

Weight Loss Resistance

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As we get older, it becomes more and more difficult to lose weight. This phenomenon is called "weight loss resistance" ("WLR"). Lack of willpower doesn't adequately explain this experience, as evidenced by people who muster extraordinary discipline with "diet and exercise" for month after month, and yet the weight just doesn't come off. While increasing numbers of Americans, both adults and children, are overweight and want to lose weight, modern medicine has failed to provide a viable solution.

This problem is perpetuated by the industries that feed off this fat epidemic, including the food (diet foods and sodas), pharmaceutical and insurance industries.

No one drug or fad surgery can really provide optimal weight, or optimal health. This is because the "cause" of weight loss resistance is multi-factorial, or web-like.

The Problem with "Diet and Exercise"

"Diet and exercise", is clearly unsuccessful in the long-term for the vast majority. This is because it flawed in its conception. As we are learning, "diet" does not work, because when we restrict calories, the body's metabolism adjusts and eventually becomes even more resistant to weight loss. Over 90% of people who "diet" are heavier five years later. This concept of diet is being slowly replaced by "lifestyle", which means that we re-construct for ourselves a new sustainable way of shopping, cooking, eating, sleeping and exercising (see below). However, there remains confusion about what and how to eat (see below).

While "exercise" is necessary for optimal health, the type and intensity of exercise advocated for weight loss and maintenance has inherent problems. The first is that most forms of "aerobic" exercise essentially trade-in a joint for fat. After a few years of running, biking or swimming, or even use of the newer machines, people begin to "burn out" their knees, backs, shoulders or necks. This is due to the un-natural repetitive motion several times per week, as well as other factors discussed below.

Intense aerobics also produces free-radicals, the sparks that ignite inflammation and block weight loss.

The Hormonal Connection

Another problem with intense aerobics is the way the body interprets this activity, leading to a condition called "adrenal fatigue" (see prior article in Yoga Living). 20,000 years ago, we only did "aerobics" when we were being chased by lions or running from natural disaster. After a period of such intense activity, an early human would either rest or rest-in-peace (!). Our pets live this way--periods of intense activity, followed by even longer periods of rest. Humans are also designed to vary their activities with the seasons, becoming more and less active as the days get longer and shorter. In addition, when we watch an Indiana Jones movie, the body thinks it is being chased by natives--it cannot distinguish a movie from reality. So we go from stressor to stressor, 16 hours a day, without a change of season. In response to this stress, the adrenal glands put out several "fight or flight" hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. While very helpful in short bursts, these hormones in the long-term raise blood sugar, raise blood pressure, damage muscle, bone, joints and skin, suppress the immune system, impair the gastro-intestinal ("GI") system, and alter sleep and neurotransmitter balance.

Adrenal hormones also have an intimate relationship with sex and thyroid hormones, so they can cause or be affected by thyroid disease, birth control pills and peri-menopause, making WLR more problematic. Finally, we are learning more about the sugar/fat modulating hormones, including

insulin, glucagon, leptin (made by the fat cells themselves) and others. They interact with all the other hormones discussed above, so true health requires a global approach to the hormonal systems of the body.

Inflammation and Toxicity as Major Missing Links

Inflammation is a natural fire that the body uses to disassemble tissues and kill internal predators. It works through multiple chemical mediators, such as prostaglandins and cytokines. However, if the inflammation process does not turn off, it begins to alter our metabolism and cause WLR. One major cause of chronic inflammation is chronic toxicity.

Toxins are substances and activities that "poison" the body. There are several types, including chemical, biological, physical, and psycho-spiritual. We can also think of them as "exo-toxins", coming from outside the body, and "endo-toxins", coming from within.

Chemical toxins include: heavy metals, pesticides, drugs (legal and illegal), alcohol, cigarette smoke, and certain substances made by the liver. Biological toxins include certain foods, bacteria, yeast and parasites, and their waste products. Psycho-spiritual toxins include chronic anger, anxiety, negative thoughts, addictions and unhealthy mental practices. While each toxin individually may be safe or manageable, the total load (we now carry as many as 300 modern chemicals in our body) can overwhelm our natural detoxification systems. The interaction of multiple toxins is called "the cocktail effect".

These toxins poison our enzymes, which are needed to deactivate other toxins, generate energy, burn fat and build tissue, to name just a few functions. Toxins also damage the integrity of our GI tract leading to malabsorption, leaky gut, constipation and further toxicity. These dysfunctions then confuse the immune system, leading to allergy, recurrent infection, and autoimmune disease.

Sleep deprivation or poor quality sleep can be considered a toxin in itself, as it has clear effects on metabolism and inflammation.

The sum total of these conditions stoke the fire of inflammation that smolders in our brains, blood vessels, joints, skin and organs, and confuses our hormonal systems.

As we get older, we accumulate more and more of these toxins in our bones, muscle and fat. Losing weight (and other activities) causes a release of these toxins from these tissue banks back into our circulation, essentially poisoning ourselves from within, causing worsening inflammation. In some ways, getting older, i.e. getting arthritic, demented, depressed, osteoporotic, bald and fat, can be simply thought of as the accumulated damage from these toxins and inflammation.

The good news is that we can reverse this toxicity and the resulting inflammation starting at any age. With strategic detoxification and lifestyle change, we can slow down and even reverse aging and WLR.

Toxic Foods and Food Allergy

Besides the clear toxicity of commercial foods, with pesticides, artificial hormones, antibiotics, genetically modified proteins (60% of soy and corn) and chemically manipulated nutrients (such as high-fructose corn syrup), another important consideration is that of allergy and intolerance.

Many of us are allergic to one or several foods. The biggest culprits are: sugar, dairy, wheat and gluten and soy. This is in part because of over-exposure since early childhood, as well as the fact that these foods are not the same as they were 10, 100, or 1000 years ago. Many people aren't aware of

these allergies, or intolerance, because the body adapts, as it does to a toxic job or home environment. However, after a period of vacation from these toxins, their re-introduction may demonstrate a clear deterioration in health. An elimination and then re-challenge is often more diagnostic than skin, blood or energy tests for allergy.

Dairy is a highly controversial and important toxin/allergen since it has been highly marketed as a good source of calcium, protein and vitamin D, and helpful for weight loss. The Weight-Watchers program, one of the most successful diet/lifestyle plans, is heavily based on dairy. However, there is growing evidence that dairy in most forms is pro-inflammatory (see Campbell's book).

When one consumes an allergenic food on a regular basis, even a small amount, this stokes the immune system to produce inflammation and also calls on the adrenal glands to produce cortisol and adrenaline. Therefore, eating an allergenic food in and of itself may be a major cause of WLR.

Some people are lucky to find that elimination of just one food, such as dairy, wheat or coffee allows weight to begin to drop off without any other changes in lifestyle. Most people will need a more comprehensive approach, however.

Lastly, there is a growing convergence of opinion that the optimal diet should emphasize organic food, green vegetables, colored fruits, seeds and nuts, less grains (especially processed ones), more water and more raw foods. Food processing and cooking can destroy up to 80% of nutritional value. Victoria Boutenko's book distinguishes between feeling full vs feeling satisfied. The common habit of looking through the cabinets after finishing a meal suggests that the body is looking for something that is missing from the Standard American Diet ("SAD").

Like building a house without nails or with substandard pipes, lacking just one critical nutrient or consuming altered nutrients may cause subtle or serious illness which tends to worsen over time.

The Unique Role of Yoga

While most exercise is stress-producing, classic yoga, with its meditative quality, is one of the few forms of exercise that provide stretch, strength, and at the same time can re-balance hormonal and neuro-transmitter systems. The trick is to do yoga gently, not aggressively. It also is portable, cheap and does not utilize the repetitive unnatural movement of aerobic machines. Yoga also allows us to explore our thought processes, which are always involved in weight issues.

Steps Toward Reversing Weight Loss Resistance

Based on the above, the following steps can be effective for a sustainable lifestyle with optimal health and weight:

1. **Get informed.** Read and learn. Be critical of concepts that have been drilled in since childhood.
2. **Get real.** Take an honest assessment of where you are with your weight, diet and lifestyle. Clarify your priorities and identify the obstacles that get in your way (see Hobbs book on time management).
3. **Get inspired.** Methods to stoke your enthusiasm for health include journaling, joining a yoga class, and finding friends and a community that support your efforts. On the other hand, find ways to defend yourself against those who may sabotage your efforts, including family members and co-workers.
4. **Get help.** Find a knowledgeable and like-minded practitioner who can do the proper tests and provide objective feedback.
5. **Get tested.** Evaluate toxins and allergies using the best methods available. Even if some are not "covered" by insurance--this investment is like fixing your car or home; and

without it, you can waste time and money.

6. **Get prepared.** Design a comprehensive program that involves: healthy foods, supplements, gentle aerobics, gentle yoga, journaling, support people, and a regular schedule or ritual that keeps your momentum going. Some people like to make one change at a time; others plan for a month or two and then implement a comprehensive program all at once.

7. **Get started.** Make a commitment to a new way of eating and living. In opposition to fast foods, the "slow food" movement emphasizes the importance and privilege of preparing our meals using organic local foods.

By applying these principles, health will improve and weight will stabilize naturally.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This educational material may not be used to make decisions about medical care without the help of an experienced practitioner.

For More Information

- See Dr. Cheikin's website, www.cheikin.com, for related articles on: Heavy Metal Toxicity, Journaling, Courage to Heal, as well as other topics and holistic health information.
- Dr. Cheikin offers workshops in several holistic health topics for adults and children. Please call for more information or to host a Workshop.
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