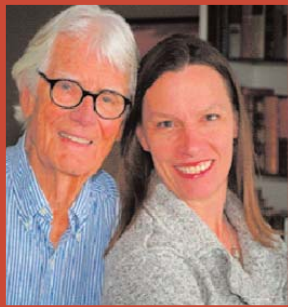


HEALTH CORNER



OBESITY, DIABETES, AND HEART ATTACKS MEAN MISERY AND ECONOMIC DISASTER

By W. Gifford-Jones MD and Diana Gifford

Why do people inflict misery upon themselves? By gaining too much weight, people are decreasing their quality of life and dying prematurely. You don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to find the clues leading to tragic or mysterious deaths. The evidence is in plain sight. We are a society in which obese people are becoming the majority.

Obesity involves excessive fat accumulation – to the point of becoming a risk to health. An effort to fight obesity should have nothing to do with shaming and blaming. That's the wrong approach, the wrong interpretation of objectives, and a distraction from what needs to be done. Instead, we must identify the steps to fight the scourge – and get on with it immediately.

A recent study published by The Lancet, a distinguished medical journal, notes that in the U.S., 213 million adults and more than 43 million children and adolescents will be overweight or obese by 2050. That would amount to 77 percent of the population. In Canada, nearly two in three adults and one in three children and youth are either overweight or living with obesity. These are grim statistics, and the outlook for the kids is not good. History tells us that obese children become obese adults.

If you hear that heart attack is the number one killer, it's a misleading claim. Obesity, and a companion medical problem, diabetes, do the most killing.

Dr. Marie Ng, Associate Professor at the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, is co-author of the study. She says the problem is "much more complex than just a matter of excessive energy intake and physical inactivity." She's right to a point. There are "structural drivers of population obesity" and she urges organizations to address them. There are also people with genetic conditions that predispose them to weight gain.

But don't lose sight of simple facts. Most people eat too much – and bad food to boot. It's costing them, and all of us, dearly. That's saying it politely.

Obesity leads to type 2 diabetes, the complications of which include blindness, kidney failure, cardiovascular disease, and possible amputation of legs. The World Obesity Federation says that by 2035 the global economic impact of obesity will exceed \$4 trillion annually, nearly 3 percent of global GDP.

But there are three easy steps to mitigate the pandemic of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Governments, food corporations, and health authorities are not doing enough to promote them. And you neglect them at your peril.

Number One, buy a bathroom scale and step on it every morning. It never lies. Pick a weight you will never exceed and adjust your food choices and exercise level as required to remain steady at your target. Number Two, use a calorie counter to help manage a healthy daily diet and a pedometer to count your daily steps. You may be surprised what you learn.

An orange is 60-70 calories and high in fiber. A glass of orange juice has double the calories and almost no fiber. A typical muffin contains 400-500 calories and often 35-45 grams of saturated fat. You can eat a banana and a homemade granola bar for half the calories, healthier fats from seeds, and again more fiber. Use smaller plates to help manage portion sizes.

Number Three, eat slowly. The arrival of food in the stomach triggers immediate chemical feedback that stimulates the urge to eat more. But after 15-20 minutes, the small intestines start working and that leads to the sensation of feeling full.

Try it. Take three easy steps to better health.

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Morally Unfit

I'm 25, married for six months. There are two issues for me: one, I got married for the wrong reasons to the wrong man, and two, I am currently sleeping with my 40-something married coach.

The first of my problems is that in the three years since my husband and I got engaged, we've taken different paths and grown far apart. I became active and started eating healthy, while he stayed sedentary, eating hot dogs and cookies all the time. I am a triathlete and travel the country competing. I eat an athlete's diet, organic and natural only.

I do this for health and because of beliefs I've developed about farming and the environment. My husband doesn't even have a gym membership and refuses to eat healthy. This is the way he's always been, but until recently I guess I ignored how much it bothers me. I made the mistake of thinking he would change, especially after we married.

I make a conscious effort to show interest in things he does, but I can't talk to him about my training because he doesn't listen. He never comes to my races. It is hurtful because I work so hard and love what I do. I feel we no longer have enough in common to have more than a basic friendship.

The second issue is my coach. He approached me at the gym a few months ago, asked if I had a coach, and asked if I wanted to be part of his team. I joined his team and at first we had a normal coach-athlete relationship. Then it escalated to a sexual level after he emailed one day saying I was beautiful and had pretty eyes.

He is married with two children. When it started, we agreed it would be physical only because we didn't want our spouses finding out. I have no problem with that, but he seems to push the emotional side of it. He calls me when he is out of town. He emails from work all day, and we go back and forth about sex, training, and relationships.

He will ask, "Do you miss me?" Or say, "I felt a spark last night at the pool." Or mention, "You are definitely someone I could fall for." Then he will turn around and say if it gets emotional it has to stop.

I know this all makes me morally bankrupt and a huge cheater, but I've gotten myself into it and don't know what to do.

Sally

Sally, one of Oscar Wilde's stories has this memorable line. "When we blame ourselves, we feel that no one has a right to blame us." Admitting to being morally bankrupt is a defensive gesture so we won't throw stones at you. We're going to throw stones anyway.

You knew who your husband was before you married him. He hasn't changed. You thought you had the power to transform him, but you don't. Green bananas ripen and change color when you get them home. Tomatoes and lemons do the same. But not people. Greatness doesn't get concealed. You can't marry someone thinking they are keeping their light under a basket to surprise you.

Frankly, it's hard to see your canoodling coach as a person instead of a type. He's like the villain in an old-time melodrama. When he comes on stage, dressed in black and twirling his mustache, we know he's going to foreclose on the widow and seduce her daughter.

Coach has played this role many times. He has his lines down pat. Give the latest conquest the ground rules--spouses must never know--then play her emotions like a fiddle. You've damaged four other people. We'd give you advice, but you already know what to do. You need a new cast of characters in your life, and your relationships need to be as healthy as your diet.

Tamara

SEND LETTERS TO: Directanswers@WayneAndTamara.com

Wayne & Tamara are the authors of *Cheating in a Nutshell* and *The Young Woman's Guide to Older Men*—available from Amazon, Apple, and booksellers everywhere.

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