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**WEIGHT IS NOT A FOOD PROBLEM**

Wouldn't it be great if the only negative aspect of being over-weight or obese is that we had to wear larger-sized clothes? I mean, after all, isn't it possible to be a plus-size man or woman and be happy and confident and fulfilled professionally and personally? And, isn't that all that matters in life? The answers: Definitely not. Probably not. Definitely not.

Most of us would settle for being just 5-10 pounds over-weight *if* we could eat whatever we wanted and be guaranteed that we'd otherwise be healthy throughout the course of our lives. However, it is NOT possible to maintain 5-10 pounds over-weight as we get older. It is just NOT possible. At some point in our lives there comes a time when without even trying we put on 5-7-10 pounds every year. It might, for example, begin with a woman in her 20's after her first child; it might happen to a woman in her late 40's as the perimenopause takes effect; it will happen to a woman in her 50's once menopause has occurred; and it can happen to a male adult at any time, most commonly in the mid- to late-40's. And, it is NOT possible to gain more weight every year WITHOUT adverse health effects: high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high cholesterol, chronic back pain, hip and knee and ankle pain—just to name a few. For women in their childbearing years, significant over-weight can affect one's ability to get pregnant and, once pregnant, there's a much higher potential for miscarriage. Let's face it, it's one thing to transition into our senior years being healthy, fit, independent and happy, and another to grow older with potentially debilitating health problems that affect not only the quality of our lives, but oftentimes the lives of those we love on whom we become a necessary burden.

Weight is not a food problem. Weight is not a physical problem. Our bodies will react to what our minds are thinking. To help our bodies to change, we must first change our thinking. How do we go about doing that?

For those of us who don't want to work very hard and who prefer to let someone or some other mechanism do our thinking for us, there are lots of options. The marketplace is flooded with diet books we can buy, each proclaiming to be "the one" for permanent weight loss. Or, we can find a doctor to either prescribe diet pills to suppress our appetites or to give us injections to over-stimulate our metabolisms. Or, we can join the myriad of diet programs, all of which are associated with either or all of packaged foods, powdered drinks, herbs, vitamins, supplements, energy bars, etc.—and, from whom do we purchase these items, you ask?—from THEM of course! Additionally, of these diet programs, almost all are structured around a group environment which can only mean one thing: Our weight loss will be as fast or as slow as the rest of the dieters in our group. Statistics show that there is a large drop-out rate amongst dieters in a group setting because most do not get to goal weight. Those that drop out find it difficult to stay motivated and focused without personal, one-on-one attention to *their* challenges, to *their* issues.

For those of us who recognize that PERMANENT weight loss is NOT a quick fix issue, that slow and steady weight loss is HEALTHY weight loss, and that the only way to accomplish this is with a lifestyle change, we've tackled the first and most important issue—acceptance of a problem that we know we'll have to manage our entire lives. Learning how to eat correctly using normal, regular, everyday foods that we shop for ourselves in the supermarket; learning portion control; and keeping a food diary to not only intimately connect us with the weight loss process but to encourage us to make our own well being a daily priority—all are the MUST DO components of an effective, permanent weight loss program.

All of us want to be slim and enjoy all the benefits it provides: Buying clothes that we WANT to wear (instead of clothes that simply look good on us); looking younger than our years and having the energy to really enjoy life (instead of getting older before our time and being mistaken for our kids' grandparents); liking ourselves and having the confidence necessary to be a participant in life's pleasures (instead of sitting on the sidelines as an observer). And, perhaps one of the most important aspects of learning how to lose weight healthily and keep it off is that we can pass along a nutritional lifestyle to our kids. An adult can choose to be overweight or obese. A child cannot. A child learns how to eat from within the environment in which he or she is raised, and his or her parents are solely responsible.

The American Medical Association states that 97-99% of dieters who lose weight gain some, all or more of it back within six months to 1-1/2 years. This is because they learned how to diet, but they did NOT learn how to prepare, cook and eat correctly. They learned a "quick fix," but they did NOT learn how to change their lifestyle. They lost some weight, but they did NOT get to a goal weight sufficient for their age, height and bone structure. Don't all of us want to lose weight in a healthy manner and then learn how to eat anything we want without ever gaining it back?

Remember: We have to be slim to stay slim. We have to stay slim to be slim. And... NOTHING tastes as good as being slim feels!!