On a Diet? Having Fun Yet?

By Mindy Couture

I will give you $20 if you can find me someone who enjoys dieting. Diets are not made to be fun, they are made to help you lose weight, but do they even do that? Yes, maybe for the month that you are on it, but what happens once you go off of it? Come on, all together now… “You gain it right back.” Almost anyone who has ever been on a diet, with the exception of a tiny group who must have some kind of magical powers, has experienced losing a little weight, getting all excited and looking so good, just to gain it all back and more the next month. It surprises me how many people still believe all of the false promises of the different fad diets out there. Although, I guess I can understand; I mean who wouldn’t want to lose 10 pounds in ten days! But it’s time to get real people, over the past 2 decades obesity has increased substantially and guess what, so has the diet product industry! Are you seeing what I’m seeing? Could dieting be contributing to obesity and other health problems?

So here’s the truth. In order to lose weight you have to expend (use up) more energy than you’re taking in. So the less I take in the better right? Wrong! We are not machines, we’re humans, and we’re a little more complicated than that. Our bodies are equipped to survive, so when we don’t get enough food, which happens when we diet and restrict calories, our bodies start storing whatever we do eat as fat so that we won’t run out. This would be helpful if we lived back in the stone ages, but we don’t, so cutting your calories too much can actually cause you to store more fat! The strict restriction of calories can also make your body desperate for food, leading to binging episodes and obsessions with foods, not fun! This can be really unhealthy mentally and physically, sometimes causing more weight gain than you originally started with.

Many diets are based on the restriction or elimination of certain foods, and this is a huge problem. These kinds of diets are very unbalanced nutritionally. The FDA doesn’t tell us to eat a variety of foods for nothing! When a diet focuses on one or only a few foods, it not only ruins the fun in eating, but more importantly, it keeps you from getting all of the nutrients you need. Like I said before, our bodies are very complex and therefore need a variety of
different nutrients to keep everything running smoothly. When you don’t give your body everything it needs it can cause major nutrient deficiencies.

Now, because these diets don’t work in the long run, it is very common for people to try and try again. This is commonly referred to as yo-yo dieting. It is when people get caught in a cycle of losing weight and then regaining it, losing weight and regaining it. Like a yo-yo your weight goes up, and down, up, and down. It can be a small amount of weight, like 5-10 pounds, or a large amount, like 50 pounds, but either way it is dangerous. Research studies on this kind of weight cycling have shown it to be linked to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, gallbladder disease, and other problems. These are all very serious concerns that you probably didn’t realize. One study also showed that the more times women dieted the higher their BMIs became! Crazy huh! But doesn’t it make sense; we’ve all seen it happen!

Weight cycling can also cause people mental distress. Regaining weight can bring on feelings of failure and worthlessness. These feelings can ultimately lead to depression. They also create a really unhealthy relationship with food, making it the enemy. Food should not be considered evil, it should be your friend, keeping you alive, giving you energy, and ultimately giving you pleasure. MMM... I’m getting hungry just thinking about how good food can taste!

So how can you lose the weight that your doctor told you to, or drop some pounds for summer without dieting? Start making healthier choices! In order for you to lose weight and keep it off for good you have to make a lifestyle changes in your diet. Instead of drastically changing your diet for a short period of time you need to slowly change your unhealthy eating habits into good ones, one step at a time. Instead of having 5 sugars in your coffee in the morning, have four. After doing that for a month, take it down to 3. Try making your macaroni and cheese with only half the amount of butter than you usually put in, I bet you won’t even know the difference! We eat the foods we eat because they are familiar and comfortable to us, so all we have to do is slowly train ourselves to be familiar and comfortable with the right foods.

Making a lot of small changes like these are virtually unnoticeable, but they add up. Without even noticing it you’ll be consuming fewer calories and will most likely be feeling healthier and losing weight. Eventually developing a diet that follows the food guide pyramid
and adding exercise to your daily routine is your best bet to a healthier you. All you have to do is be patient. With weight loss, the slower you lose the weight, the easier it is to keep it off. Losing more than 2 or 3 pounds per week means that you’re probably not getting enough calories to maintain your body’s health and protein stores.

Now, can I see a show of hands, which of you is going to start a diet tomorrow? I didn’t think so! The only thing diets are good for are health problems, weight gain, and depression, so if that’s your idea of fun then, by all means, go for it. But I have a feeling you’re smarter than that!

References


