

Why Diets Make Us Fat: The Unintended Consequences of Our Obsession With Weight Loss

By Sandra Aamodt

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“If diets worked, we'd all be thin by now. Instead, we have enlisted hundreds of millions of people into a war we can't win."

What’s the secret to losing weight? If you’re like most of us, you’ve tried cutting calories, sipping weird smoothies, avoiding fats, and swapping out sugar for Splenda. The real secret is that all of those things are likely to make you weigh *more* in a few years, not less.

In fact, a good predictor of who will gain weight is who says they plan to lose some. Last year, 108 million Americans went on diets, to the applause of doctors, family, and friends. But long-term studies of dieters consistently find that they’re more likely to end up gaining weight in the next two to fifteen years than people who don’t diet.

Neuroscientist Sandra Aamodt spent three decades in her own punishing cycle of starving and regaining before turning her scientific eye to the research on weight and health. What she found defies the conventional wisdom about dieting:

·Telling children that they’re overweight makes them *more* likely to gain weight over the next few years. Weight shaming has the same effect on adults.
·The calories you absorb from a slice of pizza depend on your genes and on your gut bacteria. So does the number of calories you’re burning right now.
·Most people who lose a lot of weight suffer from obsessive thoughts, binge eating, depression, and anxiety. They also burn less energy and find eating much more rewarding than it was before they lost weight.
·Fighting against your body’s set point—a central tenet of most diet plans—is exhausting, psychologically damaging, and ultimately counterproductive.

If dieting makes us fat, what should we do instead to stay healthy and reduce the risks of diabetes, heart disease, and other obesity-related conditions? With clarity and candor, Aamodt makes a spirited case for abandoning diets in favor of

behaviors that will truly improve and extend our lives.

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Editorial Review

Review
"Finally, a scientist who bridges the gap between the emerging behavioral theories of weight loss and our current disastrous attempts to diet our way thin! I can't wait for this to be published so I can give it to patients."
—DR. HENRY S. LODGE, professor at Columbia University Medical Center and coauthor of *Younger Next Year*

"In this deeply researched book, Aamodt demolishes the conventional wisdom on dieting, building a compelling case that if we want to be healthier, we should diet less, not more. Essential reading for today's weight-obsessed culture."
—TRACI MANN, PH.D., author of *Secrets from the Eating Lab*

"This important book sounds a much-needed alarm about the long-term damage that dieting does to our bodies and minds. Highly recommended for chronic calorie counters and anyone trying to raise healthy, sane children in an insane food world."
—JONATHAN BAILOR, author of *The Calorie Myth* and founder of SANESolution.com

About the Author

SANDRA AAMODT, PH.D., coauthored *Welcome to Your Brain* and *Welcome to Your Child's Brain*. She was the editor in chief of *Nature Neuroscience*, a leading scientific journal in the field of brain research. She received her undergraduate degree in biophysics from Johns Hopkins University and her doctorate in neuroscience from the University of Rochester. Her science writing has been published in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *El Mundo*, and the *Times* of London.

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