12. We know that certain exercises are more effective than others. We know how metabolism works, and we are learning more every day.

Get to Your Ideal Size and Get Healthier

Here's a simple, sobering health fact: Thin is healthier; fatter is riskier. The serious health risks associated with being overweight are an alarming aspect of the growing "size" of the U.S. population. The old-fashioned image of a "fat and happy" person belies the jeopardy of chronic health conditions from obesity. Many individuals are familiar with the increased risk of type 2 diabetes, but the problem doesn't stop there.

The following are known health risks for obesity and being overweight:

- ◆ Diabetes (type 2)
- ◆ Heart disease
- ◆ Stroke
- ◆ High blood pressure
- ◆ Gallbladder disease
- ◆ Osteoarthritis
- ◆ Sleep apnea and other breathing problems
- ◆ Cancer (uterine, breast, colorectal, kidney, gallbladder, endometrial)
- ◆ Gout

Obesity is also associated with the following:

- ◆ High cholesterol
- ◆ Pregnancy complications
- ◆ Menstrual irregularities
- ◆ Stress incontinence
- ◆ Psychological disorders such as depression
- ◆ Increased risk during surgery



Weighty Warning

Almost half of post-menopausal women diagnosed with breast cancer have a body mass index (BMI) equal to or over 29. The Centers for Disease Control considers a person with a BMI over 29.9 to be obese.

Obese individuals have a 50- to 100-percent increased risk of death from all causes compared with normal-weight individuals. Perhaps you already have some of these health issues. By getting to your ideal size, you are doing one of the best things you can to protect and improve your health. For example, people who are obese have 30 to 50 percent more chronic medical problems than smokers or problem drinkers.

Get to Your Ideal Size and Enjoy How You Look

You want to look your best. You want to fit into your favorite jeans. You want to make an appearance, turn heads, and receive compliments. You want to feel sensuous and desirable when wearing a swimsuit or going to a party or class reunion. Few of us have the genetics to have the figure of a fashion model, but by golly, we want to have shapes we are proud of.

Is this the wrong reason to want to be thinner? Would the world be a better place if we all were less vain? Perhaps. But wanting to look your best is a powerful motivator. Very few people are immune to the urge. You can be sure that no naturally thin person is itching to be overweight!

It isn't fun to feel fat in your clothes. It isn't fun to shop for clothing that hides your size. It isn't fun to be physically uncomfortable in airplane seats. It isn't fun to huff and puff up the steps or to avoid health clubs because you're embarrassed by how you look.

Are you a shallow person just because you want to be at your ideal size to look better? Of course not. Everyone has vanity and glamour needs. (If we didn't, we would all wear the same outfits, no makeup, and the same shoes. How boring!) What would be shallow is to deny the importance you place on how you look. Be honest with yourself.

Note that we aren't talking about becoming "skinny." ("Skinny" is a word that's hard to define, but somehow we all recognize a truly skinny person.) People who starve themselves to the point of frailty to look pencil thin are taking serious health risks.

This book is *not* about attempting to copy the look of the latest *Vogue* models. It's designed to help you reach your *healthy* ideal size.



Thinspiration

Feeling good about your looks enhances your self-esteem and makes you more courageous, more confident, and more attractive—both to yourself and to others.

Life is challenging enough without being self-conscious about your looks. Worrying about your weight is debilitating and doesn't let you shine and radiate happiness. Later on in this book, you will learn to develop the "mindset" of a naturally thin person. But for now, just try to imagine the simple, everyday joy of appreciating your own looks.

Become More Visible

One of our clients, Mary, commented that the biggest difference for her when she went from a size 18 to a size 8 was that she became "visible." Before, Mary could stand and stand at a cosmetic counter in a big department store and never be helped,

while those around her were served. Today, the clerks at stores “see” her. They want to sell her cosmetics, clothing, or whatever. At a size 18, Mary was embarrassed to walk into a restaurant. Now when she walks into a restaurant, she is greeted right away and she feels comfortable and welcome.

You can become more visible, too, so get familiar with this concept now and plan to enjoy being visible. Be prepared to accept the responsibility and the resultant delights.



Thinspiration

Right now is a good time to start imagining what it will be like for you to be “visible.” Imagine walking into a department store or a restaurant as a trim person. What does it feel like to be noticed? Get ready now, for this will happen as you release body fat. Some people who lose weight find it somewhat scary and intimidating to be “seen.” Prepare yourself now. Just for fun, the next time you enter a nice restaurant dressed appropriately, imagine being “visible” like a famous movie star. Make an entrance. Let yourself feel glamorous. If you think it would be too hard to actually do this, let your imagination play out the fantasy.

Look Forward to More Romance

It’s probably fortunate that romantic attraction between men and women is more mystery and magic than science. We are attracted to each other for a host of reasons, and physical looks is only one of them. But physical attraction based on looks is certainly very real.

Feeling desirable can have a direct effect on the quality of your romantic life. By contrast, feeling fat can hinder one’s love life. Being perceived as fat hinders it even more.

Sadly, this is true even in long-term, loving relationships. Physical attraction can diminish when one or both partners become overweight. We hear it all the time from clients.

Should you be angry about it? No! Go ahead and focus on romance now by making yourself as desirable as possible at your current size. Then proceed to get to your ideal size ... and look forward to enjoying extra sizzle in your romantic life.

Body of Knowledge

In the world of online romantic personals, it’s said that men lie most about their height and women lie most about their weight. You know the reason. A woman who is overweight feels undesirable. She fears that fewer men want to date and marry overweight women. Men generally want to be taller as this is associated with power and virility.

Get to Your Ideal Size and Join in on Financial Rewards

Get rid of the excess inches by depositing them in the bank! Okay, you can't literally do that, but there are often professional and income benefits from reaching your ideal size. Over time, the extra income can add considerably to your bank account.

Workplace discrimination against overweight people is seldom discussed and certainly not openly acknowledged, but you know it's there. You feel it. You may have been told in some ambiguous way that, if you don't lose weight, you will be passed over for promotion or, even worse, will be downsized. ("Downsized" is not a happy word in this context.) Perhaps you have already been derailed or knocked out of the running for a promotion and pay increase while a less-qualified-but-thin colleague got the job you deserved. You may never be able to prove you were discriminated against, but you know.

Yes, this is illegal, and it's infuriating. In its most blatant forms, it's obnoxious and even immoral. But that doesn't make it less real. Many of our clients have recounted sad stories of such job discrimination. We can only hope that weight discrimination will decrease over time, but don't count on it happening soon.

The real problem may be much more subtle. Those who discriminate may be doing so entirely subconsciously. Research by John Cawley of the University of Michigan has shown that a white woman who is perceived as being overweight may earn 7 percent less in pay than a woman who is perceived to be at her ideal size. In a 40-year work career with an estimated annual salary of \$30,000, the average overweight woman can lose \$84,000 in earning power. Think about how many vacations and pairs of shoes that money could buy!

If you are in a profession in which you have direct contact with customers and the public, your perceived size can make a big difference in your performance and pay. Why? Because you are subjected to people's underlying prejudices about those who are overweight—even if they are overweight themselves. Many professional salespersons, especially women, who are at their ideal size earn more than those who are overweight.

Body of Knowledge

Both men and women who are overweight may be discriminated against, but men typically have more "room" to be a bit portly before size discrimination sets in.

Plenty of individuals who are themselves overweight are hypercritical of other overweight individuals. Go figure. They seem to recognize their own issues and project them onto others who live in overweight bodies. It doesn't make much sense and isn't pretty, but it is a fact.

What is a person to do? Get to your ideal size and stay there. If you're a woman, you may be giving yourself a 7-percent raise. The best and easiest way to deal with these unfortunate facts is to work with them. By the way, this doesn't mean you need to accept the prejudice or the implicit underlying assumptions that prejudiced people make. The assumptions aren't kind, noble, or loving, but we all have irrational prejudices. Get to your ideal size for personal reasons and, in the process, attain your professional and personal goals and ensuing rewards. Then, when you're in a position of authority, make sure you never, never discriminate against someone with a weight issue ... because you've been there yourself.

Get to Your Ideal Size and Enjoy Life More

Losing weight most likely has been one of your major lifetime projects. Certainly it has taken time and energy. You've learned about nutrition and various diets and food systems. You've succeeded at times and failed most of the time. You may have worked at your weight issues endlessly and worried thousands of hours about your size, your eating, and your behaviors. As you get to your ideal size, you will free up time and energy that can be used more constructively.

Having a weight issue takes time. It takes time to worry about what the scale is going to read and what you can or cannot eat at each meal and snack. It takes time to figure out what clothing will fit on that particular day and how to make yourself look thin even when you aren't. Moreover, it's a drag to go and find one more diet, one more exercise scheme, or one more oddball potion that perhaps will work.

Lose Weight, Find Time

What would happen if much of your weight-management time and energy were put into more uplifting, positive, and satisfying activities? What would happen if you didn't need to constantly diet or worry whether your clothes will fit? How would your life change?

Here's a short quiz to take. Write down your honest answers:

- ◆ How many times a day do you think about your weight?

- ◆ How often do you step on the scale every week?

- ◆ How much time do you spend thinking about which foods are “okay”?

- ◆ How much time do you spend figuring out how to dress in ways that hide your weight?

- ◆ How often do you feel guilty for eating a particular food?

- ◆ How many times have you wondered what others thought about your size?

- ◆ How many hours in your lifetime have you stood looking in the mirror examining your hips and thighs?

- ◆ Do you think someone who has naturally thin habits spends his or her time doing these things?

- ◆ What would you rather be doing with your time and energy?

Your weight management won't be one of the most significant contributions you make in your life. Your size will not be written about in your obituary. You have more important things to do in life than deal with a weight issue. So make this the last time you put energy and effort into weight loss. Now is the time to get over the issues and get on with your life.



Thinspiration

Make a list of what you would do if you were already at your ideal size. Then either do these things or make plans to do them.

Mastering Your Weight

You are the only person who can master your body's weight. Whether you choose to lose weight in a group or alone, only you get to vote on your size. You determine your success. No one else can do it for you.

By mastering your eating and your weight, you ...

- ◆ Understand your body and its needs.
- ◆ Know which foods and nutrition work best for you.
- ◆ Do exercises that make you feel good and look good.
- ◆ Understand your individual metabolism and how to enhance it.
- ◆ Stay at your ideal size throughout your lifetime.
- ◆ Sensuously enjoy food and eating.
- ◆ Remain in charge of your eating, your size, and your weight.
- ◆ Set a good example for your children.



Thinspiration

Affirm your life's purpose. Dieting isn't it and neither is overeating. If you aren't sure what it is, pretend you know. Tell yourself, "I am now fulfilling my life's purpose."

The Least You Need to Know

- ◆ The number of overweight and obese people has reached national epidemic proportions.
- ◆ By getting to your ideal size, you will improve your health and reduce health risks associated with being overweight and obese.

- ◆ Generally speaking, women who are at their ideal size earn more income than women who are overweight.
- ◆ You can begin to enjoy the benefits of looking good and feeling good right now.
- ◆ As you master your weight, you will free up your energy for more creative and productive pursuits.