

Foreword by Michael J Vandermark, PhD

Author of *Life's Wake-up Call: the Content to Process Shift*

With a special note from Joseph P. Santiago, MD

2 Day Gift of Wellness

*An Effortless
Weight Loss
Process
You Can Do
Together*



Dr. Michael Christensen

2 Day Gift of Wellness

By Dr. Michael Christensen

An effortless weight loss process you can do together

“Dr. Christensen is an extraordinary author. Simply put, his research on how to give yourself a 2-day gift of wellness is priceless. This gift will keep on giving for the rest of your life, with his unique process of utilizing your “Triple ‘R’ days”. – Debra Thomas, Integrative Nutrition Health Coach (INHC)

“I found Dr. Michael’s book, *2 Day Gift of Wellness* to be exceptionally well written, a quick read and very easy to understand. Dr. Michael achieves two primary goals. He clearly demonstrates the downfalls of most diets, at the same time giving the reader an alternative that targets wellness which normally achieves weight loss as a side-effect. The virtue of his process is that it has been proven to be sustainable which is difficult in most diets. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to lose weight and keep it off, while improving their health, their energy and their state of mind.” – John Berish

“A must read for folks who’ve been unsuccessful with traditional diet plans, or anyone seeking better health and wellness. Dr. Christensen explains why those traditional diet plans ultimately fail and offers a path to better health and wellness through his UdP™ process. He lays out UdP’s eight basic principles in clear, easy to understand language and includes real world examples of his clients’ experiences and successes, along with sample menus and journaling. For folks like me, who must travel internationally across many time zones, his tips for achieving UdP success on the road are invaluable. – Phil C., MD-11 Captain

“I started to measure my success in ways other than just weight loss. I noticed that I was feeling more grounded, more at peace, in spite of the fact that there were some very stressful things happening during this period of my life.” – Christie Z.

“Without my partner, I would never been able to attempt this process in my current state. My wife has been completely supportive, and she has been an excellent example of how the process should work.” – Dave Z.

“I was surprised at how easy the process is ... how effortless it has been to make the necessary changes. How easily I have embraced [the UdP] as something I will continue for the rest of my life. Weight is literally falling off without much effort. When I start walking again, it will really start coming off. I have lost 21 pounds since March! I have lost almost 4 pounds the 1st week of vacation – unheard of!” –Karen D.

“I have good energy, haven’t had any heartburn since I started [the UdP]. My weight is dropping at a steady pace. This process is sustainable long term. I realized when I stepped on the scales a few days ago at 235 lbs., that’s almost 20 lbs. lost in 6 weeks. – Larry C.

“I noticed my clothes fit better. Trying on wedding dresses was fun! The gal helping me even told me I didn’t need to wear the Spanx I had on. I didn’t feel like I had to suck in my gut! Thank you!” – Cheri C.

“After my first Triple R day™ of the week, I finally slept great and woke up feeling like I was actually rested for the first time in a long time.” – Pam W.

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you can do together

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Dedication

*For my Mom, Winnie Mae Christensen,
my wife, Victoria, and our children.*

*In different ways, my life began
when I met them.*

A Note to Readers

This book is not intended to be a substitute for talking to your physician. It is for informational purposes only. The book does not concentrate on weight loss, but on reaching an ideal weight through healthy lifestyle changes. In this regard the author and publisher encourage you to use the information in this book with health care professionals, personal trainers, and nutritionists. They are perfect team members in your quest for increased wellness and a longer life. Everyone is different and you should consult with your team before beginning this or any program to tailor it to your individual needs. The author and publisher expressly disclaim responsibility for any adverse effects that may result for the use, misuse, or application of the information contained in this book.

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Foreword

What a coincidence. Nearly 30 years had passed since I met Mike Christensen. I was an Air Force instructor pilot and Mike was a recent graduate from the United States Air Force Academy and was entering USAF pilot training. I had the distinguished privilege of “soloing” Mike in his first high-performance jet. That was in the 1980s. Later in 2012 we would meet again. This time, I took on the role of Chair of his doctoral dissertation committee. What is coincidental about our second meeting is that due to the amount of time that had passed, we did not initially recognize each other. So there we were working together again, clueless about our earlier relationship. I don’t recall which of the two of us finally came to the conclusion we had met in our Air Force days, however I must say it was quite a meaningful experience to become aware of our earlier flying days together.

Looking back as Dr. Christensen’s instructor pilot in the Air Force and again as Chair of his dissertation committee, I can say with pronounced sincerity that Mike produces outstanding

work. He makes no claims that go unsubstantiated. Nor does he insinuate to his readers something other than scientifically-derived and well-founded fact. Simply stated, Mike knows what he's talking about. Take time with this book. Make it a part of your *process of living*. Go the distance. And I have a hunch, you will be happy you did.

Now, a few words about the book itself.

The book you are about to read – and study and use as a reference for years to come – was written by a highly creative and talented author. Whether you are new to the notion of losing weight and becoming healthier, or one of many who have searched extensively for effective diets, you will find this book invaluable.

2 Day Gift of Wellness is unique for one highly important reason, process. In this book, you will learn to shift your attention away from *what* you are eating to *how* you are eating. In psychological terms, you will experience a *content to process shift*. Dr. Christensen's Ultimate diet Process™ gently yet effectively shifts your attention away from calorie counting and toward what he calls a synergy of the mind, body, and spirit for healthy living. Additionally, his ingenious approach leads to increased creativity, a longer life, and almost accidental weight loss. *Accidental* being the key word here.

Some of the important concepts Dr. Christensen addresses – my top 5 if you will – include 1) the secret fat connection, 2) eating when you're hungry, 3) the Triple R day, 4) UdP buddies, and 5) journaling via Triple R questions. Of course, there are a quite a few more concepts to choose from, I just have my favorites. I recommend developing your own list of gems from the array offered throughout the book.

This book is highly practical. It is certainly easy-to-read, interesting, and immediately useful to the reader by way of important stories and useful tips and practices. Additionally, ample theoretical background is provided and thoroughly substantiates

Dr. Christensen's approach. *2 Day Gift of Wellness* is a must for every person whose life involves focus on health and exceptional well-being. I predict this book will become an important resource to those interested in a happy, healthy, and well-balanced life.

— *Michael J Vandermark, PhD*

President, Vandermark and Associates, Inc.

Author of *Life's Wake-up Call: the Content to Process Shift*

A note from Joseph Patrick Santiago, MD

People never say, "I want to improve my heart health for two months," but they treat weight loss as a temporary situation.

A friend of mine, who is also a patient, used to weigh 350 lbs. Over the course of five years he lost about half that weight to get down to 170-180 pounds, and has kept the weight off so far. He simply ate better and exercised regularly. He made a comment that I'd never thought of in sixteen years of primary care private practice.

It was a remarkable insight: "For every pound of physical weight I lost, I had to lose two pounds of mental weight. I had to rethink and retool the way I lived my life before I could get physically healthier."

In sixteen years of private practice I've never seen anyone who had weight loss surgery keep the weight off permanently. All the patients I've seen who lost weight and kept it off were able to achieve their goals by creating new habits and lifestyle changes. It's the sustainability that matters.

So many people are okay with the idea of taking medication for the rest of their lives, but for some reason don't think of eating better and exercising as equally important to long term health. Nobody comes to my office asking me to reduce their risk

of a heart attack for just three months. But that's what people do when they don't stick with eating right and being physically active. I've told my patients that weight loss isn't just eating healthier food and being fit. It's a conscious effort to retool the way you live your life. That's why this book is such a gift to anyone who wants to get well and stay well.

— *Joseph Patrick Santiago, MD*

Introduction

Why I wrote this book

Like everyone else I know, I've been on diets throughout my life. I was never obese but I always thought I was a little heavier than I should be. When I look back at pictures in high school and college, I think how skinny I was, but I don't remember feeling that way at the time.

When I dieted, especially in the military, I'd lose just enough to squeak below the maximum weight allowed. Two weeks later, I'd be over that weight with an added five pounds. I'd stay that way for the next year or two and then start all over again. So from the very beginning I felt that dieting doesn't really work. But I wasn't that much above my ideal weight so I didn't worry about it.

I had several close friends and family members who went through surgery to lose weight. It was traumatic for them and shocking for everyone who witnessed it. We watched them endure this surgery and then feel violently ill afterwards. They couldn't

eat anything because their stomachs were stapled, and they'd throw up every few hours. They did lose the weight, but it was a very harrowing experience. The distressing thing was that even with their stapled stomachs, they gained the weight back within a year or so.

So I kept thinking that something was missing from this whole process. I heard absurd statements like, "If you eat yogurt with probiotics, you'll double your weight loss." I suspected that couldn't possibly be true and I wanted to investigate.

One day a colleague mentioned that his teenaged daughter was having issues with bulimia. I thought, "This really doesn't make any sense. I'm going to explore and figure out what happened."

I came across an old book my brother had given me several years before about the musings of a Chinese philosopher. *Translations from the Chinese* was published in 1927 but the first copyrights were in the early 1900s. One of the musings really stood out to me as I started this journey. It reminded me of how the diet industry treats the truth. It's called:

The Truth Will Condemn You

It's a mark of extreme youth to believe
That telling the whole truth is always useful.
Truth is not a diet
but a condiment.

—The Old Mandarin

While I'm not a medical doctor, I am well versed in reading and understanding research studies. So I decided to take a deep dive into the research without the bias associated with the individual disciplines of medicine or nutrition.

It seemed to me that each field was stuck in its own narrow tower and didn't cross over. I wanted to review the research

through a variety of disciplines including medicine, nutrition, exercise science, straight weight loss, vegetarian and vegan diets, meat-only diets, metabolic adaption, fad diets, high protein, low-carb, high-carb, low-fat, intermittent fasting, when to eat, calorie reduction diets, and obesity data.

There are thousands of different ways to approach weight loss, so I decided to hit them from many different angles. I used only peer-reviewed research and not popular health or nutrition magazines because they tend to be sensationalist. When I went back to look at the studies, their reports weren't what the actual studies said. That's why I decided to write this book.

**I can see the forest, not for the trees, but
for the living organic entity that it is.**

UdP – The Ultimate diet Process™

UdP stands for the **Ultimate diet Process**. It's different because I looked at it from a different perspective. Everyone is blessed with certain innate talents and abilities, and mine include the ability to peer through the clutter and come up with central ideas, seeing the trees for the forest, if you will. But my talent is really more than that. I can see with clarity the entire forest, the stream coming in and the river flowing out. I can see the subtle changes of the leaves and bushes that make the forest a living organic system.

I noticed that focusing on weight loss distorted the picture. So I decided to research a concept called ideal weight, which we'll talk about later. The UdP would be a synergy of all the research I've done. It would take the focus off weight loss and put it squarely onto healthy habits, where ideal weight or weight loss are a natural result.

I learned that the body is constantly attacked and stressed by the environment. Even the digestive process is stressful. When you look at nutrition instead of looking at what we eat, it's really looking at what your body wants to eat to get the nutrition it requires. It truly is a unique personalized approach to ideal weight and healthy living.

UdP synergizes the mind, body, and spirit for healthy living, increased creativity, and a longer life, all the while creating weight loss, almost accidentally.

**A good decision is based on knowledge
and not on numbers. – Plato**

My story

Throughout this book, you'll read stories of my clients who have been through the Ultimate diet Process (UdP). In this section, I'll write a little about my experience living the UdP lifestyle.

I wrote this book because I had very discouraging results with several popular diets. I am an international Boeing 777 Captain with a large American commercial airline. My job requires that I maintain a healthy weight. But like most people I had gained and lost the same 10–20 pounds many times in my life, always putting on an extra 5 pounds for good measure. I'd heard all the standard diet advice, such as "eat less, exercise more." Intuitively I knew that wasn't true.

I decided I needed to do some in-depth research into the diet industry. I graduated with my Doctor of Management degree in 2015. The experience of understanding peer-reviewed scientific studies gave me an idea. What if I did a deep dive into the diet industry, throwing aside all I thought I knew, and going where the data led?

What I found was that most of what I read in popular magazines, US Government recommendations, and online was wrong. The studies just didn't support the conclusions. For example, when I would ask friends or colleagues about weight loss they would often say that all I have to do is exercise more and eat less. This is the old calorie-in/ calorie-out approach. One popular diet program gave additional points for working out. The research however, showed a different result. (Forthergill, et al., 2016; Lucan & DiNicolantonio, 2015; Monteiro & Cannon, 2015; Rosenbaum, Hirsch, Gallagher, Leibel, 2008).

My Masters' Degree from USC was in Systems Management, so looking at weight loss from a holistic approach made sense to me. From my psychology degree at the United States Air Force Academy, I knew the mind had great control over the body, but could not maintain its hold indefinitely.

With these tools I did lengthy research into everything related to weight loss. Using my unique skills to visualize the entire system that occurs in wellness, I looked at respected current studies that were peer-reviewed and scientifically sound. I did not use any popular magazines or internet blogs. I went right to the data. I used research conducted since 2014, unless the study was particularly relevant (ground breaking). What I found was amazing.

The body has a weight “set point” that it guards with all its energy. This set point is the pivot for the yo-yo dieting syndrome.

For instance, research shows the body has a “set point” that it thinks is the correct weight based on a number of internal systems and receptacles. This set point has no bearing to what current fashion dictates, or even what fad diet you are on. It is based

on age, weight, stress, illness, genetics, and evolution (Aamodt, 2016; Pontzer, 2015). The body will do whatever it needs to get back to that weight. Because the body is an open system, it reacts to ANYTHING the mind makes it do.

If the mind restricts calories, the body becomes more efficient with the use of calories. The body, without the mind's approval or knowledge, restricts the energy use during non-peak times to make up for this reduction, even after you have started exercising. The body also seems to make fat out of air. The human body truly is amazing.

So, using all the data I accumulated from the studies, I designed a process to take advantage of my knowledge. I first tested the concepts I developed on myself and lost 26 pounds in 4 months without exercising. I accomplished this while flying internationally and I wasn't starving myself. Just the opposite, and I increased my energy levels and creativity.

My first officer (co-pilot) witnessed my effortless weight loss while on layovers in China, Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia. He didn't say much during the trip, but when I was looking for a test group, he insisted I let him participate. Here is a note he wrote after 11 weeks on the program. You can read an expanded version of Larry's journey in Chapter 11, UdP on the road – the travelers' guide.

Larry's story

Elk season began in Idaho this week. For me and my hunting partner, this meant 4:30 am wake ups, hiking 3-5 miles in the morning at elevations from 7500-9500 feet with 30 pounds of gear, taking a mid-day nap, and then doing it over again in the afternoon until dark at 8:30 pm.

By the time we get back to camp and eat dinner, we are left with about 6 hours of sleep before the next 4:30 am alarm goes

off. In seasons past, after a couple of days we would have to take a morning or an afternoon off to recover from exhaustion.

This year, after 11 weeks of the UdP, I started the season about 10-15 pounds lighter than last year and with the same amount of pre-season working out. I noticed on the very first day how much better I felt hiking up the hills. Climbing was easier, I did not get as winded as usual, and I had good energy all day.

My hunting partner is 5 years younger, 80 pounds lighter, and works out a lot, but I've been kicking his butt climbing hills this year.

Larry's story is not unusual. The secret was discovering that weight was just a number. So my research began to center around holistic wellness. I looked for activities in which the research showed weight loss as a by-product, not the intended result. But the activities had to be beneficial to health. By concentrating on getting healthier using specific behaviors and activities, I discovered you could live a longer, healthier life at the ideal weight your body sets for you.

The UdP is a diet killer, not a killer diet!

My goal was to develop a diet killer – a process where the reason you eat is more important than what you eat. The UdP isn't a content-driven program. You decide what you eat. It is designed to be sustainable. You will never diet again, because there is no need to. A core principle is to eat when you are hungry. You eat what you enjoy and discover foods that are good for your body, along with other foods you might want to limit or cut out.

You decide which two days to devote to activities that reduce or eliminate stress and allow your body to repair itself. You decide

what type of exercise you want to do. None of these actions alone promote weight loss. But together, along with a few more specific activities, they increase your wellbeing and allow your body to relax and not store as much fat.

You see, fat is a rainy day fund for your body. If your mind and your body are in sync, your body will automatically and effortlessly lose fat. But you have to follow the plan exactly. As Einstein said, you can't keep doing things the same way and expect different results.

They All Fall Down

I've built three homes,
One worse than the other.
But one final try today.

I have the plans, but I'm proficient,
I alter to suit my needs;
Then watching, disbelieving, as #4 dissolves.

©2016 From the upcoming book *Ballet in a Coal Mine*: the musings of a Dr. Captain, publishing date January 2017.

I've done the research and now you can follow this new plan. Don't fall back into old ways that don't work. Involving a buddy, partner, or family member will significantly improve your chances of success. This plan is simple, but not always easy at first. It requires a paradigm shift from everything you've heard. You can hire one of our mentors to help, but ultimately you make the commitment to be a better you. Even with a partner, you travel the road independently. Each of you can eat whatever you enjoy. There is no requirement to eat or avoid any specific foods.

How will your journey go? I can't say. Most of us need to lose weight, and if you follow the plan you probably will. But remember, weight is just a number. Ultimately it is meaningless. It is wellness that counts. It's getting your body and mind in sync. It's about increasing your health.

As a pilot I am required to have a flight physical every 6 months. During my last checkup, my flight doctor noticed my weight loss and asked about it. I was a little shy about sharing my system with a physician. He waived off my concern saying, "Doctors don't know about wellness." Then he took my blood pressure, which was 107/79. Next he took my pulse, which was in the low 50's. He knew I wasn't on any medications, and at my age he thought that was amazing. After asking a few more questions, he said he wanted to buy my book as soon as it was published.

The UdP is simple, but you have to follow the plan exactly as developed – no short cuts.

The unbelievable part of the UdP journey is that it is sustainable. Change comes slowly and permanently. I noticed I didn't require any allergy medicine, even though we've had one of the worst allergy seasons in memory. I couldn't remember the last time my plantar fasciitis acted up. My prostate had shrunk and I swear my gray hair started getting darker. One client noted she hadn't had irritable bowel syndrome for over a month. Another client with acid reflux suddenly realized he didn't have that anymore. All these people lost significant amounts of weight, but the real benefit was their health. Their bodies had begun to rejuvenate.

Everyone remarked that their clothes fit better than the weight loss should allow. The body changes and digests the unwanted fat before it shows on the scale. One client wanted to lose

that last stubborn 5 pounds. I explained that this is about wellness, not reaching a target weight. She committed to the process, and started fitting into clothes she never thought she would. By week three she was engaged. She lost 6 pounds the first month and genuinely enjoyed shopping for her wedding dress. There are stories like this throughout the book.

This book has been a labor of love. While writing it, I've enjoyed being healthier, with more energy and unbelievable creativity. I hope and pray that this book is the beginning of your new, healthier life. No more diets! Enjoy life, and live deliberately.

Take advantage of the UdP

If you're reading this book, I'm assuming there are things you'd like to change in your general health or your weight. Like most people, you've probably tried a series of diets, only to be disappointed as the weight came back on, most likely even more than before. In this book, I'll give you new strategies to achieve the health you've always wanted, along with weight loss as a side-effect, if that's what you want.

This book is organized into 3 parts:

Part 1

- You'll learn about the diet industry's dirty secrets, so you'll discover, once and for all, why you can't maintain the weight you struggle so hard to lose.
- We'll dive into the UdP program, and set you up with the 8 Principles of UdP Wellness, so you have a framework to be healthy in today's world.

Part 2

- You'll be putting the UdP into action. We'll go into detail about what and when to eat, how to create a sustainable eating plan for

yourself, and how to benefit from the Triple R day™, which is the heart of our program.

- You'll get the nuts and bolts of every aspect of the program, to set you up for success. You'll also be reading stories of people who have been thru the UdP, and love it so much that they plan to continue for the rest of their lives.

Part 3

- You'll get resources, such as sample menus, questions to answer, and sample journal pages.

With the solutions in this book, you'll learn to harness the power of a program that is based on the best scientific evidence to date, not the sensationalist stories that make the news, only to fade into oblivion the next day. You deserve to have the healthiest and most productive and enjoyable life possible, don't you?

— *Dr. Michael Christensen*

PART **1**

*From Fat and
Stressed to
Weight Loss as
a Side Effect*

CHAPTER 1

Show me the money

The diet industry's dirty secrets

Show me the money! That's what I wanted to know about the diet industry. According to Markets and Markets, a leading research firm, the global weight loss and diet-management products and services market is worth over \$671 billion a year.

In contrast, a significant portion of the world's population is close to, or at, starvation levels. I found this perplexing. Borrowing a phrase from the movie Jerry Maguire, "Show me the money," I wanted to research where the money is. I found out that the industry is basically content-oriented, which means focusing on which foods to eat or how much, because there's lots of money to be made.

The global weight loss industry is worth more than \$670,000,000.00 a year.

The word "diet" actually comes from two different sources. The Latin and French source of the word is *dieta*, which means

daily food allowance. That makes sense when you think of diet programs such as Weight Watchers™, which are based on how much you eat. You have a calorie or point-count to make sure you don't eat more than a specific amount.

The other root of the word diet is from the Greek word, *diaita*, which means “meaning of life.” That's closer to what we're looking at. Examples include the Mediterranean diet, and vegetarian or raw food diets which are content-specific. You have to eat a specific group of foods, and avoid others. My beginning research explained the two types of diets, but not *why* we diet.

Most people these days are constantly dieting or are starting diets over and over again. It never seems to end. We diet for many reasons, including physical, psychological, emotional and cultural. Marketing plays a huge role. The global diet market is almost a trillion-dollar-a-year industry, so they have a vested interest in keeping us on the diet roller coaster. The weight loss industry includes fitness, nutrition, health, technology, wellness, supplements, and much more.

They keep that golden goose fat by convincing us to keep buying more health-related items such as diet books and programs, gym memberships, Fitbits, scales, clothes, bicycles, treadmills, running shoes, and yoga mats.

Two dirty secrets about dieting

The industry has two dirty secrets about dieting they don't want you to know. The first secret is the psychological aspect. They know we human beings are insecure and therefore vulnerable to advertisements and suggestions. Marketing preys on our insecurities. We're told we can never be thin enough, and that thin people are more popular and successful. But that's only part of the story.

The second secret is that the diet industry knows dieting doesn't work in the long run. Not only does it not work, but we

consistently gain back the weight and add a few extra pounds for good measure.

Most credible diets work in the short run because they are content-driven. You reduce what you eat, and you lose weight. But ultimately it's not sustainable because you have a life to live and you can't keep up with the activities that helped you lose the weight.

By constantly reinforcing our insecurities and developing new diets and products, the diet industry creates a limitless supply of people who want solutions. It really is quite a brilliant scheme if it weren't for the fact that we're talking about people's lives and health.

The diet success stories you hear are a bit like doing your taxes. Somebody will tell you about all the different exemptions they took and how much money they saved, but they never tell you that they got audited a month later, and how bad it was. They only tell you the good side.

Dieting is like taxes – you do it every year, you hate it, every year its more, and it never ends.

That's what happens with dieting. People will tell you, "This diet was great. I lost so much weight." They neglect to tell you that they gained it all back and packed on 10 more pounds. You witness this with your friends and family, but on TV you never see the whole story. And that's what perpetuates the myth that diets work to keep you thin.

The Biggest Losers TV show is a great example of how the second part of the story never gets told, because most of the participants gained most of their weight back (Fothergill, et al, 2016). But it's worse than that.

Dieting can cause harm. There are consequences to constantly dieting, physically and emotionally. That's why all the plans

have disclaimers telling you to see your doctor before beginning the program. They have to protect you from the content of their plans which often feed into eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge eating. In a nutshell, the reason diets don't work long-term is that we fight against our own nature (Aamodt, S., 2016). Our minds fight our bodies, which fight our spirits.

Back in the hunter-gatherer days, we formed groups to hunt prey and forage for food. We only ate what we caught or found. Food was hard to get, and no one was overeating. As we aged, we became less efficient at hunting and gathering. Research speculates that for genetic reasons, based on natural selection (Neil, et al, 1998; Pontzer, et al, 2012), we gain weight as we get older because our metabolism slows down to conserve calories. We're counting on other people to feed us, and may be getting less to eat. So as we age we are naturally inclined to store extra weight.

Today, especially in developed nations, we're a knowledge culture. We don't have to chase a bison and hunt it with a gun or a spear. We use money as a means of catching food. We tend to grow wealthier as we age, and at the same time we are likely to exercise less, without decreasing our food intake.

Instead, many of us eat more and more. So we have two things working against us: the freedom and ability to pick up food any time we want it, and the body's natural tendencies to hold onto weight as we grow older.

What works and what doesn't in weight loss

Your body knows when you're under stress before your mind is even aware of it. It knows when organs are injured or things are going wrong inside you before you feel the effects.

We can learn a lot by looking at what happens when we gain weight back. For instance, we know that after five years, 41% of

dieters gain more weight than they lost, no matter how hard they try. Why does that happen? We know that dieters are more likely to become obese than people who have never dieted. In studies where one identical twin dieted and the other didn't, the one who dieted was twice as likely to become overweight than the other one (Dulloo, & Montani, 2015). And women who diet are three times as likely to become obese than those who don't.

Your body knows a lot that it's not telling you.

We also have to understand that exercise is not really a weight loss mechanism because your body has ways of making up for the calories you burn during a workout (Hobkins, et al, 2014; Lucan, S. C., & DiNicolantonio, 2015; Pontzer, et al, 2015).

Counselling doesn't seem to be the answer either. One study from the *Journal of Obesity* took two groups of people who had lost 10 to 20 pounds. They divided the group in half. One half had monthly counseling, similar to what some of the popular diet plans offer. The other had no counseling. After a year, both groups had regained the same amount of weight. So we know that counselling is not the solution.

So what is the answer?

The next chapter reveals a paradigm shift that lets you work with your body's natural processes. You'll understand how to create wellness, with weight loss or maintaining an ideal weight as a happy side-effect.

CHAPTER 2

The UdP

*From content to process –
A paradigm shift*

Eat this. Don't eat that. You hear this constantly in the media, and in diet books and plans. Most diets are content-based, which means they tell you what kind of food you can or can't eat. They also restrict the amount you eat. They might have points or tell you to eat a specific number of certain kinds of foods, or to reduce your calories by 20% every day. That's content-driven.

A *process* is the way you do something. An example of a process might be picking up rocks. Once you learn how to pick up rocks and put them into a box, you can pick up anything. It could be logs or sticks. You learn the process of picking things up, and as things change, you adapt your process to picking up new objects.

The UdP, or Ultimate diet Process, is process-driven. It requires a paradigm shift. That means going from the content-driven weight loss programs you're used to, to something completely different.

The most notable paradigm shift occurred back in 1543 when Nicolaus Copernicus theorized that the sun was actually the center



Nicolaus Copernicus

of the universe. Up until that point, everyone believed the earth was the center of the universe. Copernicus looked at all the scientific data and couldn't make the numbers work with the earth as the center. So he decided to shift his view to the sun. Lo and behold, it all began to make sense. Even with overwhelming evidence, it still took 200 years for the scientific community to make that paradigm shift.

Similarly, when we talk about process versus content for weight loss, we're looking at losing weight not as a specific goal but as the by-product of healthy living. Although we use it as a data point, the aim is not to reach a specific number on the scale. That makes the UdP the antidote to commercial diets that are not sustainable, because it works on what your body naturally wants to do instead of fighting your basic nature.

Make the paradigm shift from content (what I eat) to process (how I eat.)

As we touched on earlier, excess weight was not an issue for most of human history. Only wealthy people were fat, and they were envied because they had enough to eat when most people barely had enough food to survive. During the hunter-gatherer days, we could only eat what we could either catch or find. Food was often scarce, so our bodies developed adapting mechanisms such as decreasing our metabolism to keep us from starving to death.

These days we have the opposite problem in the Western world. There's plenty of food available, to the point where many

people are obese. So we've created the diet industry to solve the problem. Most diets are based on reducing calories or restricting certain kinds of foods. But by pretending there is some kind of starvation crisis, we unintentionally cause our bodies stress by overriding the normal desire to eat.

Your body's set point

Your body wants you to be a certain weight, based on what it knows and feels. This is called a set point. It tries to maintain equilibrium through the hormones and enzymes that regulate your metabolic rate (Aamodt, 2016). This process is called metabolic adaptation and it persists over time, causing weight to return after a diet (Fothergill, et al, 2016). This includes whether food is processed through the liver and stored as fat, or used right away for fuel, partly based on the amount of stress you feel.

But the body is like the tortoise that always wins the race. It's slow-acting and long-lasting, which is why the standard commercial diets aren't sustainable. The brain can overcome the body momentarily while it's thinking about it. But as soon as it forgets, the body takes over and stores the fat it thinks it needs. When you put your body under stress by reducing your calories, it actually wants to save even more calories, which is why we gain that extra five pounds every time we diet.

This metabolic adaptation, which is rooted in genetics based on natural selection, has positive effects (Neel, 1998; Pontzer, 2015). For instance, in 1990 a few days after Iraq invaded Kuwait, I was deployed indefinitely, to Saudi Arabia. I only had 12 hours' notice and couldn't tell my family where I was going. I was one of the first 100 military personnel to be deployed.

I stayed in Saudi Arabia for 5 months. I worked 12 hour shifts with no days off. I ate at the military chow hall or the

meals ready-to-eat (MREs) that were provided. Both were very high in calories. Towards the end, we'd make a midnight run off base to pick up shawarmas, a local type of lamb pita, also very high in calories.

I had no time to exercise, so of course I must have gained weight. But no, I actually lost about 25 pounds, effortlessly. That was the first time I ate what I enjoyed and lost weight without trying. After my recent deep dive into weight loss, I now understand the mechanics of what was going on.

Have you ever heard of anyone committing suicide by holding their breath? It can't happen. The body always wins over the mind.

My unconscious mind understood the danger I was in. So, without my conscious thought or physical activity, my body used available fat to strengthen my muscles and heal my body. My unconscious mind and body were preparing me for battle. The change was so gradual, I didn't notice until I returned home and saw photos of me in a local newspaper giving a talk about what it was like "over there."

The UdP is a process to take advantage of the body and mind's ability to work together - subconsciously. The UdP restricts calories using a specific process to put the body and mind in sync. Reducing calories signals the body to repair and rejuvenate, and not worry about stress. In fact, when you're repairing, you actually store less in fat because the body and mind are working together to create health and well-being.

That's the paradigm shift. We start thinking of weight loss as a by-product of healthy living and not something that we desire on its own, and we try to get the body and mind working together so we don't stress the body.

The conscious and unconscious brain

The UdP works with the unconscious brain, which reacts to stress and the inner workings of the organs and the muscles. Let's look at the issues that put the conscious and unconscious brain into conflict, as we transition from content to process.

The hypothalamus was one of the first parts of the brain that developed as humans evolved. It's the area of your brain where you experience worries and fear. The hypothalamus, in concert with numerous other bodily organs and glands, controls your body through hormones, which are slow-acting and long-lasting. With the exception of adrenaline, it takes a while to put a hormone into your circulatory system, and then it takes a while for the effects of that hormone to wear off.

Our hypothalamus basically operates on an unconscious level. We don't think about being hungry, thirsty or tired, or about regulating our body temperature. It just happens: we feel hungry, thirsty, fatigued or cold. When the two systems, our thinking brain and our unconscious system, fight each other, the body will always win.

The first part of our brain developed to survive. The later part developed to control the first part, which built in conflict.

A great example is a job that causes fatigue. If you do 24 hour shift work you struggle to stay awake. You can fight sleep by turning on the TV or drinking coffee. But your body starts grabbing micro naps. You don't even know you fell asleep until you suddenly wake up. That's how people crash cars when they suddenly nod off at the wheel.

The body will win that fight, although it may take a while. That's why you can lose weight while you're thinking about it

actively for six to 12 weeks. Coincidentally, that's how long most research studies last, probably because they know people will start gaining the weight back after that time. The study typically lasts for up to 12 weeks and then the body catches up. Then the unconscious brain starts feeling it is in starvation mode, so it pumps out all the hormones necessary to gain the weight back. They are slow-acting, so if we don't directly control them, we're set to fail.

Why "eat less, move more" doesn't work

The subconscious mind and the body work together. Their goal is to prolong life, and to do that they have to make your body as stress-free as possible.

That's part of the reason the resting metabolic rate goes down hours after you've finished exercising. When you are actually exercising, you're using a lot of calories. The only way your body can make up the calories you expend for exercise is to use fewer when you're resting (Hopkins, et al, 2014). That means you relax more and sleep more, and all that time you're not burning or reducing your calories.

For many years, people have been telling us to reduce calories and exercise more to lose weight. The studies don't support that, so we have to look at weight loss differently (Lucan & DiNicolantonio, 2015). We need to shift our emphasis from content to process: not *what to do* but really *why we do it*, and if it makes sense to do it. The hypothalamus is responsible for feelings of hunger. Once the stomach sends the signal to the hypothalamus that it's time to eat, the hypothalamus releases the hormones necessary to make us hungry.

The hormone tells your brain, "I'm hungry," so you start eating. Unfortunately, it takes a long time for that hunger signal to wear off, and you can continue eating even after you are no longer

hungry. You use your conscious brain to control what you eat, but when your hypothalamus is in conflict with the conscious brain, it will override it.

The secret fat connection

A recent study looked at the participants of the popular show *The Biggest Loser* five years after the first season (Fothergill, et al, 2014). Of the original 16 contestants, only one had not gained all or most of the weight back. That's significant. These people worked hard for six months, exercising and dieting, and reached the weight they wanted. They were very motivated. Yet all but one of them gained the weight back. Half of them maintained only about a 10% weight loss and gained 90% of the weight back.

Weight is just a data point, but it can show us how well we are controlling stress.

Why would they gain the weight back? It's still speculation but through interviewing the *Biggest Loser* contestants, it seems that stress had sabotaged their weight loss. It appears that their bodies felt constantly under stress, and this changed their metabolic resting rates (Aamodt, 2016). Now they required fewer calories to maintain their weight than before they had dieted. And they had given up 500 calories a day! So you can see that by eating the same foods as before, in just a year they could gain back 56 pounds while still dieting.

One of the ways to reduce stress is with a paradigm shift where we don't focus on the number on the scale. We focus on healthy activity. We don't set a target because we don't know our ideal body weight. We know that if we reduce stress, the weight will go down because the body doesn't need this excessive fat to

save itself. In fact, fat in your body is your ideal food source because it has already been processed. All the impurities have been taken out.

For instance, researchers estimate our brain consumes 20% of the energy in your body. If it doesn't have glucose, which is the sugar in your blood that comes from food, it converts energy directly from your fat and it works almost as well as the glucose. That's how good it is.

The other way to reduce weight is to try to let the body know through your conscious thoughts that you're not going to starve. You can do that through one of the eight principles of the UdP, which is to eat when you're hungry. If you're hungry your body thinks there may not be food, otherwise you would have eaten. In the olden days you grazed for something edible. You would take advantage of finding food because there was less food around than your body required.

In western cultures today it's the opposite problem. Because food is readily available, overeating and weight gain become the issue, not starvation. Marketing and pop culture encourage us to fixate on weight, not wellness. So the UdP helps you make a shift to looking at weight loss not as a goal in itself, but as a by-product of health.

Your weight is a number, and it can go up and down. If you engage in healthy behaviors and you're above your ideal weight, your weight will start going down as you remove stress. In the next chapter, *The 8 Principles of UdP Wellness™*, we'll show you a framework for healthy habits that are sustainable and give you the positive results you want.

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