

Combating obesity with a diet ... fat chance!

You have to change mindsets not *just* menus



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**By
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Let's be brutally frank – there's a lot of fashionable twaddle nowadays about fat.

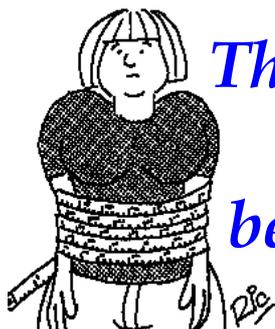
Maybe you've read some of the weighty articles by "adipose rich" female journalists trying to make obesity stylish. The intent may be laudable but the harsh truth is that those inclined to fat would, on the whole, prefer not to be.

The reasons are easy to understand. Health considerations apart, fat people suffer serious disadvantages. Disadvantages in employment ... in their social and sex lives ... in the simple everyday wear and tear of living.

Fat people are discriminated against, albeit discreetly. If you had to employ a nanny would you choose a fat candidate? Be honest. Chances are you might just wonder about furtive raids on your refrigerator and what she might covertly feed your children.

Given the choice of employing two people with identical qualifications would you chose the fat candidate or the slim one? The fact is that more people would employ the slim one.

Fat people suffer all sorts of indignities. They can't fit into off-the-peg High Street clothes ... they are not sought after for the glamour jobs ... or often any job at all. They have to move the seat back when they get into cars and not because of their long legs.



The billion pound slimming industry is huge ... because it doesn't work

Fat people are expected to be jolly and to be robust. Fat people frequently find others don't think that their feelings count as much as their slimmer contemporaries. Those are some of the external pressures.

The internal pressures can be even worse. The low self-esteem, the robotic way in which they binge through food – the loss of control and general feeling of hopelessness. On top of this fat men and women have to worry about their health. Visiting their doctor is often a nightmare as they know that they are going to be once again *ticked off*, accused of being greedy and lectured on their impending *early death* – not to mention all the other ghastly diseases they are likely to contract as a result of their obesity.

Just moving about can often be troublesome and the thought of joining an exercise class is clearly not on.

Visiting friends can be a nightmare if offered an expensive looking, delicate Louis XVI-style chair to sit upon. Dilemmas, dilemmas – will the bottom squeeze between the arms of the chair and if it does will there be an almighty crash, then bits of splintered wood and occupant scattered over the floor? Piling on the misery is the prospect of horrified hosts frantically pretending they have never liked great grandfather's heirloom anyway!

Yes, being fat means life is full of pitfalls, dangerous hazards and potential disaster – a state not to be recommended at all. I am, therefore, in great sympathy with anyone wishing to relieve themselves of obesity and certainly cannot share Dawn French's view that *fat is fabulous* – nor can I comment on whether it is sexy.

Expectations of Hypnosis

What I do know is that hypnotherapy is capable of playing a major role in helping obese people reduce their weight.

It would be lovely to think anyone could go and see a hypnotherapist and simply never want to eat a Mars bar again. Unfortunately that is precisely what many do think. The ensuing problem for the hypnotherapist lies in synchronising the client's expectation with what is actually going to happen.

There is another problem in that the hypnotherapist simply does not know precisely how the client will respond to the various suggestions given.

No hypnotherapist worth their salt wants to tell the client that the hypnosis will be useless for weight control (which it often can be on its own), thus implanting the idea and setting the client up for failure.

Dealing with clients who want to lose weight is extremely difficult. Not least because the client has to eat.

It would be so much easier, as in the case of smokers, if the hypnotherapist could simply implant suggestions for total abstinence.

The first task of the therapist therefore is educating the client to realise that using hypnosis is not a *magic wand* for losing weight and if they still eat the same amount of food they will remain obese. The client must really understand that it may at times be slow, it may at times be laborious and much of the time it will be boring – but that they are the only ones that can do it.

They are, however, the lucky ones because you have a secret weapon – hypnosis – that is going to help them not just to lose weight but to improve every area in their life. It is a fine balance between keeping the client's spirits up and being realistic about how much they will have to contribute to the project themselves.

The Price Tag

But is the client prepared to pay the price in terms of personal commitment and sacrifice? This comes down to straight negotiation with the client.

- **What are the pros and cons?**
- **Is the client prepared to change their eating patterns?**
- **Are they prepared to suffer hunger pangs from time to time, decline certain invitations, perhaps even go jogging every morning?**
- **Is the price too high?**

It may be that the client decides at this stage that the price is too high and that they agree with Dawn French and her cronies that "*there are the women who eat chocolates and then there are the bitches.*" However, most clients will at least verbally agree that they are prepared to pay the price and this is where the inspired hypnotherapist comes into their own. It is their job to *sell* the pros – in other words build up the client's motivation – in such a way that they cannot wait to get started with the programme and get back that ideal figure.



The Motivation

This is what the client is going to have to fall back on when the going gets tough. The therapist has to concentrate the client's attention not on what they are giving up but what they are gaining.

Each client will have their own personal agenda, some of which they will share with you and some they will not.

For example, for some the real reason they want to lose weight is to get their own back. To get back at their best friend who *stole* their boyfriend or because people have offended them inexcusably by cruel office japes made at their expense.

Or they are hurt to the core by the realisation that when they pick their child up from school he is so embarrassed by his mother's size that he scampers out of the playground ahead of her, pretending she is nothing to do with him.

The question to ask your client is "what will your life be like when you are no longer fat?"

This is the key area on which to focus your client's attention. Lists should be made, images should be built in glorious Technicolor, feelings should be anticipated, a whole new glorious world should be put on the drawing board.

The Client Can Do It

Many of your clients will be at their wits' end when they arrive in your consulting room. They will be full of self doubt.

It is the job of the therapist to instil the belief into the client that whatever has happened in the past is irrelevant and that they CAN do it; it is only that they have not done so yet.

The client needs to be reassured that there is nothing mentally inherently wrong with them and that by putting in the effort and changing their belief systems they too can be slim.

Factors Causing Overeating

The factors causing overeating need to be examined and if possible removed. These usually fall into one or several of the following categories:-

Addiction to Food – habit

It is true people really can become addicted to certain foods such as chocolate. The *chocoholic* needs to abstain from chocolate for seven days before their body is no longer dependent on the chocolate.

A straight habit removal script should be employed with the advice that *one piece of chocolate is too many and twenty pieces are not enough.*

The smallest piece of chocolate can trigger off the habit again in exactly the same way that one cigarette will usually trigger the ex-smoker off on a smoking binge.

Anxiety/Fear

Many overweight clients suffer from free-floating anxiety. This may have been triggered off during the first six months of the client's life when they were lying in the pram and there were adults or older children around them who were shouting angrily. The baby has no way of making sense of the shouting and it becomes internalised as free floating anxiety.

Deep states of relaxation should be employed with suggestions that they have nothing to fear, they are going to be all right, the future is looking bright, etc.

Stress

This factor is often given as a reason for *bingeing*. The bingeing obliterates the experience of stress for a short while – but of course it is short lived and the client feels even worse after it.

Stress is undoubtedly a very real problem in our society and needs to be addressed in detail. The client should learn that they are only human and can only do one job at a time. They need to establish what is really important for them to do, what can be delegated and of what they can be relieved.

It is important that they write down all their problems and analyse specifically what they need to do to resolve the situation. The list should then be rewritten not as problems, but as goals that they want to achieve.

Guilt

Depending on which stable we come from we are likely to feel guilty at some time or another. One of the problems with much of society today is that people do not feel guilty enough.

Our permissive society has decided that if anybody does anything wrong it is not their fault. This is wrong. People should be made aware that if they commit crimes against society they should pay for them. Society should be taught that one has to take responsibility for one's own actions unless we wish to head for anarchy.

Clients often have a sense of guilt when they *binge* and so as to punish themselves they eat even more. Not helpful.

The client needs to look carefully at what makes them feel guilty. Can they do anything constructive to recompense? If so, do it. If not, they should say 'good-bye' to the guilt and get on with their lives.

A big black bin liner stuffed with unhelpful guilt can be thrown over a seaside pier as the client is taught to forgive themselves and understand that a function of being human is that we all make mistakes from which we learn a better way of doing things.

Fatigue

People often eat a bar of chocolate to give them extra energy. This is again short lived and people who eat too much will tell you it is exhausting. They want to sleep it off.

The client needs to be taught that if they feel fatigue coming on they need to employ their self-hypnosis at the first available opportunity.

Family pressures

"Mother always feeds me up when I go home". Mothers are renowned for this. Even if their daughters or sons are forty-five mothers are usually under the illusion that their children are not eating enough even if their figures are two or three stones overweight.

What usually happens here is that the client returns home and assumes the role of the *child* once again. They find it comforting on the one hand and, since they have once again assumed the role of the child, they are unable to stand up to their mothers. Grown-up children need to learn to tactfully assert themselves, really to talk to their mothers so that their mothers understand that it is not helpful to serve up three helpings of their favourite childhood pudding of treacle sponge.

No family likes change and its other members will do their best to combat it. The *mother* who decides to change her eating pattern will be up against all sorts of obstacles.

Her husband may well immediately order her favourite chocolates and invite her out to dinner at the restaurant that serves her favourite hot chocolate fudge cake. The children won't like seeing a shrinking mother. Where is their cosy, comfortable *mum* disappearing to?

It is just not on. What is going to happen next in their orderly lives? The alarm bells go off inside the husband's mind: *"What is my wife up to?" ... "Is she doing this for me or is some other man involved?" ... "God, she is getting more and more attractive – she's going to leave me – whatever next?"*

"You're not fat!" they will implore, *"we like you the way you are"*. *"Look I bought these specially for you, you know you love them, you've got to eat them!"*

This may all sound far fetched but it is not. It is extremely important that 'the mother' gets 'permission' from her family to lose weight. She has to explain how miserable her obesity makes her and that she will be a much better and happier mother and/or wife when she is slim – and most importantly she will not leave them and she will still be the same old mum, only better.

Friends/peer-group pressure

Close friends to a lesser degree fall into the above category. They don't like change either.

They will wonder what the ramifications will be if their friend becomes slim. Will she be more attractive than they? Will she be any fun any more or will she just become slim, superior and serious? It would be most

irritating if she lost weight while they carried on a losing battle. Friends also need to be brought on-board by reassurance.

Reward system

A bar of chocolate is a lousy reward. If anything it's a punishment. There have to be better pleasures. If not, the therapist must search high and low to come up with a better alternative even if it is only that they are one bar of chocolate closer to that glorious new lifestyle.

Lack of time and organisation

A common complaint. Buying a bag of fresh carrots takes no more time than stuffing the shopping trolley with half the contents of the cake counter.

Yes, it is part of the price to pay to make sure that there is always something less fattening on hand to eat. It is a question of re-training the hand to reach for the fruit-and-veg rather than the biscuits. With practice it can become quite easy.

Boredom

This is always a sad reason for eating. It occurs when people lack goals and self direction. Ask your client to compile a list of 21 things that they would like to achieve in order of importance.

The list acts as a direct suggestion to the unconscious mind and focuses the client's attention on what they really want to do rather than what they don't.

Clients should also be taught that each and every day they can and should do at least one thing that they really enjoy – even if it is merely sitting in the lavatory with a trashy magazine for twenty minutes.

Lack of self-esteem

The root of most people's problems. People do not have the confidence to lose weight. Massive ego-strengthening suggestions should be employed in all scripts to help people lose weight.

Sexual problems

Fear and avoidance of sexual liaisons are common reasons for retaining a protective shield of fat. One client complained to me however that the problem was that it did not work – *"You still get the men after you ... only you just get the fat slobby ones."*

Sexual frustration and boredom are another complaint. It is frightening how seldom couples talk about sex together. It is shrouded in fear and taboo. Communication needs to be opened up. Couples usually end up by saying *"if only you'd told me years ago" ... "I didn't know that was what you wanted or how you felt"*.

The trouble is that people do not take sex seriously enough. It tends to be something fitted in, if there is time. Making dates with your partner for sex is just as important, if not more so, than making dates to go to the cinema.

Lack of love

We come back to the cliché that you must learn to love yourself before others can do so. Why not, indeed? Why not be your own best friend – and if you were your own best friend would you allow yourself to stuff yourself with ice-cream?

This is where sessions of *self mothering* in the trance are very useful. Get the adult client to go back in time and give love and comfort to the little three year old, the little seven year old, etc. Those little parts inside are often still crying out for love and find the world a frightening, confusing place.

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Comfort Eating

You hear it again and again and again. *"Oh, I eat to comfort myself"*. Faulty thinking. The client needs to understand the relief of comfort eating is so transient that it simply is not worth doing.

Why on earth do they want to add to their weight problem on top of everything else?

They may not be able to control the fact that they have been made redundant, or that the bank has written them yet another threatening letter, but this is one area they have control over – so why not use that control?

It's awful to be depressed – but it does not help if therapist, family and friends reinforce it with sympathy and attention

Depression mulled over

A nasty business. Often clients must seek medical help for this but even then sound therapeutic suggestions will benefit and speed the process of recovery.

In clinical trials we have discovered that depressed people constantly present themselves with gloomy pictures. We know that people who are depressed repeatedly jeopardise their future by saying “*I'm so depressed*”. A suggestion they repeat over and over again to themselves.

Clients need to learn to be accurate in the way they talk to themselves. A more accurate and helpful suggestion would be “*I'm miserable at the moment but it's not going to last*”. Yes, of course it is awful to be depressed but it will not help the client if the therapist, family and friends reinforce it with sympathy and attention. The secondary gains for the depression can become too alluring. Far better to ask the client if there is anything constructive that you can do for them and if not you will leave them to be depressed in their own time and look forward to seeing them when they are better.

Somehow you need to break the state and this can be achieved by humour, shock or even by making the client angry.

Caring for others

Women often find it easy to slip into the role of being so busy caring for others they forget about themselves. Focusing attention on others' needs and problems is a way of obliterating their own miseries and needs. They have a right to a life too and should allocate sufficient time to cater for their own needs in order to be most effective with other people's needs.

They need to learn to get their own house in order before they dissipate all their energies on others.

Women often loathe to delegate because they want to appear to be *Superwoman*. Clients should learn that it is not a crime to say “*No I cannot do that*.” They also need to say to spouses and children: “*This is the situation – I need your help*.”

Secondary gains

How is the client benefiting by being overweight? Is it a marvellous excuse not to get a job, get married or succeed in the area they have always maintained they would like to?

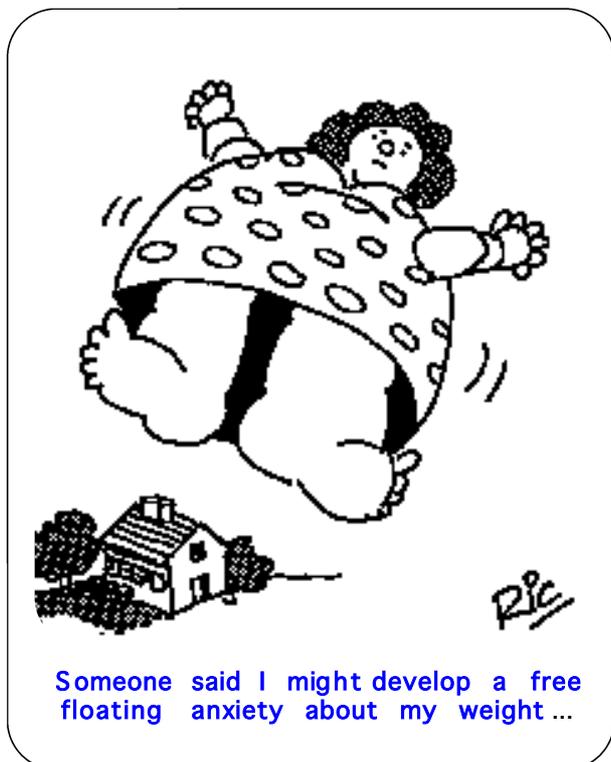
The secondary gains need to be explored and dealt with – either overtly or covertly.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- Excuses for failure need to be put in their true perspective and not sympathised with. It is very rare for a medical condition to cause obesity.
- The client must be guided to take responsibility for their weight and not to blame external circumstances.
- The act of losing weight is not a sufficient motivator in itself. It is the by-products of the act that engage the client's imagination and increase their determination to succeed.
- For most clients losing weight is looked upon with despair and dread. Their focus of attention needs to be changed. They need to focus their attention on everything that they are gaining and that the only thing they are losing is weight.
- Many clients think that they cannot *survive life* without chocolate and/or bingeing. The reassurance must be absolute that they will be perfectly okay even if they never touch another Mars bar as long as they live.

Why Diets Fail

- As soon as someone goes on a diet the idea of abstinence, starvation and irritability spring to mind. The other thing that happens is that the client's mind will immediately reactivate memories of past diets that have failed.
- **Going on a diet** also implies that it is something temporary, something that is going to happen for a relatively short duration like the *14 day grapefruit diet* or the *3 day banana diet*. The discouraging statistical fact is that something like 95 per cent of people who lose weight put it back on again.
- Research has shown dieting actually sets a person up to gain weight by training the body to live on less. Repetitive dieting puts a strain on the body and is confusing to the metabolism.
- Since most diets fail they produce low self esteem, self-consciousness and feelings of inadequacy.



The Billion Pound Slimming Industry

The industry is huge because it doesn't work. People are ever-optimistic and happy to try out new gimmicks in the hope that they will produce results.

After all, if the billion pound slimming industry were any good there would be no need for articles such as this one.

Patients who have always failed in the past

People become obese because they eat too much and too often. Ask clients: "*Would you get fat if you ate grass all day?*" and they often answer "*No*". Whereupon you can remind them that sheep and cows eat grass all day ... and get fat.

When you eat it sets off a complicated metabolic process. The gastric juices start flowing, the digestive process goes into action.

During the digestive process there are three things that happen:

- (1) *Much of the food passes as excrement.*
- (2) *Energy burns up some of the intake.*
- (3) *The rest is converted into fat.*

If you were to eat ten mouthfuls of food in one go you would store less fat than if you eat ten mouthfuls of food spaced out during the period of one day. The moral of the story is that if you nibble all day – *you squirrel away the fat.*

It would be extraordinary to meet an obese client in the consulting room whose dieting had not failed in the past. In order to change the client's mental framework a radical approach has to be taken.

They have to be persuaded that what they have done in the past should be discarded and a new thinking process negotiated and agreed.

Establishing the correct mindset

These two ideas should be installed by hypnosis so that the conscious and unconscious mind can work in harmony:

- No more diets – only a change in lifestyle
- Bingers are out of control.

Control has to be given back to the client. In order to do this and to break their mental framework you negotiate with them to undergo a three day fast where they will consume nothing but water.

Clients will inevitably be shocked. They may look at you as if you are *barking mad* but it will make an impact on them and help change their rigid mental framework.

The therapist can explain to the client that he or she will be perfectly okay. You can remind them that many religions get their adherents to undergo fasts at various times of the year. If the client commits him or herself to the fast the appropriate suggestions are then installed in hypnosis.

The result will be that the client will lose several pounds, feel inspired, but above all regain control of their eating habits. They may well adopt the idea that anything after a three day fast is going to be comparatively easy.

Once the fast has been completed the client must agree to establish a *new norm* from which he or she will not deviate for at least 21 days. For best results the client will agree to eat only one meal a day. The maximum that they can eat is three meals a day.

Eating between meals is strictly prohibited, as is eating certain foods, e.g. chocolate, cake, biscuits. The prohibitions give the client a sense of control.

These suggestions are installed in hypnosis together with much emphasis on the client's *change of lifestyle*, an abundant supply of ego strengthening suggestions and references to all the benefits they will derive from this change of lifestyle.

Self-hypnosis techniques should naturally be taught, together with the understanding that minds do what they are programmed to do.

The client should be taught to imagine enjoying the process of achieving their goal as well as the end result, to direct their attention to their past successes rather than their failures and to think of their project as a wonderful adventure from which they can emerge victorious.

The following script insertions have proved useful imagery for weight control

1) Each and every time you take a shower or bath you will notice how the soap is getting smaller and smaller and you will remember that you too are losing weight bit by bit, day by day until you reach your ideal weight.

2) And I want you to imagine how each and every time you go food shopping you find yourself magnetically drawn to the fresh fruit and vegetables and you remember how delicious a ripe pear, plum or tomato tastes and you find yourself filling up the trolley with healthy delicious food that you know is good for you and you know is part of your new life style.

3) And the more you think about your new lifestyle the more excited you become. You feel free, in control, optimistic – you feel energised with a new vitality.

4) People will stop you on the street and comment on how well you look. You will walk with poise and confidence and a knowledge that there is plenty of opportunity out there – you just have to go out and grab it.

5) Each and every morning you wake up with a feeling of excitement. You climb out of bed, get dressed and notice that your clothes are a little looser.

6) You see yourself sitting down to delicious healthy food that you thoroughly enjoy. You eat the food slowly because you are enjoying your meal. You are happy to eat because you know that you are eating foods that belong to your new lifestyle.

7) You find yourself thinking about doing the things that have seemed impossible for many years – going ski-ing, joining that exercise class, riding. You marvel at how good you feel and laugh at yourself for having been silly for so long. You are back in control – you are back in the driver's seat. Nothing and nobody is going to take this new lifestyle from you. It belongs to you – you are free at last and it's a wonderful feeling that you are going to hang on to.

8) You see your body lying on a massage table – receiving a wonderful relaxing massage – and you notice that as you are massaged your body transforms into the exact weight you would like it to be.

9) And I want you to look at your reflection in a full length mirror and as you do so you see yourself as you would like to be. You notice how well the clothes fit and watch that radiant confident smile as you twirl in front of the mirror.

10) And I want you to imagine six months from now. It is a beautiful sunny day. You are preparing for your own magical imaginary party. Your hair is done, your make-up is done and you step into a magnificent outfit. Look at yourself for a second or two and smile – enjoy the image – really enjoy it. You go downstairs to greet your guests one by one. The guests are all of your choosing – they can be your favourite actors, politicians, friends you haven't seen for years, ex-lovers, your family. It's your party – you can have whomever you want. Everybody is smiling at you – congratulating you on your success – you feel a million dollars. Go on, enjoy your party.