PART ONE

The Reverse Diet Weight-Loss Phase

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What Is the Reverse Diet?

I saw Tricia and Heidi on Good Morning America and started on the diet immediately. I started at 235 pounds and in one year I have lost 85 pounds! I love eating this new way, with one big meal in the morning and smaller meals throughout the day. Now I look forward to morning meals as a time to really enjoy good food. I know I still have a little weight left to lose, but I'm happy with my results now. After this long on the diet, I'm good at maintaining. I can stay at a particular weight for as long as I want or continue on down the scale. I'm in control of how much I lose and when. I can stay on the Reverse Diet anywhere I go. —Becky, a successful Reverse Dieter

Welcome to the Reverse Diet. This program is not just about losing weight, it is about reframing your approach to eating. One of the first things to do as you begin the Reverse Diet is to set a goal that is achievable and that can continue to motivate you toward a healthier lifestyle. We believe setting goals is good to do before you begin the program because goals can help keep you on track and focused. In this chapter we'll go over some distinctions between healthy and unrealistic goals. At the end of the chapter, you can choose the goals you'll be working toward throughout the plan—the first step toward reversing your body and your life!

Moving toward a Reverse Lifestyle

Tricia says that no one wakes up, looks in the mirror, and says, "I want to gain a hundred and fifty pounds." Tricia never deliberately decided to gain that much weight. But, importantly, she did have to deliberately decide to lose it. You may not have decided to gain that extra 10, 50, or 100 pounds, but you realize as you examine yourself in the mirror that that is exactly what you've done. As Tricia often says to her fellow Reverse Dieters, "If you can gain the weight, you can lose the weight." Now by reading this book, you're deciding to lose that weight. With the Reverse Diet, you can make the same decision that Tricia made and take the steps toward losing weight and gaining your confidence and better quality of life.

Most likely, you were driven to start this plan because you have a glimmer of hope that you can have a different relationship with food and your body. A voice inside you may be saying, "Yes, I will finally make that change toward a healthier lifestyle." Listen closely, because that little voice can become the big voice you hear every day. With this plan, you will find the power to reverse your life. You will begin to understand that you can feel full and satisfied, and you can listen to your body signals so that you eat regular-size meals—and as you do so, you can lose weight.

Take a look at the following list and see if any of these apply to you:

- Do your clothes not fit right because of your weight?
- Is your clothes size moving up?
- Are you afraid to get on the scale?
- Do you have an upcoming event that you want to lose weight for (a wedding, a reunion, or a cruise)?
- Do you have extra post-pregnancy weight to lose?
- Have you ever been unable to see the stairs because of your belly?

- Have you ever felt embarrassed when someone saw how much you had on your plate?
- Do you get out of breath after a quick walk across the parking lot?
- Do you weight cycle (yo-yo diet, gain and lose weight each week or month)?
- Do you diet by day and overeat by night?
- Do you snack instead of eating real meals?
- When mealtime comes, are you completely unprepared—you don't know what you'll be eating, but you are starving?
- Do you eat fast food more than three times a week?
- Do you make unrealistic promises to yourself about food, such as "I'm never going to overeat again"?
- Have you ever felt yourself longing for a time in the past when you looked better, felt better, and had more energy?
- Has your doctor told you to change your diet due to high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or other health problems?
- Has your love life suffered from what you perceive to be a weight problem?
- Have you become reclusive due to your weight?
- Do you often feel lonely and blame it on your weight?

If you identified with several of these questions, the Reverse Diet is for you. Whether you want to lose 5 or 100 pounds, the change on the scale will be just one of the profound things that will happen once you lose the weight. Just as important will be what happens to your self-image, your body, your mood, your energy, and your confidence.

Reverse Diet Benefits

Once you learn to take the steps toward reversing your habits, you will see results. Some of the changes you'll begin to notice include:

• More energy. Tricia and many of her clients find they don't even need caffeine to start the day! As your metabolism soars, so do you.

- Visits to the scale will be rewarding rather than depressing.
- Improved body image. Your clothes will fit, you'll enjoy picking out what to wear, and you won't dread photo time.
- You will discover that confidence is about you and not your body, and you will come to terms with any lingering body-image issues you might have.
- You will have fewer health setbacks or issues like high blood pressure, high triglycerides, blood sugar imbalance, high cholesterol, glucose tolerance/intolerance, heart disease risk, risk of stroke, Alzheimer's, and macular degeneration.
- You will feel less stress. A healthier lifestyle reduces both physical and mental stress.
- You will enjoy better moods.

The Reverse Diet plan doesn't require the intensive consumption of certain foods that other diets do. By reversing the habits you've been taught all your life, you may find you have been starving yourself at the wrong parts of the day and filling your stomach during the time of day you need food the least—at dinner (and after dinner). Now, instead of looking forward all day long to a large meal at dinner, you'll be eating satisfying, full meals throughout the day. When you learn to look at meals differently, your body will respond with a higher metabolism and increased energy. Sugar and salt cravings will be more manageable. You will begin to see emotional eating for what it truly is: a habit. As your habits reverse, so will your past failures at dieting.

Realistic Weight versus Your Idealistic Weight: Setting Goals

When her clients begin a new diet plan, Heidi often tries to help them distinguish between *realistic* and *idealistic* weight goals. She has found that if they strive to meet realistic goals, they have a higher rate of success.

Body image or body satisfaction and the amount you weigh are two different things. The Reverse Diet plan encourages the emphasis to be put on positive body image rather than a specific amount to weigh.

Take a moment to think about what you idealistically would like to weigh. How would you like your body to look? How far from reality or possibility is that image? Most of us have an idealistic weight goal. Weight loss won't change our height, for example, or our basic features. We are taught by the popular media to want something that many of us will never have, a so-called perfect body. How often do you disparage a particular feature of yours? Do you look specifically for fat rolls because in our culture you are *ideally* supposed to have none? You might so constantly be asking yourself what is wrong with your body instead of what is right that it is no wonder you have distanced yourself from your body. So often, our thoughts and our impressions about what is good and what is bad are based on unrealistic aesthetics instead of realistic health.

Many people begin programs by choosing the specific number of pounds they would like to lose. Examine what your ideals are and what exactly is motivating you before you seek that goal weight.

Are you influenced by realistic standards? The media and Hollywood motivate us to desire bodies that many of us will never have. Perhaps you don't have the correct build for a body like Jennifer Aniston's or you don't have the time or energy to devote to exercise and a perfect diet. Remember, *perfect* is different from *healthy*. This is true for diets and for people. With idealistic goals, no matter how much we try, we rarely will reach them no matter what we sacrifice to get there. Making the sacrifices required to reach these goals takes away from other things we value in our lives. You may rarely reach an idealistic weight goal or may sustain it for only short periods of time, in comparison with getting to a stable weight that is healthy for the rest of your life.

What Goals Do You Strive For?

Take a moment to look over the following list and figure out what unexamined, unrealistic ideals you have been harboring. Perhaps you've always wanted certain things but have never actually examined your goals. Do you hope to accomplish these things?

If you find the right diet plan and lose weight, you will:

- Lose 10 pounds every week for six months
- Have no stretch marks
- Have no sagging skin
- Have no love handles
- Have no rolls of fat or jiggling body parts
- Look the way you did before puberty
- Look the way you did the day of your wedding
- Look like (insert name of supermodel or actor of choice)
- Have a perfect life (be smarter, more outgoing, financially successful)
- Never overeat
- Look fifteen years younger
- Go from a size 14 to a size 2
- Get the perfect man or woman
- Be taller, have longer legs, or have a different body altogether

How many of these things haunt you and produce more and more guilt and feelings of inadequacy and failure when you find you cannot live up to them? Do you feel you will be able to fulfill these expectations for the rest of your life without dramatic sacrifices or misery? How many goals do you think you can achieve long-term? How many are about more than just what you weigh on the scale?

These ideals aren't necessarily impossible, but you should evaluate what you really think you can do and feel good about without sacrificing the quality of the rest of your life. Remember, success and health may entail some sacrifice. Not sacrificing in order to reach your goal is a myth. Getting what you want by putting very little to no effort forth is a myth. What matters is when and where you put the effort. The Reverse Diet plan will help you figure out where your effort will pay off and where it won't.

Let's Get Reverse Real

A realistic weight is one you can achieve by eating healthfully, moderately, and regularly. Realistic goals are goals that concentrate on an inside-out healthy lifestyle. Better feelings about yourself and better eating habits equal a better quality of life. No harsh standards or negativity go along with realistic goals. Realistic goals include the possibility of falling off the wagon and not beating yourself up for it. These goals focus on your being healthy at age fifty-five rather than wearing a size 5 at age thirty. That doesn't mean you can't look great at any age. Looking healthy, trim, and fit is different from looking skinny.

What the Reverse Diet Can Do for You

If you commit to the Reverse Diet plan, you will:

- Have better eating habits you can keep throughout life
- Develop more awareness about how to eat well easily
- Have long-term results and a healthy stabilized weight
- Gain the satisfaction of setting and achieving goals
- Feel comfortable in your clothes
- Gain more confidence
- Have a healthier, more active lifestyle
- Have more energy throughout the day
- Enjoy food without denying yourself or sacrificing full meals
- Lose fat and not muscle
- Leave behind your negative body images
- Quiet the critical voices in your head about your weight and appearance
- Have less guilt about your appearance and what you eat regularly
- Be able to walk up the stairs without losing your breath
- Live a longer, fuller life so that you can have fun and play with your grandchildren one day

How many of these goals produce a positive emotion? Are these benefits or goals you would like to keep throughout your life? Read on to find out what action steps will help you achieve them. And when you become realistic and healthy, it will become a lot easier to lose weight.

Tricia found when she was able to maintain 130 pounds, she enjoyed her lifestyle more than when she attempted to stay at 125. At 5'8", 125 felt too skinny, and it demanded that she make sacrifices that interrupted her quality of life. At 130, she is able to enjoy an energetic lifestyle without the stress of thinking that she won't reach a nearly impossible weight goal. When Tricia finally decided she just wanted to be healthy and to lead an active, longer life with her family, she began to push aside ideal weight goals and work toward realistic weight goals. That was when her long-term success began.

Your Reverse Diet Journal

It's important that you keep a journal as you follow the Reverse Diet plan. Find what works for you. It can be a notebook, a blank book, or a folder on your computer or on your personal data assistant. It's up to you. Your journal is a very special tool in the Reverse Diet plan. You will use it every day.

How Do You Cut Your Pie?

If you are overweight or have been, you know that it can cut into the quality of your life by consuming inordinate amounts of brain space and time thinking about food, feeling guilty about eating, and obsessing about what you look like. Tricia's life was dominated by her weight issues before she developed the Reverse Diet. All of us want to feel good in our clothes and be proud of our figures, but we should also focus on parts of our lives other than when we're going to have a brownie sundae, or if we've had the brownie sundae, how bad we feel because we had it. Many of our clients obsess over what they ate and what they weigh so often that ultimately they are wasting valu-

able energy when they could be directing it toward reversing their lives. They spend time feeling bad about what they ate, rather than dealing with the emotion that drove them to overeat or to eat something unhealthy.

What are the different elements that make up your daily life now? The goal is to broaden your life beyond food in meaningful ways. Think of these things as slices of a pie. If you're like most people, the sections of your pie are:



With this in mind, it's important to evaluate how much of your life will be focused on how you look and what you weigh. Of course it's great to have pride in how you look, but that is different from having your day ruined by bad hair or a shift on the scale. Do you have hobbies or specific areas you want to add to this pie? The piece of the pie that is focused on health and weight supports the other parts of your life. If you give all areas of your life more attention, you will find yourself more satisfied.

REVERSE DIET EXERCISE

Draw Your Life Pie

Take a moment to draw your own pie in your journal. Design the pie so it reflects how much emphasis you currently give specific

areas of your life. Do you work all the time and have little time for your family? Do you give your looks little thought? If this is the case, work should have a large slice and the other areas should have smaller slices. We can't tell you how it should be; everyone's pie will look different. Ask yourself what reflects your values and priorities.

Now draw another circle and design how you would realistically like your pie to look. If you think you work too much, make the work slice a bit smaller than in the first pie, and draw the family and looks slices a little larger. How can you reach your personal goals? How much of your pie is taken up by health or weight issues?

Your Goal Weight

Your personal objectives may be very different from other people's personal objectives. Every person has a different body, a different build, and different expectations. The Reverse Diet is designed so you can personalize it to your own tastes, habits, and goals.

Keep your realistic goal weight and broader goals in mind as you continue on the Reverse Diet. With your realistic goals in mind, choose a goal weight or weight range before you start the program. Your waist will shrink as your confidence increases.

REVERSE DIET EXERCISE

Write Down Your Goal

Take a moment to write down at the front of your journal one or more personal, realistic goals. Pick a goal that is achievable, like many of the realistic goals listed previously in this chapter. It might be something like "Freedom from weight cycling" or "Achieve a balanced, healthy weight I can maintain for life." If you want to select a weight, find a range instead. Instead of picking a goal weight of 140 pounds, for example, make it a range from 140 to 145. This will help put less emphasis on a specific number and more on the general state of health you will be in when you reach that range.

Remember, we're talking about not only how great it will feel when you reach your goal but what it will take to get there. Next, we'll discuss developing the skills you need to achieve your goals. Put your realistic goal aside so that you can come back and refer to it throughout the Reverse Diet program.

Take a picture of yourself, if you like. It can be helpful at certain parts of the plan to look back at your "before" picture. You're going to feel fantastic when you see how far you've come.

Form Better Habits

As you work toward your goal weight range, remember that you should focus on the process and action steps you're taking to get there rather than the actual number of pounds you hope to weigh. Throughout the book we will help you build the skills you need and help you identify the actions you can take to achieve your goals. It takes action to reach a goal. When you focus on the process of the Reverse Diet—when you eat, what you eat, how you eat, and why you eat—you will be building a foundation of new habits that will support a more stable, healthy weight. If you simply have blinders on and concentrate on the goal weight you hope to achieve, once you reach that weight, you may have difficulty staying there, because you haven't been entirely focused on the new process of healthy living. Achieving your goal weight range is something that happens as you learn the process and action steps toward a healthy lifestyle. Change your habits and form better ones, and weight loss will follow.

Your Reverse Diet Moment

Almost everyone has a Reverse Diet moment—when they realize that they have to make a change for the better. Tricia had hers, and it was the catalyst for a new life for both her and her family. Tricia was a chronic yo-yo dieter; there had been many, many times when she decided to lose weight and would do it. Eventually, though, other things would take over her weight-loss goal and she would gain the weight back. Although she would try to succeed, she encountered many obstacles. Sometimes her schedule at work would become overwhelming or the kids didn't want to eat healthy foods, or she told herself, "I just don't have the stamina to eat healthy."

Now that she has had her Reverse Diet moment, she says, "There is not one excuse you can throw at me that cannot be overcome. I have been there and done it all."

What will your Reverse Diet moment be? Maybe it has happened. Perhaps learning about someone like Tricia who has lost that much weight and kept if off is your inspiration. Perhaps picking up this book and beginning this plan is preparing you for your moment. You must ask yourself, are you ready for *your* moment? There is no better time than right now.

REVERSE DIET EXERCISE

Become Aware of Your Reverse Potential

Take the time today to stand in front of the mirror. What are the first few things you see? What are the thoughts you have about your body? Record in your journal everything you see and what you feel. Take note if you experience mostly negative thoughts. Ask yourself if you are ready to love and embrace the person in the mirror. This is your chance to reverse things and begin to appreciate your body and yourself. Work on becoming aware of negative, damaging thoughts that could potentially sabotage your goals to remake your life and your body.

Throughout the Reverse Diet plan you'll work on reframing your thoughts so that much of the way you feel toward your body is positive rather than negative. For example, instead of saying, "I have fat thighs or rolls of fat on my belly," try "I have kind eyes. My hands are beautiful. My legs are strong." It's okay to be realistic—if you are overweight, it's okay to acknowledge that—but that is not who you are, and it is not the only thing about your physical person that matters. Eventually you will look back over what you have recorded in your journal so you can begin to notice changes in your thought processes and your body. Now let's grab that Reverse Diet moment and turn the page toward a new life!

REVERSE DIET EXERCISE

Shed Idealistic Images

Stop a few times today and notice—are you recycling old negative thoughts about your body image? Listen closely, because these thoughts are not going to help you reverse your life. The more you become aware of them, the less damage they can do.

Begin to take notice of the unrealistic, idealistic body image goals that are being pushed on you every day. Do you subscribe to a certain magazine that features airbrushed models? Do you watch MTV or soap operas and wonder why you don't look like a pop star? Do you work with someone who is petite and constantly feel inadequate around her? Every time you see one of these idealistic body goals pushed at you, counter it with a positive thought and remember your personal, realistic goal with a smile.