

## The Psychology of Weight-Loss

The following post is kind of long, so you may want to get yourself a cup of tea (coffee, hot chocolate) and kick back. I have taken a couple of words here and there from some of my previous scribbles so if you sense that déjà vu feeling, you probably don't need your pills after all. The good news is that your memory is working. Nice to know.

The first bit. One day in the mid eighties, possibly a Tuesday, I was manning, or should I say 'personing' the gym floor (must be PC), picking up stray dumbbells, mingling with the club members, dispensing incredible advice (as always) and generally being fabulous, when a familiar figure loomed large in the doorway of the weight room. For the sake of my story and his anonymity, we'll call him 'Ted'. Ted was not unlike many people that I've met over the years; he would re-appear at the gym about every six months with a steely, new resolve to create 'Super Ted'; a new leaner, meaner version of himself. He would tell me that he hated his body, needed to drop fifty kilos (110 lbs) and that "this time it would be different." Stupidly, I would believe him. Call me young, naive, gullible, call it what you will, but every time, I was sure the big fella would get the job done; he seemed so sincere and desperate. If you had seen his big dopey, chubby face and those big, puppy dog eyes you'd have believed him too. How could I not have faith in him? With an over-riding sense of familiarity, I would take Ted's measurements, talk to him about his crappy diet and diabolical lifestyle (again), set some (more) goals (because that's what you do) and write him a new program (again). For about two weeks the big guy was a cross between Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sugar Ray Leonard (it was the eighties), lifting, riding, punching and sweating his way to a better body. Then somewhere between weeks three and four his amazing commitment and Olympic attitude would start to wane and the inevitable slide would commence. By weeks five and six the daily visits turned into weekly cameos, and by the two month mark, Ted was lucky to make a fortnightly appearance. When I called him to see where he was, he would inform me that he was still pumped and totally in the zone but that "work was crazy, his ankle was playing up and that he'd been carrying a sore throat for a week or so." Sure Big Ted.

The Revelation. After yet another of Ted's failed weight-loss campaigns I was feeling a little inadequate and frustrated. I got off the phone after chatting with him and sat there trying to figure out what I was doing wrong. I was setting him good programs, giving him appropriate advice, providing him with all the resources he needed to exercise effectively and being as encouraging, understanding and supportive as a twenty two year-old alpha-male, meat-head could be... and then it dawned on me: I could tell people what to do (how to exercise and eat), why they should do it (the physiological benefits) and how it should be done (the method) but I couldn't actually make anyone do it. Maybe it wasn't about finding the right program or diet; maybe it was about finding the right attitude. The right head-space. Having a personally designed exercise program is handy. Being a member of a health club is .. nice. Having resources at your finger tips might help. Knowing what to do is always a good start. But the truth is many of us have all the reasons in the world to change our body, life and reality but never do. We are consistently almost getting in shape. For a range of reasons we spend our life getting on and off the weight-loss merry-go-round, wasting time, starting, stopping, procrastinating, lying about our behaviours, making excuses, waiting for the right time to start (which never comes), getting frustrated, complaining about our genetics and generally being miserable. Standing there on the gym floor it began to dawn on me that creating physiological change (getting bigger, smaller, faster, fitter, lighter, leaner) is more about our head than it is about our body. More about his 'readiness' to genuinely change than my programs. For the first time I began to really understand that the weight-loss process isn't as much about dumbbells, treadmills and carbs as it is about attitude, thinking, beliefs, passion, self-control, decisions, standards and habits. Getting in shape is more of an internal process than it is an external one. When we get the internal stuff right... the external change is merely a (positive) by-product. Why then (I hear you ask) do most health fitness, health and medical professionals focus solely on the practical, external stuff (lift this, stretch that, run there, eat these, don't eat those) when obviously creating 'forever change' (what most people want) is largely about controlling and managing our thoughts, feelings and emotions? Good question Grasshopper. Let me know when you get the answer. So while conventional thinking tells us that losing weight is essentially a physical process, my experience with thousands of people over way too many years tells me that losing the love handles is more about our head than it is about our body. If only our obesity problems could be fixed by merely providing people with information and direction. If it were that easy then we'd see almost zero fat people because we live in a society which is bombarded with exercise and dietary information from a range of sources on a daily basis; we live in the information age. Years ago I learned that telling people what to do and how to do it was the easy bit but getting them to actually do it (consistently) was the real challenge. What shape we are in (whether we're fit or fat) invariably comes down to two key things; 1. The decisions we make and 2. The things we do (and don't do). When we look at what influences those two things the most, our head (thinking, beliefs, standards, fears, expectations, desires), then we begin to understand that getting in shape is, without doubt, more about our mind than it is about our muscles. Take your head where it needs to go and your body will follow. I've never met anyone who has created 'forever' change (in any area of their life) who hasn't had a significant shift in thinking, attitude and perspective. These days my team of trainers complete around 75,000 personal training sessions per year. Since the eighties I have personally conducted over 40,000 sessions with thousands of people with all types of bodies and all types of goals. When it comes to the pursuit of health, fitness, weight-loss, physical perfection (doesn't exist), big biceps, flat tummies and long-lean-legs... there's not a lot I haven't seen or heard. So here's my take on how to get the most out of your head... in order to get the most out of your body.

1. Go into the process with the best possible attitude. There is an undeniable relationship between attitude and outcome. Many people don't want to hear that transforming their body is more about attitude, commitment and self control than it is about finding the right program, health club, diet, trainer or miracle-pill. Good attitude typically equals a good outcome. I have watched thousands of people sabotage themselves with a crappy attitude; they whinge, complain, blame, rationalise, justify, and procrastinate and then end up back where they started anyway (or worse). Conversely, I have watched thousands of people with limited genetic potential, time, money and resources create (and maintain) amazing results because they got their head where it needed to be. If you tell yourself getting in shape will be a painful, un-enjoyable process... it probably will be. Amazing results are about attitude and effort; not genetics.
2. Get in shape for life; not an event. Too many people spend their life getting in shape for summer, birthdays,

weddings, school reunions and other significant social occasions. Like athletes, they peak for an event... and then get fat again. Sad really. Creating (and maintaining) your best body is about the next few decades, not the next few weeks.<sup>3</sup> Make some tough decisions about you. Your lifestyle, your habits, your diet and your exercise habits. You know these decisions; the one's you keep avoiding, the one's that make you uncomfortable. The decisions you should have made a long time ago; the scary, but necessary ones.<sup>4</sup> Don't start something that you can't or won't finish. Every day around the world thousands of people start programs or routines which they will never maintain. They make decisions that they don't follow through on. They join health clubs but rarely go. They start running programs that last a week. They go on diets and then go off them. Some people spend their life getting on and off the weight-loss-merry-go-round. Don't be one of them. Start realistically and progress sensibly. Don't try and undo twenty years of bad behaviour by next Tuesday.<sup>5</sup> Procrastination. Stop waiting for the right time to get in shape; it never comes. "I'll start next Monday, next week, next month, when the kids are at school, when it's not so dark in the morning, when all the planets align, when Tasmania (remember I'm an Aussie) reconnects with the mainland. Sure you will. The only person you're deluding is yourself.<sup>6</sup> Don't make excuses or tell fibs! If you want to find a reason not to change, you'll find one. Many people lie to themselves and others constantly; "it's not my diet, it's my genetics, it's a time thing, a money thing, my sore ankle". They don't want to acknowledge that it's a them thing because if they did, then they would have to do something about it. I regularly talk to morbidly obese people who apparently 'eat hardly anything'. Liar, liar pants on fire.<sup>7</sup> Don't lay blame. I'll be brief. People make people fat - not junk food, soft drinks in schools, drive-thru restaurants, remote controls, lack of time, business lunches or clever marketing. Yes, there are many variables, hurdles and factors to be negotiated along the way, but unless someone's making all your decisions for you, or holding you down and force feeding you, the only person making you fat is you. Don't get precious on me now.<sup>8</sup> Stop looking for the magic pill. For most of us, the simple reality of getting-in-shape is a bit of sweat, a bit of discomfort, a bit of tiredness, a bit of inconvenience and the odd sore knee. The sooner we get that and accept it, the sooner we'll get where we want to go. Look for the most effective option not the easiest one. By the way, easy or hard is largely about perception and attitude.<sup>9</sup> Nothing tastes as good as being in shape feels. Focus on what you're gaining, not what you're missing out on. Many people who change their eating habits sabotage themselves by constantly focusing on 'how deprived' they are and all the 'good stuff' they're missing out on. That piece of chocolate or slice of cake might give you a few minutes of pleasure but it doesn't change the fact that you live in a fatter-than-desirable body 24/7.<sup>10</sup> Motivation is temporary. For most people motivation is an emotional state; a feeling that comes and goes. We can't rely on it to get us to our destination because it ain't always there! If you experience motivational peaks and troughs, you're not a loser; you're normal. Motivation is great when it's there but when you don't feel pumped to do that workout, do it anyway. Changing your body is more about self control and consistency than it is about being in the zone. It's possible (necessary sometimes) to exercise even when you're not motivated. I tell people "if you don't feel like training, do it anyway. You might not love the process but you'll love the results". If we only exercise when we 'feel' like it, we'll never be consistent and we'll never create life-long change.

## About the Author

Great weight loss tips offering pointers for practical, effective.

Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>