

Healthy Weight

It's a Family Affair

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Foreword

Weight management and obesity issues are top priorities for today's American family. As obesity in the nation reaches critical and epidemic proportions, the untoward impact on health is profound. Going it alone can be difficult at best; making lifestyle changes to overcome obesity may best be conquered by having loved ones around on the same program, becoming supportive coaches. Our children are the next generation that will face the issues of obesity; namely diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and all the other degenerative disorders that are associated with being overweight. Bringing our children into a program at a young age, instilling healthy behavior while at an impressionable age, is critical for success.

We have seen a rise in obesity over the past three decades with epidemiological statistics on obesity reaching near 50% of the general population. Diabetes in our nation's youth and upcoming generations is a major threat to the health of our nation. Predictions that one in three children born today may suffer from diabetes are astounding, and we witness today the trend for more sedentary activities in our children and families further complicating the issue.

Cindy discusses in her book ways the individual and the

family to overcome challenges in weight management by adhering to a new paradigm in obesity control with focus on health using a family model.

This book should be required reading for those with a family history of diabetes or obesity and for all who want to save themselves and their families from the ravages of being overweight.

Yusuf M. Saleeby, MD
Wellness One / Atrio Gene

Introduction

As a mother of two daughters, I have learned through the years the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle within the family. I also realized how important it is to have support and guidance from each family member to help make such a program successful. Even though I realize that it is never too late to begin the process of good health, I look back and think of many things I could have done differently and can still do differently. I allowed life to get in the way of healthy eating for my children while they were involved in activities throughout the day, often eating out for convenience and not making healthy choices in the process. I did not have a good work-play balance, usually working two or three jobs. I grew up in an environment that did not promote physical activity and promoted overeating. I then remind myself that I need to continue practicing the art of staying in the present, knowing that I have no control of the past or the future, but instead focusing on my actions *today* that may have an impact on my family. I am not going to waste energy and be unproductive by blaming myself or anyone else. I ultimately made choices in my life; however, I would be untrue to myself if I said that my past decisions aren't painful in the present, at times. I wish that I taken the time to read a book or had gotten guidance on

how to avoid having the daily stressors of life interfere with a healthy lifestyle. It is with this passion that I want to prevent other families from having to experience what I did, so I am writing this book. My wish is for families to be preventive in health and wellness, to have a plan to include healthy eating and physical activity into their daily lives, and to ground themselves on what is important in their lives and the lives of their children. I also include emotional and spiritual health in this book because if these issues are not addressed within each of us, then they will interfere with the family system in being as healthy as it can be.

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1

Weight Management as a Family

This book is about family members sharing the process and lifelong journey of weight management. It is about each of the family members creating an overall healthy lifestyle together and having fun in the process. When a healthy lifestyle is developed and maintained, then goals for a healthy weight are met. I will discuss what a healthy lifestyle means and what is included in developing one, remembering that it is a combination of a lot of behaviors and not limited to just counting calories or exercising.

Health and wellness is holistic, meaning it is a combination of the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of our life. I will discuss all of these aspects in this book, because it is essential to develop all three for true health and wellness and lifelong success. Imagine all of the possibilities and opportunities we would have as a family when each of us makes an effort to focus on our physical, emotional, and spiritual health, all of which affects not only our weight, but also our overall attitude

and how we relate to each other (and the world around us) throughout the day, the week, and the year. I will offer simple strategies to develop physical, emotional, and spiritual growth, no matter what your age or fitness ability. It is a gradual and very rewarding and gratifying *process*, so let's be kind to ourselves when setbacks occur, learn from them, and move forward, staying focused on the positive and keeping focused on our goals and our long-term vision of our family.

Ultimately, as adults, it is our own responsibility to create a healthy lifestyle for ourselves, and each of us has the ability to do so on our own. Each of us is unique, and each of us is whole and resourceful and capable of making changes on our own. It is always beneficial, however, and is shown to be more successful, to have others on board with us, supporting us through the journey, helping us overcome or minimize temptations, motivating us to be consistent with our healthy choices. Whenever there is support from others as well as accountability, we are more inclined to achieve the goal we set for ourselves than if we did not have support or accountability. Bringing the family together to help with keeping each other accountable for our personal goals we have set for ourselves will help us reach those goals.

Research has shown that when we share goals with others, we are more likely to complete those goals than if we do not share them with anyone. Since children do not have the resources available to them that adults do, it is important that the adults in the household give children the opportunity to make healthy choices as well as provide them an opportunity to be part of setting goals and giving support. This book will include ways that children can get involved in the process of making choices and how adults can create an environment

for children that will incorporate the whole family in being active in making choices and developing healthy self-images and confidence.

As a licensed behavioral counselor, coach, and personal trainer, I have had the opportunity to connect with thousands of people in a variety of situations, lifestyles, life stages, and ages. I have learned that we have similar needs as humans, no matter what our situation, race, or gender. We have the need to feel accepted by others and the need to be social with others. We *want* to be happy and we *want* to feel good physically, mentally, and spiritually. Sometimes, though, we get “stuck” and allow things to get in the way of our health and happiness. Examples of things that may get in our way are unhealthy relationships (and staying in them); unhealthy ways of thinking (negative thoughts, self-doubt, hatred, jealousy, resentments); not having a work-play balance; unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking, drinking excessive alcohol, abusing drugs, over-eating, eating unhealthy foods (foods that do not nourish our bodies); not having an open mind; not being flexible and willing to try new things or ideas; not taking time for ourselves to have quiet time; not taking time to be in touch with nature; not taking time to take care of ourselves; and not listening enough to others. We also tend to spend a lot of energy dealing with issues that we don’t have control over, such as what other people are doing or saying. We tend to spend energy on being stuck in the past and not moving forward or spend a lot of wasted energy on worrying about the future or the “what ifs” in life. All of these things are mentally, emotionally, and physically draining and prevent us from having energy to do worthwhile and healthy things for ourselves, which in turn affects our family life and affects the entire family system. Our lifestyle has a big impact on our future generations. This book

will include ways to change these unhealthy and suffocating behaviors and thoughts so that you will have the energy and desire to focus on the present—the things that you have control over—and create a life of good health.

- There is a variety of ways to incorporate a life of physical, emotional, and spiritual health for the whole family. Each of you can take small “baby” steps along the way. It’s never too early and never too late to begin the process. Research shows the following:
- Weight control is more successful with accountability, motivation, and support
- Lifestyle and food choices have an influence on family members
- Modeling behavior has more influence on someone than being told what to do
- One person’s healthy behavior can influence generations of family members
- Healthy families are more productive and happier people, and because of this fact, they generate more positive energy around them and with others
- Low self-esteem is learned and can contribute to obesity
- One’s confidence level has an effect on weight control
- There is a connection between obesity and many medical conditions, such as depression, diabetes,

and high blood pressure, all of which typically can be controlled by decisions made in the family.

- Stress levels in the family related to arguments or financial difficulty, or dysfunctional behaviors, such as excessive alcohol use, can contribute to obesity.

We also know that organization in the family system can lead to healthy behaviors, such as making time to buy and prepare healthy foods, so that eating out is less of a temptation, because eating out is also a contributing factor in weight gain. Having a good work-play balance has a role in weight management with other family members as well as your own. Having tempting foods available at home can make it more challenging to make healthy choices.

We know that lack of support for and from family members has an effect on weight management. A lack of physical activity in the family contributes to weight gain. Making excuses like not being able to afford healthy food or not having time to exercise has an effect on the other family members' decisions.

When the family system can create a nurturing home environment with positive feedback and rewards when appropriate, and when the family can create a healthy routine of exercise and healthy eating, then we can see a change in the family as a whole. Families create communities, and communities create countries. Each of us can make a big difference in the way others think and the choices they make for themselves, just by modeling behavior. For example, if you lived in a community where everyone rode bicycles to the store, chances are that you would be more likely to ride your bike. If all of your friends brought healthy snacks to gatherings, wouldn't you be more likely to do the same? Since we want to be accepted by

others and feel a sense of connectedness in our community, my guess would be that you would follow the behaviors of others. This book has information on how to create a healthy family environment so that each family member would be capable of making healthy choices.

When I use the term “family” in this book, it is not limited to relatives. Family is unique to each of us. Family is who makes us feel loved, appreciated, comforted, and accepted. Family can be friends, a partner, a community, a neighborhood, a support group, a pet, or anyone who has a healthy relationship with us. A healthy relationship consists of each person being non-judgmental and non-competitive, while having unconditional love and respect for each other, accepting each other, and supporting each other to be as healthy as possible, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Each person will continue the journey of life together and take care of him or herself so that you can take care of others. In order to be present with someone, it is important to be accepting of yourself and want to improve yourself, so that you can be present to help others grow. Being a part of a family includes having a sense of responsibility for yourself as well as other family members, so that you can nourish each other and blossom together, being a healthy role model to each of them and being able to reward yourself for making healthy choices for yourself. Often when parents are not making healthy choices, their children are not able to have the opportunities they need to make healthy choices either, which creates a cycle of unhealthy behaviors throughout generations.