

## **Introduction**

I'm sitting in my therapy room in Harley Street on a rainy day in September 2009. I'm with a lady who's been dieting for more than 30 years and is really struggling with her mental health. She tells me she's put on the same three stone over and over again, and is now the heaviest she's ever been.

This lady has become obsessed with food, is addicted to weighing herself daily and is constantly self-sabotaging because she's now become a comfort eater. She feels a failure, her self-esteem is at rock bottom and she tells me she's given up believing she can ever lose weight.

Sadly, this is such a familiar story. So many people I see for one-to-one therapy have the same problem with their mental health because years of dieting have psychologically damaged their relationship with food. I resonate completely with them because, when I was younger, I was in the same position and my self-esteem also suffered.

## **From Struggle Comes Hope**

I was an overweight child and I'll never forget the way I was bullied at school because of my size. They called me 'Miss Piggy' in the playground and that stuck with me for many, many years.

Chocolate became more than a treat for me. It was my comfort, my escape, leading me into a downward spiral of guilt and further indulgence. It was tough. I struggled with rock-bottom confidence and my low self-esteem stayed with me way into adult life.

I used to tell myself I was useless, worthless, that nobody liked me – I felt I had no friends. This would drive me into a vicious circle where I'd eat even more chocolate and become even more miserable.

Yet, through my own painful battles, I equipped myself with the tools of behavioural change, transforming my inner struggle into a beacon of hope for others. The most important lesson I learned is that sustainable weight loss is about so much more than how much – or what – you put on your plate.

The brain plays a huge part in your success – you need to know how to retrain it to think differently about the lifestyle you desire.

In Harley Street, I help my patients understand what is holding them back and how we need to get their mind and body working together again, instead of fighting each other, so they start losing weight in a sustainable way.

It was with this knowledge that I developed the Slimpod programme in 2010, a culmination of personal growth and professional expertise, to help more people to take back control of their lives. To date, more than 350,000 people have been on the programme and, for many, it's been a life-changing process.

### **Why We All Need To Do Something**

Since the 1960s, consumers have spent billions trying to lose weight and yet, in the UK alone, latest government figures show that three-quarters of people over the age of 40 are overweight or obese. Many of them will have spent 25 years or more on a diet of some kind.

Worldwide, more than two billion people are overweight and over 600 million of those are obese. In the United States, more than 100 million people are on a diet and, in the UK, 55 per cent of the adult population is on a diet at any one time.

The average dieter spends over £30,000 on diets in their lifetime and yet these are the people who are most likely to be overweight later in life. Obesity has now become a bigger problem than malnutrition, and type 2 diabetes is at an all-time high. Some 96 per cent of people with diabetes are over 40.

One of the scariest stats of all is this: among the obese people who try to lose weight, the failure rate is 99 per cent. And, sadly, for the other 1 per cent, the success is only temporary. The vast majority of dieters end up heavier than when they started.

If this happened in any other walk of life there would be outrage. If a school, college or university had a 99 per cent failure rate it would be closed down – the same with a hospital or business. There's a huge disconnect.

Millions of people are clearly motivated to lose weight. Many of them are so desperate that it causes mental health issues. But when they get into their forties they're exhausted. They feel out of control because they've tried everything and find themselves bigger than they were when they started dieting decades earlier.

Over the years, their positive body image has been eroded away because food has become the enemy and the body the battleground. They're desperate and they feel helpless.

They've stopped believing life can be any different and they now believe they'll be fat for the rest of their lives. They've been disempowered and have stopped trusting themselves around food.

They have no idea what it's like to be a 'normal' eater anymore. Sadly, most people's relationship with food is now based on emotion rather than logic. Clearly, something is stopping the over-forties from losing weight, from being healthier and happier. And the reason is a mystery for so many people.

They are hypnotised by diets and the food industry, and have no idea how to break free from the trance and get their lives back. If this resonates with you, read on as that's what this life-changing book is about: freedom, liberation and, above all, hope.

## **The Weight's Over**

Recently, I asked some of our Slimpod members to complete a survey I called the 'Diet Dossier'. Nearly 4,000 responded and it revealed incredible information about the effects of dieting and their relationship with food – and themselves – before they came on to my programme.

Their deeply personal insights into what dieting has done to them convinced me to write this book to help more people realise that constantly having their weight on their minds is what prevents them from achieving sustainable weight loss. I firmly believe this is one of the reasons for the current obesity epidemic.

People have been conditioned to think that, if they follow this diet or that one, take this pill or that one, or have this job or that one, then they'll magically lose weight.

Well, yes, many do get instant weight loss. But for 95 per cent of them it doesn't last. 7 Day-to-day life, stress, anxiety and boredom lead to emotional eating and they go back to square one, feeling like a failure again. It's a horrible cycle that takes a heavy toll on their well-being.

This book is a testament to the power of positivity. It's a guide that aims not only to inform, but to inspire. Everything you'll discover in the book is based on scientific research and, throughout these pages, we'll delve into the innermost parts of our minds, unravelling the tangled threads of thoughts and feelings that shape our self-perception.

How we see ourselves is the key to contentment. Once we can throw off the shackles of how we think others see us, a new perspective on life opens up.

What's between our ears is the missing piece of the weight-loss puzzle. Our brains can block weight loss or they can be our greatest asset.

To retrain your brain to have a better relationship with food you need to take a leap of faith and be open-minded to learn more, ready to have your life changed. Many people have done just that and you'll see their stories running through the book because they're a constant inspiration to me and many others – I'm so very proud of them and what they're achieving.

I love celebrating their success because they've been there, done it and got the smaller T-shirt.

They are what drives me on my mission to help people understand there is a happier way to live their lives rather than going mindlessly from one meal to the next and panicking about everything that passes through their lips.

Life really doesn't have to be that way at all.

When you understand how you can change yourself, it's so empowering. You'll be part of your own journey to health and you'll become a huge part of the solution. You then have choices and optimism about the future.

It's like walking through the wardrobe door and into Narnia – a whole new world opens up and it changes everything.

You may have read weight-loss books before. You've probably tried a diet or two without success. If you've given up on losing weight, read on – this book is different and it's all about giving you hope and showing you that you can take back control.

I've split the book into three parts. First, we look at the most common issues faced by people trying to lose weight. Then, we discover why the way you are really isn't your fault.

Finally, you'll be ready for my magic sauce: the proven ways you can take control of your eating and your life. All the way through you'll find expert tips to guide you.

So, let's walk through the wardrobe door together because, finally, the weight's over.

This is the moment you start to take back control.