KNOw Dieting: Risks and Reasons to Stop

Dieting: *Any attempts in the name of weight loss, "healthy eating", or body sculpting to deny your body of the essential, well-balanced nutrients and calories it needs to function to its fullest capacity.*

The Dieting Mindset: *When dissatisfaction with your natural body shape or size leads to a decision to actively change your physical body weight or shape.*

Dieting has become a national pastime, especially for women.

* Americans spend more than $40 billion dollars a year on dieting and diet-related products. That's roughly equivalent to the amount the U.S. Federal Government spends on education each year.

* It is estimated that 40-50% of American women are trying to lose weight at any point in time.

* One recent study revealed that 91% of women on a college campus had dieted. 22% dieted "often" or "always." (Kurth et al., 1995).

* Researchers estimate that 40-60% of high school girls are on diets (Sardula et al., 1993; Rosen & Gross, 1987).

* Another study found that 46% of 9-11 year olds are sometimes or very often on diets (Gustafson-Larson & Terry, 1992).

* And, another researcher discovered that 42% of 1st-3rd grade girls surveyed reported wanting to be thinner (Collins, 1991).

The Big Deal About Dieting: What You Should Know

* Dieting rarely works. 95% of all dieters regain their lost weight and more within 1 to 5 years.

* Dieting can be **dangerous:**

    ★ "Yo-yo" dieting (repetitive cycles of gaining, losing, & regaining weight) has been shown to have negative health effects, including increased risk of heart disease, long-lasting negative impacts on metabolism, etc.

    ★ Dieting forces your body into starvation mode. It responds by slowing down many of its normal functions to conserve energy. This means your natural metabolism actually slows down.

    ★ Dieters often miss out on important nutrients. For example, dieters often don't get enough calcium, leaving them at risk for osteoporosis, stress fractures, and broken bones.

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* Dieting can be **dangerous** (continued):

   Dieters often experience physical consequences such as:

   ★ loss of muscular strength and endurance
   ★ decreased oxygen utilization
   ★ thinning hair
   ★ loss of coordination
   ★ dehydration and electrolyte imbalances
   ★ fainting, weakness, and slowed heart rates

* Dieting also impacts your mind. When you restrict calories you restrict your energy, which in turn can restrict your brainpower.

   ★ Medical studies indicate that people on diets have slower reaction times and a lesser ability to concentrate than people not on a diet.
   ★ All of the stress and anxiety about food and weight that preoccupy dieters actually can consume a portion of a dieters' working memory capacity.
   ★ Numerous studies link chronic dieting with feelings of depression, low-self-esteem and increased stress.

* Dieting can lead to an **eating disorder**.

   ★ Many studies and many health professionals note that patients with eating disorders were dieting at the time of the development of their eating disorder.
   ★ Dieting may not *cause* an eating disorder, but the constant concern about body weight and shape, fat grams and calories can start a vicious cycle of body dissatisfaction and obsession that can lead all too quickly to an eating disorder.

Tired of Die-ting? Try Living!!!

* Just imagine all of the time and energy you could save for other activities and interests in your life if you decided to stop dieting.

* We all need to take care of our bodies and make sure that we are fueling them with a nutritional balance of foods, but we don't need to let the way our body curves or doesn't curve determine how we feel about ourselves or how we live our lives.

* Next time the dieting desire crosses your mind, take a time-out. Think about the reasons why you want to lose weight. Are they really worth it? Think about the potential dangers of dieting. And, most of all, take the time to remember that *you are worth so much more than what you weigh!*

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