

Weighing In: September 2013

Who are you? Stolen identity!

Recently, three women in my waiting room were carrying on a conversation about who had lost the most weight. Each one of them had a reason for her gain over a period of years. The first lady said that she gained most of her weight after her second pregnancy. The next lady was concerned that she gained most of her weight over the last few years by traveling and eating out a lot. The third lady said that she gained most of her weight after the stresses of loss of her father and that she used emotional eating as a rescue for her depression. They all agreed that the obesity had taken away their lives... They had lost their identity... Was it all wrapped up in just being obese?

Each of these women suffers from what psychologists call dissociative identity disorder... I do not believe that most of this is dissociative disorder of identity, but rather the loss of who they really are. Who am I? There is the stolen identity.

I'll explain: I am a husband; father, brother, employer, teacher, physician, and friend. That still doesn't say who I really am. Those are just titles that I have. It doesn't really say who is the real me. Many of my patients are locked up in their obesity; they each concentrate on being 'the fat person.' In these ladies' minds everything can be fixed if they just lose their weight. They think that just being the fat girl is their identity. What they don't understand is that their weight problem is just a small part of whom they are.

We all engage in strategies to boost our self-esteem. Psychology studies done at Stanford have shown this to be true for all consumer lifestyle choices. The market is open up to us; we feel less in control of our lives than ever and more prone to the invasion slights and anxieties of a hostile world. Some people eat their way into security. Almost a third of Americans take some kind of drug or substance to boost themselves psychologically. Others just sit around and dream of some escape mechanism to which that they can devote themselves.

But none of the coping skills are strategies that work for the long-term thus people feel vulnerable. One lady spoke to me and said she'd been plagued by obesity all of her life. She described herself as working hard to return herself to a healthy weight. But when she succeeded she felt extremely vulnerable as all these layers of fat were a suit of armor worn to protect her from the intrusions of the outside world. When she was fat, people gave her the best table at the restaurant, for example, so she didn't have to sit in the booth. Now they brush right by her, invading her space and making her feel more exposed. Another woman wrote to me and said, "The craziness of all of this is that when I was surrounding my body in fat it was as a protective layer, so bad things and nasty comments couldn't pierce the real me. The fat was a protective layer to my emotions.

Each one of these patients had gotten lost thinking of her obesity as her identity. Their sense of self worth had deteriorated. A lot of them spent time buying luxury goods to feel special and successful. This kind of spending on so-called luxury goods reflects not so much the growth of prosperity but the spread of anxiety and self-doubt in our lives. They each became the fat person with the new Mercedes, the fat person with the new home, the fat person with the new clothes. But the new affluence didn't change who they were.

The loss of your identity which is wrapped up in your obesity is not the answer. You must ask yourself who are you really. In Matthew 16:13 – 17 It's recorded that a dialogue took place between Jesus and his disciples.

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven."¹⁸

I included this part of Scripture to show you that Jesus showed concern for people's testimony about him which makes me believe and understand whatever testimony that people bear about us it's very, very important to us. We must consider them very serious and be willing and ready to make corrections and changes when necessary. For such testimonies were either affected positively or negatively. When you're losing weight... That's a positive affirmation. When you come for your weekly check-ins that's a positive affirmation. Accountability is everything. And, positive testimonies do affect us in a positive way. They will determine the direction and our purpose in life. Sometimes they will win us friends or create enemies.

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Why should what people say stick? Why should what we say about ourselves be so important? Because part of every person's life is in the hands of another human being. Don't ask me why, That's just how God made it. Each day we get out of bed we put our lives in someone's hands. Somehow just think driving down the street every car you pass could hit you. You just trusted the driver going past you. Your progress and my progress are linked to the human beings each person may come in contact with. How can we survive this world without obtaining help, support and encouragement from other people?. Your identity is who you really are, it's not what you wear, it's not how much you weigh, it's not who you socialize with.

I read a quote once: Basically it said that what matters is adding life to your years not years to your life."What do you do to add substance, meaning and significance to your own life? It is really who you are. It's not so much how important we are or how many years we live on this planet Earth. But what one's life amounts to is why we are here. What one accomplishes. And how positively one's life affects others. What memorial will you leave behind? Would you only be remembered as the fat girl or the fat guy?

Life is not about winning but rather about serving, helping others to change themselves to fill their purpose here on earth that God has given them. But if you can't move from the chair to the car because of your weight or you stay a recluse because of your weight, you're not really capable of affecting others in a positive way, are you?

The drive to win this battle of obesity is not about hating yourself for bearing a grudge against yourself. A lot of it is about forgiving yourself and forgiving others for their offenses for we are here today and tomorrow we are no more. Are you making peace with yourself; are you forgiving yourself for your obesity? Do you forgive yourself when you don't follow the program.?

Remember, your identity is not in your size, your weight, what you drive, or what you wear. Your identity is who you really are. Now, go find the real you and when you do, don't lose it again!

Chuck Shaffer M.D.

Recipe Of the Month:

Chicken Salad Spread

Makes 6-8 servings:

Ingredients:

- 12 ounces chicken
- 1 jar marinated artichoke hearts
- 4 scallions
- 8 ounces cream cheese (soft-spreading, low fat if possible)
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1/4 C parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste



*Use on homemade Weigh Station approved flax bread or celery

Directions:

Cook chicken and set aside. Drain artichoke hearts and chop scallions, garlic and artichoke hearts. Blend chicken in blender then add cream cheese, parmesan cheese and vegetables to mix. Spread onto flax bread or celery, enjoy!

Recent Research Tidbits:

Appetite Hormone Misfires in Obese People

According to a study done earlier this month, glucagon, a hormone that helps to regulate appetite, loses its ability to help obese people feel full after a meal. Eleven obese individuals and thirteen lean individuals participated in the study. Study subjects received injections of either glucagon or placebo. Researchers then measured the subjects appetite by measuring the amount of ghrelin (the hormone responsible for appetite) and gave participants a satiety scale to fill out. Feelings of fullness did not vary between the obese subjects who received the glucagon injection and placebo. In contrast, lean individuals reported feeling significantly more full after receiving the glucagon injection compared to those receiving placebo.

Glucagon, which is secreted by the pancreas, is supposed to signal the body to release stored glucose when blood sugar gets too low. But growing research implies that glucagon may also help control food intake and feelings of fullness, through by telling the body to reduce levels of other appetite hormones like ghrelin.

"Once a person becomes obese, glucagon no longer induces feelings of fullness," said the study's lead author, Ayman M. Arafat, MD, of Charité-University Medicine in Berlin, Germany. Researches aren't yet sure why this is. More research is needed to find out why glucagon no longer suppresses appetite effectively in this population, even though the obese subjects reported no other health problems.

Scientists Discover Why A Low GI Meal Makes You Feel Full

We all know that eating low GI foods helps to regulate blood sugar levels but new research gives us a better incite as to why. Good news for those on The Weigh Station's meal plan since we too use low GI in our approach.

Researchers from King's College London studied the effects of a low versus high GI meal on levels of hormones located in the gut. They found that a low GI meal takes longer to digest and releases sugar into the bloodstream more slowly than a high GI meal. The research looked at the effects of a low versus high GI meal on gut hormones in twelve healthy volunteers. Each participant ate the same GI meal for dinner, fasted overnight, and was given either a low (46) or high (66) GI meal for breakfast. Blood was then drawn every 30 minutes for 150 minutes, and levels of the gut hormone glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1) and insulin were measured. GLP-1 is a hormone produced by the gut that has been shown to cause a feeling of fullness and suppression of appetite.

Results: Volunteers who ate a low GI breakfast had 20% higher blood plasma levels of GLP-1 and 38% lower levels of insulin than those who had eaten a high GI breakfast. These results indicate that eating a low GI meal increases GLP-1 production and suggest a physiological mechanism as to why a low GI meal makes you feel fuller than a high GI meal.

Both a Mediterranean Diet and Diets Low in Available Carbohydrates Protect Against Type 2 Diabetes

New research shows that a Mediterranean-style diet (rich in fish and olive oil) as well as diets low in available carbohydrates can offer protection against type 2 diabetes. The researchers studied patients from Greece who are already part of the ongoing European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and nutrition (EPIC). This was a large study with 22,295 participants, who were followed for just over 11 years. 2,330 cases of type 2 diabetes were recorded. All participants completed a food questionnaire, and the researchers constructed a 10-point Mediterranean diet score (MDS) and a similar scale to measure the available carbohydrate (or glycaemic load, (GL)) of the diet.

People who followed a Mediterranean like diet (with a MDS score of over 6) were 12% less likely to develop diabetes than those with the lowest MDS of 3 or under. Patients with the highest available carbohydrate in their diet were 21% more likely to develop diabetes than those with the lowest. A high MDS combined with low available carbohydrate reduced the chances of developing diabetes by 20% as compared with a diet low in MDS and high in GL.