EVERYTHING YOU’VE BEEN TOLD ABOUT WEIGHT LOSS IS BULLSHIT

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BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #1: LOSING WEIGHT IS EASY

People selling weight loss will shout about the ‘success’ of their programs until they’re blue in the face. And hey, in the short term, if you follow a calorie controlled diet*, you may very well lose weight.

What the weight loss wolves DON’T want you to know is that you’re almost CERTAIN to put the weight back on, plus more. A HUGE amount of weight science research tells us that in general, humans on diets will lose weight (how much varies on the amount of restriction you’re doing, and your unique genetic predisposition to be able to lose weight), for a maximum period of about 6 months.**

Weight science research loves to publish their ‘results’ after this length of time, and then sell you the dream that this result lasts forever. It’s in their interests to trick you into thinking that theirs is the dazzling, life-changing diet you’ve been looking for.

* By the way – any weight loss from a diet is due to the calorie restriction involved in the plan/points/telling you to cut out major food groups making it impossible to eat enough food – NOT the random crazy made-up rules the diet is selling you. It’s not about low fat, or high fat, or low carb, or macros, or Mediterranean. ALL weight loss diets ‘work’ – temporarily – through calorie restriction.

** ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17469900
But it’s not. After that magical 6 month period, regardless of the type of diet, almost everyone starts to put the weight back on, and by 2 to 5 years later, the VAST majority (95%) of dieters are back to where they started, and about one to two thirds of people end up heavier than they were before they began! This fact is SO well known that it’s included as “Level A” evidence (meaning it’s the highest level of evidence possible in science) from our very own National Health & Medical Research Council:

**LONG-TERM WEIGHT MANAGEMENT**

How effective are lifestyle interventions in maintaining weight loss in adults?

Weight loss following lifestyle intervention is maximal at 6–12 months. Regardless of the degree of initial weight loss, most weight is regained within a 2-year period and by 5 years the majority of people are at their pre-intervention body weight.

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References: Dansinger et al. 2007; Schmitz et al. 2007; Stahre et al. 2007; Cussler et al. 2008; Martin et al. 2008; Svetkey et al. 2008; Cooper et al. 2010; Neve et al. 2010
Now, sometimes researchers try to compensate for their incredibly shitty misrepresentation of the facts, and follow their dieters for longer. Studies like this often show people regaining the weight. But rather than seeing this as a normal, biological response to starvation, the researchers then blame the participants for not ‘complying’ with the diet. Oh, those naughty, naughty dieters!

Look, we need to face the fact that **dieting is really hard to do in the long term.** At first, in those ‘rose-coloured glasses’ early days of going on a diet, many people report feeling energised, positive, focused, and even not interested in food. This is when they rave for hours about their amazing new low carb/vegan/cleanse/detox/unicorn poo plan, and how it’s the answer to literally every ailment they’ve ever encountered.

We call this particularly painful period (for friends and family of the dieter) the ‘diet honeymoon’. And it doesn’t last. At some point, dieting just becomes the world’s biggest drag. Not only do people get really, really obsessed with all the food they can’t have, they’re also getting enormously increased hunger signals, thanks to an outpouring of the hormone grehlin in their stomachs, driving feelings of intense hunger. Our bodies will fight tooth and nail to regain lost weight.* It’s much smarter than us, and if it thinks it’s starving (which on a diet, IT IS!), it will do everything it can – from **slowing down our metabolism** to **increasing hunger** to **rerouting energy expenditure**, in order to force the body to regain lost weight. The body also ‘remembers’ each experience of weight loss and regain, and over time it becomes smarter, re-setting our body’s ‘set point’ (the weight range in which a human

* [nytimes.com/2016/05/08/opinion/sunday/why-you-cant-lose-weight-on-a-diet.html?_r=0](http://nytimes.com/2016/05/08/opinion/sunday/why-you-cant-lose-weight-on-a-diet.html?_r=0)
body feels comfortable) to a higher level. From the body’s point of view, doing this means that there’s an extra safety net of fat which it can rely on the next time a famine sets in. Clever, right?*

There’s even a stack of research that shows that people regain the weight even when they stick to the diet – down to the last *!#$ almond. In the Women’s Health Initiative, almost 20,000 women followed a low-fat diet for 7.5 years. Initially, they lost weight, but then started to put it back on. After the experiment ended, the dieters weighed a dismal 400 grams less than they did at the start. These women stuck to their low-fat diets through 7.5 long years; they weren’t cheating. All for a lousy 400 grams! The women in the study who didn’t diet stayed roughly the same weight – in spite of not following a diet, they did not get fatter. Which group would you rather be in!?

And before we start assuming that the weight regain result was just because it was a ‘low fat’ diet, another study compared weight loss using the Atkins diet (high protein, low in carbohydrate), Zone (low in carbohydrate), LEARN diet (low in fat, high in carbohydrate), and Ornish diet (very high carbohydrate). The results showed that although people lost a little weight on each of the diets initially, by 6 months the weight loss stopped and they all started to regain – even though everyone was still following the diet.**

It’s no wonder that a very large Australian study concluded that over time, dieting to lose weight is a strong predictor of BMI increase, not decrease!***

* nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/n57 p161
** jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/205916
*** ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25608460
Apart from being physiologically resisted by the body, diets are horribly hard work psychologically. Here’s some pretty convincing evidence of just how impossible sticking to a diet can be – the graph below is from Jenny Craig’s very own database:

So from a pool of over 60,000 Jenny Craig customers, clearly it doesn’t take long for people to leave! At the 3 month mark, more than half of their victims/customers had fled, and at 1 year, a massive 93% were gone. **This pattern is much more of a “typical” result for people doing diet programs than those seductive before and after pictures!**

So please, please don’t feel like you’re ‘alone’ in not being able to stick to these crazy regimes! Dieting just sucks. We’re not supposed to be good at starving ourselves. IT’S NOT YOUR FAULT!

It’s seriously time to stop blaming yourself – you have not failed. Weight loss is not easy. **The diet is the failure, not you.** Let’s stop supporting the weight loss industry, and instead turn our attention to supporting each other in crushing it!
BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #2: YOU CAN PICK YOUR GOAL WEIGHT!

How much weight can you really expect to lose by dieting? If you believe the hype, heaps! It even looks like you can ‘choose’ your goal weight, pick out the diet, and cruise on down to the number you’ve always wanted to be at….right?

Sorry, but science doesn’t agree with this weight loss industry spin. You know how on weight loss ads for Weight Watchers, or Lite ’n Easy, there’s always that little asterisk at the bottom with a “results not typical” disclaimer? It’s there for a reason. The companies have been forced to put these warnings up (though they try really hard to make them reeeeally tiny!) because science overwhelmingly shows that people lose bugger all weight on diets.

One of the biggest and longest running studies on the impact of diet on weight loss (translation: long-term diet torture) was The Look AHEAD trial.¹ This was setup to investigate the impact of weight loss on people with type 2 diabetes. The trial was supposed to run for 10 years, but it was stopped after 8 years because of "futility" – in other words, they discovered that making everybody diet and exercise like weight

¹ ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4339027/
obsessed cult members did not actually reduce their chances of having a heart attack. In fact, what they found was that people who did nothing at all had exactly the same risk of having a heart attack than the unfortunate people who restricted and exercised themselves into a frenzy.

The Look AHEAD participants had to stick to a 1,200 calorie diet (1,500 calories if they were above 250 pounds), aim for less than 30% fat intake, and do 200 minutes per week of exercise. The researchers also threw some serious support at these dieters. In addition to being given the diet & exercise rules, they also got:

- Intensive behavioural counselling sessions with psychologists, dietitians, and exercise therapists
- Free weight loss drugs for people who weren’t losing enough weight
- Free meal replacements
- Free gym memberships, personal trainers, and home exercise equipment

So what happened? In the first year of the trial, the diet group lost on average 8.5% of their body weight. Then – guess what – they started to put it back on. And after 8 years, they’d lost an average of 6% of their body weight. In real terms, this translates to an average of – wait for it – a loss of 2.6 kg.

I know, right? 8 years of blood, sweat, and deprivation-induced tears… for 2.6kgs? Hardly seems worth it to me!

It gets worse. Believe it or not, the Look AHEAD trial’s 2.6 kg result was actually pretty good in comparison to other research outcomes!
Another review of 21 long term weight loss studies found that on average, people who dieted were able to maintain an average weight loss of just .94kg after 2 years.*

Can we please just face it? Losing a lot of weight and keeping it off is really, really unlikely. Researchers in the UK have even crunched the statistics! They found that for people in the “obese” BMI category, the probability of getting to a BMI of 25 and below was 1 in 210 for men and 1 in 124 for women. For those with a BMI above 40, the odds were 1 in 1290 for men and 1 in 677 for women.**

This information might seem pretty depressing, especially if you’ve been trying to lose weight for a long time, or are living in a larger body. I get that our society constantly sends messages about the value of being thin, and the experience of being larger in our world is incredibly hard. There’s a lot of pressure out there to keep you focused on weight loss, in spite of a mountain of evidence that this is extremely unlikely, difficult, and also extremely harmful.

But there’s POWER in knowledge. It’s important that you know the reality of what you’re up against when it comes to the weight battle.

You need to make an informed choice about how to look after your body in the long term, rather than being sucked in by the diet industry hype.

You need to really think about it – how much energy and time are you willing to put into this fight? Is it worth it?

* dishlab.org/pubs/2013%20Compass.pdf
** ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302773
BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #3:
BEING EVEN A LITTLE BIT FAT WILL KILL YOU

The DEATH FAT myth scares so many people, and it's one reason we keep turning again and again to dieting, even if we keep 'failing'. We're told that unless we're in that magic BMI range of 25 and below, we're at imminent risk of dropping dead. Exactly how much earlier we'll die is a subject of enormous scientific debate*, but that doesn't stop this death-fat-hysteria.

But if we look more closely at the relationship between weight and death, we see that actually, it's BEHAVIOURS that make the real difference - not weight. Thin people who are inactive have a higher risk of dying than an active person with a high BMI. The fact is, in every BMI category there are fit people and unfit people, people with questionable dietary habits, people with health-promoting dietary patterns, people with straightforward access to incredible medical care, and people for whom even basic health care is out of reach. Does it seem fair that they're lumped in together? We need a better way to assess death prediction, especially if the findings are going to be used to tell people to keep trying to lose weight.

Luckily one study has done just that. This very large scale investigation of over 11,000 people actually thought to look beyond BMI and examined the impact of behaviours on death rates. The researchers looked at 4 'health behaviours' which were:

* ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK62367/
1. Eating 5 or more fruits and vegetables daily
2. Exercising regularly (around 3 times a week)
3. Consuming alcohol in moderation
4. Not smoking

and then crunched the numbers according to people’s body weight. Here’s what they found:

As you can see, if people weren’t doing any of the behaviours, their risk of dying was increased, especially in people with a BMI of over 30. But this association between body weight and dying early dropped away almost completely once behaviours were taken into account. The more healthy behaviours people did, the lower their risk of dying early, REGARDLESS OF THEIR BMI.

**Fat people who embraced all 4 of the health behaviours had exactly the same risk of dying early as thin people. Thin people who didn’t do any of the healthy behaviours had double the risk of dying early than fat people who did all 4.** The authors concluded that,
“Healthy lifestyle habits are associated with a significant decrease in mortality regardless of baseline body mass index.”

BOOM. Tell that to your doctor next time you’re told to lose weight or you’ll die young!
BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #4: WEIGHT LOSS WILL MAKE YOU LIVE LONGER!

Losing weight will make us live longer, right? Don't we hear that message a lot! But actually, the data says the opposite – there is a very extensive amount of research that shows that weight loss is associated with increased risk of death, not the longer lives we dream of. The association looks like a U shape: people who are very thin and people who are very big have higher death rates than those in the middle. But the mortality risk associated with largeness generally doesn’t become prominent until someone’s BMI above 35.

**WEIGHT WATCHING**

In some studies, being overweight is associated with increased survival time, creating a U-shaped mortality curve.

And just to throw in another pretty picture, let’s not forget that globally, life expectancy is increasing, and in Australia, life expectancy statistics are pretty damn reassuring.

![Life Expectancy Graph](aihw.gov.au/deaths/life-expectancy/)

In spite of the ‘obesity epidemic’ which started to take hold in the 1980’s, we are enjoying much longer, healthier lifespans. OK, so we’re getting heavier, but we’re living longer! As we saw above, if we do our best to look after what we can control – our BEHAVIOURS – we’re likely to be just fine.
BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #5: IT’S JUST CALORIES IN, CALORIES OUT

There’s a lot of talk out there about the ‘obesity epidemic’, and everyone has an opinion as to why we’ve globally gained weight since around the 1980’s. Popular belief points the finger directly at individuals, and this idea that people who are larger are lazy, indulgent over-eaters has really taken hold. People think that what we weigh is a simple matter of calories in/calories out.

Anyone who tells you this is seriously wrong. Yes, we’re getting larger, but no-one has categorically nailed ‘why’. It’s not just humans – even our animals are getting bigger, and bizarrely, even our laboratory animals (whose diets have literally remained the same) – are getting heavier.

Research has unearthed over 100 factors which contribute body weight, and more are being discovered all the time (check out this amazing visual representation of everything that’s involved! You’d probably die of boredom if we talked you through all 100, so let’s just briefly review a few of these non-calorie contributors to weight.

* [rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/early/2010/11/19/rspb.2010.1890](http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/early/2010/11/19/rspb.2010.1890)

** [shiftn.com/obesity/Full-Map.html](http://shiftn.com/obesity/Full-Map.html)
Genetics & Epigenetics

Genetics have a big say in what we weigh. Twin studies show that babies who are adopted out are much more similar in weight to their biological, not adoptive parents. Literally hundreds of studies prove that our weight is very much down to genetic inheritance. In fact, the genetic inheritance of weight is higher than the genetic inheritance for schizophrenia and breast cancer. So, if you belong to a family with larger bodies, it is likely that you are genetically ‘supposed’ to weigh more. **This is not ‘wrong’ – this is diversity, and diversity is SUPPOSED to exist!**

Some people’s genes mean that their bodies are more effective at storing excess calories as body fat. This is known as the ‘thrifty gene’, and is actually very good for survival. In ancient times, famine and lack of food was common. People with the thrifty gene were efficient at storing up extra calories during times of plenty, so that their bodies could rely on the reserves when the famine hit. Therefore, those of us with the thrifty gene were more likely to survive to pass the gene down.

We’ve all heard that “the gene argument is wrong, because people’s genes haven’t changed over the last fifty years, but we are getting fatter”. But of course, our genes interact with the environment we live in. This is called ‘epigenetics’. If we live in a ‘land of plenty’, where food supply is abundant, or if our bodies are impacted by environmental and social forces, our genetic tendency to weigh more combines with these, and we become heavier.
Environment & Social Forces

In addition to genes and hormones, there are many other factors which can influence body weight. Recent research has investigated the role of gut flora, or bacteria in our stomachs. Environmental pollutants are also a hot topic, with endocrine disruptors found to have a significant impact on body weight. Stress is a critical factor, with research showing that increased cortisol levels (a stress hormone) causes the body to increase its storage of fat. Sleep is another determinant on how much we weigh, with chronic sleep deprivation linked to increased fat storage. Socioeconomic status, experiences of oppression and trauma, dieting, and weight stigma are significant and almost totally overlooked contributors to our body weight. There are so many things to consider, ranging from individual psychology and physiology to the culture and economics of food production, food consumption, and the structure of our environment.

The fact is, anyone who believes that what we weigh is simply down to what we eat is ignorant, trying to sell you something, or both!
BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #6:
WEIGHT LOSS WILL MAKE YOU HEALTHY
JUST LIKE A THIN PERSON

Everyone knows that losing weight will make us ‘healthier’ – right?

In diet studies, when people’s health indicators improve, researchers assume that this is due to the weight loss. But once again they overlook something crucial: people’s behaviours. People don’t just lose weight – they do stuff (like reduce the amount or types of foods they’re eating, or do more exercise, or even just get in contact with other human beings who act like they care about you). And it’s the stuff people DO – their behaviours – that are responsible for improved health indicators – not the weight loss.

If it was just the weight loss, then we should be able to improve people’s health by just cutting the fat off them right? This is exactly what happens in liposuction, and guess what? Liposuction doesn’t improve people’s health!*

A recent meta-analysis** asked the question: Is long-term weight loss related to health outcomes? It seems incredible that this research question isn’t asked more often, but there you go! This assumption that our health gets better when we lose weight is so widely accepted as ‘fact’ that researchers have forgotten to actually research it!

* ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2656416/
In this very comprehensive analysis, 21 weight loss studies with follow-ups of at least 2 years were reviewed. They looked at metabolic health indicators, such as cholesterol, triglycerides, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and blood glucose, and tested whether the amount of weight lost predicted these health outcomes. The results showed that overall, health improvements from dieting were minimal, and that **none of the health improvements were related to weight change**. The health benefits that people did experience had more to do with exercise and a change in eating habits (BEHAVIOURS) rather than weight loss. The researchers concluded by saying

“it is difficult to justify encouraging individuals to endure them (diets)”. 

So there we have it! Long-term, high quality research shows that there is NO evidence that weight loss by itself has marked health benefits. In reality, **our behaviors are far more important in determining our health.** Studies such as this one are leading many researchers to finally start thinking, “Hey, maybe this whole diet push isn’t actually the best use of our time.” Just joking/wishful thinking – unfortunately the whole ‘let’s just keep looking for another magic diet formula’ is still the most common branch of weight science. But a growing army of anti-diet crusaders are lending their voices and research brains to investigating more human-friendly, less harmful ways of looking after our bodies and our health. Check out this fantastic Youtube video from the Association for Size Diversity & Health (ASDAH), which uses poodles to explain the problem with weight-focussed health science: [watch here](#).
And while you’re there, go check out the ASDAH website which is bursting with anti-diet professionals and practitioners:
sizediversityandhealth.org

**Why Does My Doctor Still Tell Me To Lose Weight?**

So if the research is out there, and the science is being debunked, then WHY does my doctor keep telling me to lose weight?? Well, the average time for research findings to become established everyday medical practice is 17 years (SEVENTEEN YEARS!!)* which explains why your doctor and perhaps other professionals around you still push you to lose weight. Even government and public health policy guidelines can take a while to change because the literature they rely on to make their policies is rammed full of short-term weight loss studies (those pesky 6 month ones!). At present, research that focuses on behaviours rather than weight loss is a much smaller pool than the weight-loss-is-great pile. They don’t know any better, yet. You might be the one to show your doctor that there is another way, and it might help them to realise they need to catch up!

Weight science researchers are well aware of the dismal outcomes of most weight loss attempts, and of the physical and psychological risks associated with dieting. It’s incredible that they STILL tell us to lose weight. But as we know, there’s a very dominant cultural belief that thin is good, and fat is bad. Science is unfortunately just as susceptible to the biases of our society. It wasn’t that long ago that psychologists were using horrendous aversion therapy to “cure” homosexuality.

* [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3241518/]
Questioning the dominant weight-focused paradigm is what the anti-diet movement is all about, and an ever-increasing amount of research, academic discussion, and activism is happening all over the world. Nothing short of a ‘paradigm shift’ is needed, and this will take time!*

But it is our hope that 50 years from now, people will look back at the diet culture of the twenty first century and shake their heads in disbelief. We envision a world in which all bodies – of all shapes, sizes, races, genders, abilities, and ages - are welcomed, supported and cared for in a compassionate manner. A world in which behaviours, not sizes, are the focus.

* nutritionj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1475-2891-10-9
BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #7: WEIGHT LOSS IS HARMLESS

The risks of dieting are literally NEVER mentioned, but they are incredibly serious.

We now know that the vast majority of people who diet tend to yo-yo diet — that is, most people gain the weight back again, then later on they try a new diet, and so on, and so on. So most people struggling with weight issues are ‘weight cyclers’ who don’t enjoy weight stability.

We know that many of the health issues typically blamed on being at a higher weight may actually be caused by yo-yo dieting. In a study of nearly 10,000 people with pre-existing cardiovascular disease, people whose weight fluctuated the most (by around 4 kg) were found to experience 136% more strokes, 117% more heart attacks, and 124% more deaths than those with the smallest shifts in weight (around 1 kg).*

In addition to being physically harmful, dieting, body hatred, and wanting to lose weight are very psychologically damaging. In 2012 it was estimated that almost 1 million Australians were suffering from an eating disorder. The rates of eating disorders in Australia have doubled from 1995 to 2005,** as our diet obsession and fear of fatness reached fever pitch. Eating disorders are difficult to treat, and once developed, are often chronic, requiring long-term treatment and causing great disruption to people’s lives. Many eating disorders begin, innocently

** ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2212110/
enough, with dieting. Other eating disorders begin with a disparaging body comment from a loved one, or from hearing a parent share their diet talk or body dissatisfaction with another adult.

Body dissatisfaction, dieting, and disordered eating are strong risk factors for developing an eating disorder. In Australia, research showed that adolescent females who dieted severely were 18 times more likely to develop an eating disorder within 6 months.*

Research has shown that almost half of those in the ‘obese’ BMI category suffer from Binge Eating Disorder (BED) – not surprising given what we know about the link between repeated weight cycling and binge eating behaviour. It’s ironic, then, that so many people in this ‘obese’ category are then told to go on a diet to lose weight – pretty much ensuring that they’ll develop an eating disorder. A recipe for disaster!

BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #8:
WEIGHT LOSS WILL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOUR BODY

Probably the most depressing fact in this entire e-book is this one: these days, being unhappy with our bodies is so common it’s seen as ‘normal’. A global study of women in 10 countries found that 90% wanted to change their appearance, with body weight and shape ranking as the number one thing they wanted to change.* Disturbingly, how women felt about their bodies was closely related to their self esteem. In other words, disliking their bodies meant that they disliked themselves.

The weight loss industry profits from making us feel wrong. If we feel bad about ourselves, and are offered some miracle product which promises to ‘fix’ us, we’ll buy it! The idea that we ‘should’ feel bad about ourselves if we aren’t at our most desired body weight (whatever that means!) is widely accepted, as is the idea that we ‘should’ then lose weight to feel better. Think of those horrible Weight Watchers ads which are telling women that the life they deserve is tied to their stupid diet plan (Live bigger in a smaller body? Get serious!!). It’s a shame-based industry. Shame makes us slaves to the next diet.

If we tie our self esteem to whatever is happening on the scales, then we can’t feel good about ourselves unless we are thinner. A client told me once that her husband weighed her each month, and that they had a deal: If she gained more than five kilograms, he would divorce her. Shocking, right? It’s appalling to think that a complex, rich, intimate relationship like marriage could be judged and dismissed on the basis of something as superficial as weight. Yet this is exactly what we do when we judge ourselves because of our body weight.

The weight loss industry doesn’t want you to know this, but people who lose weight are not ‘guaranteed’ to experience lasting improvements to their body image or self esteem. Short term weight loss studies do show an improvement in self esteem, but when the weight that was lost is regained, AND WE KNOW THAT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY HAPPEN – self esteem takes a hit.* If self esteem is a problem for you, weight loss is not the answer!

Trying to feel better about our bodies by shrinking them feeds into the weight loss industry’s stranglehold on our lives. Diet culture (the dominant set of beliefs that thin is good and fat is bad) is toxic and damaging, and doing what it says will not make you happy!

Here’s a radical idea. If you want to improve how you feel about your body, you can do this without trying to lose weight. Yes – it is possible! All of the techniques in the UNTRAPPED program are scientifically validated, shown to improve how you feel about your body. And none of these amazing changes are dependent on weight loss. Which means they’ll last!

* hindawi.com/journals/jobe/2014/983495/abs/
BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #9:
WEIGHT LOSS WILL MAKE YOU SEXY!

Diet culture relies on constantly selling us the message that our appearance is our worth. So many of our fairytales, novels and movies depict female success in love after an amazing weight loss or appearance transformation. It’s no wonder we have rampant body dissatisfaction when our romantic social conditioning starts with Cinderella and progresses to My Big Fat Greek Wedding, Clueless, The Swan, and The Biggest Loser.

Even major life events – like deciding to get married – (which is after all about deciding to commit to a lifelong relationship – not about what we look like) has become dominated by a social expectation that the bride to be must be starved, spray tanned, botoxed and enhanced to meet the idealised vision of what a bride looks like.

All of this is bulls**t. If you want to lose weight because you think your partner would be more attracted to you, or if you want to lose weight because you think that only thin people can attract a partner, that’s diet culture at work, inside your mind, affecting your thoughts.

There is nothing inherently attractive about thinness. It’s just that diet culture holds up thin bodies as desirable.

As a test of the cultural construction of desirability, male villagers in Yomybato, an isolated Peruvian village, were shown pictures of Western supermodels and asked to describe them. Rather than seeing them
as “sexy”. the men described them as “pale, almost dead”...“had diarrhoea a few days ago”.

You don’t have to move to a remote South American village in order to feel sexy! Even in our diet-saturated culture, the fact is, people of all shapes and sizes can and do have satisfying sexual relationships. A large study in Sweden** found that sexual satisfaction and health and life satisfaction was similar in all BMI categories. Yes, larger people have sex! Naked! And they can enjoy it!

The way to achieve a sense of connection with your sexual self and obtain the confidence to pursue relationships is not through doomed weight loss attempts. It starts with recognising the messaging being shoved down our throats, calling bulls**t on it, and turning towards yourself in a completely different way. Rejecting diet mentality, embracing your uniqueness, and owning it! And I don’t want to sound like a broken record, but this is what we help you to do in UNTRAPPED!

* nature.com/nature/journal/v396/n6709/full/396321a0.html
** onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1038/oby.2004.211/full
BULLSH*T DIET MYTH #10:
IT’S NOT A DIET, IT’S A LIFESTYLE/HEALTHY EATING PLAN/CLEAN EATING/ WAY OF LIFE

Oh, MAN this one is annoying! Let’s start with some basics. What is a diet? A diet is any set of rules, guidelines, way of eating, etc – that tell you WHAT, HOW MUCH, and/or WHEN to eat, with the purpose of losing weight/changing your appearance (or increasingly, trying to ‘be healthy’ – whatever that means).

People selling weight loss and pretending they’re not diets make up very empowering-sounding names like ‘clean eating’, but it’s still a diet. And for crying out loud, a lifestyle change is a diet that YOU CAN NEVER STOP DOING. Given what we know about the likelihood of anyone sticking to a diet long term, this is a sure-fire ticket to nowhere.

It’s not surprising that with their dismal outcomes, diets now have a terrible reputation. So now suddenly everyone’s denying that their shitty weight loss product is actually a weight loss product. Some of them even have the nerve to claim that their crappy diet industry product is ‘body positive’. 
Take Weight Watchers, who are now proclaiming all over their media that they are “not a diet”.

This type of thing seriously needs bulls**t called on it. Weight Watchers is a company that has watching people’s weight right there IN ITS NAME. No matter how much they spin it, its product gives food a number and then limits that number on a daily basis, so that you lose weight. In my book, that is a diet my friend. That’s a fact. An actual fact, not an alternative fact!

Diets and lifestyle changes tell you to obey their rules, and sell you the dream of permanent weight loss or physical perfection if you follow their plan. **All of them undermine your relationship with your body. Diets tell you that you can’t trust your own intuition, and that you can’t trust your body’s messages.** Undermining our sacred right to body trust is an absolute CRIME. The truth is, nothing is wrong with trusting your body. People who do trust their bodies – those who eat intuitively – are just FINE.
UNTRAPPED: THE END OF BULL**T

It’s time to call bull**t on this whole diet culture thing. Dieting, even if it’s not called that, is a spectacular waste of time and energy. You deserve more, my friend!

REBEL against this constant saturation of bull**t. Rise up, and reclaim your body as your own. Join us at UNTRAPPED, and we’ll take you step by step through an incredible, empowering process of unlearning. This program is a labour of love from Louise and her crew of committed anti-diet health experts. We’ll help you to reconnect with your body, and learn to truly trust your hunger and fullness. We’ll guide you to develop a playful, enjoyable relationship with food and nourishment. We’ll help you find joy in moving your body, not to lose weight, but to feel embodied. And we’ll skillfully help you to lose this constant diet narrative in your head. We’ll help you to make peace with this incredible, one of a kind body you live in. And we’ll bring you into our wonderful community of people who are also feeling the power of REJECTING the diet culture!

So sign up now and start your UNTRAPPED liberation!

Love, Fiona & Louise
MEET

LOUISE ADAMS &
FIONA WILLER

Louise Adams is a clinical psychologist, the creator of UNTRAPPED, and host of the anti-diet podcast All Fired Up. She has written two books, Mindful Moments and The Non-Diet Approach Handbook for Psychologist and Counsellors (along with Fiona Willer, APD). She has been practicing in this field for more than 20 years. Louise’s expertise is in anti-dieting approaches to self care, and she helps heal people with disordered eating, eating disorders, weight struggles, and with all things body. Louise fights to educate people about the cruel trap of dieting and diet culture, which only sets us up to fail. She uses an evidence-based anti-dieting approach to empower people to achieve permanent lifestyle change. Louise is treasurer of Health At Every Size Australia, and is also a Member of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), and a member of the Clinical College of the APS.

Fiona Willer is an accomplished Accredited Practising Dietitian and university lecturer in nutrition and dietetics. Fiona is also the UNTRAPPED Research Coordinator, responsible for designing and implementing our UNTRAPPED research program. Fiona values nourishment, autonomy, authenticity and evidence based practice. She is the author of two non-diet approach guidebooks for health professionals (one for dietitians along with Fiona Sutherland, APD, and one for psychologists and counselors along with Louise Adams, clinical psychologist). Fiona’s PhD research cemented her resolve that weight neutral approaches should be part of every clinician’s skill set and continues to inform the professional development workshops and training she provides through her business, Health Not Diets. Her advocacy work includes being the current Vice-President International of the Association for Size Diversity and Health (ASDAH), and being the current Secretary of HAES Australia. Fiona has great enthusiasm for demolishing weight biased research and overusing food and eating metaphors in everyday life.