

THE 3-SEASON DIET

Eat the Way Nature Intended:
Lose Weight, Beat Food
Cravings, and Get Fit

*John Douillard Author of
Body, Mind, and Sport*



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JOHN DOUILLARD



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Also by Dr. John Douillard

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To My Readers

Do not attempt a weight-reduction or exercise program unless and until you have had a thorough examination and consultation with your physician. As with any diet or exercise program, if at any time during the program you experience any discomfort or serious symptoms consult your physician immediately. If you experience any pain or discomfort during any of the recommended exercises stop immediately and consult your physician.

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Preface

OVER MILLIONS OF YEARS of human evolution, nature has figured out how to feed us with astonishing accuracy. The more deeply you study the 3-Season Diet, the more logical and compelling you will find its wisdom. And the proof is in the craving: When you practice this diet, you will crave exactly what nature is about to harvest. You will not experience any struggle or strain, only a growing appreciation of how nature has designed the best diet for balancing weight, mood, and energy for everyone living anywhere on the earth.

In the late 1980s, I went to India to study their natural system of medicine, called Ayurveda. That ancient Sanskrit word means literally “the science of life,” an in-depth study of nature itself. To the masters who described Ayurveda in the ancient Vedic texts, perfect health was a reflection of a life attuned to the changing cycles of nature and with all plant and animal life. They saw that these cycles, from annual growing seasons to daily rhythms, were connected to the rhythms of the cosmos and influenced every aspect of nature. Because Ayurveda was derived from natural rhythms, its research and proving ground was found in the expression of nature itself. The 3-Season Diet that I am presenting here is based on the Ayurvedic nutritional map, but with some important differences.

After my postgraduate training in Ayurvedic medicine in India concluded in 1989, I returned to the States and started teaching Ayurveda to doctors and lay people. During my years of teaching, I realized that the original Ayurvedic diets, which work for India, don’t always fit well in our culture. So I began to apply the concepts and rules I had learned in India to the pace of life and the foods that are available here in the West. I have spent the last 10 years translating Ayurvedic concepts into the American way of life, including diet, exercise, eating habits, and stress-prevention techniques—all of which are included in this book. The deeper I delved into nature and its growing seasons and harvests, the more respect I had for nature’s wisdom. I discovered that the principles of Ayurveda provide a universal body of knowledge that applies to every culture and each individual in all parts of the world. Although I would not call this an Ayurvedic book, the principles from which the 3-Season Diet is derived have been proven over more than 5,000 years. In fact, I like to think of the 3-Season Diet as an updated version of the original American Diet. It is based on the same logic farmers have been using to feed us since the very first harvest.

PART I

You Can Eat It All

CHAPTER 1

The Diet Dilemma and the Eye of the Hurricane

FOR SOME TIME NOW, the people of the United States have been overweight in record numbers, and the situation is worsening with each decade. In the last 10 years alone, the rate of obesity in this country has increased from one in eight people to one in five! According to the most recent government survey,¹ 55 percent of the adult population—97 million people—is overweight or obese (weighing more than 30 percent over their ideal body weight). As a result, the same survey states, Americans are spending \$100 billion a year fighting weight gain and obesity. More ominous still, the Centers for Disease Control reports that 22 percent of American *children* are obese, twice the level of the mid-1980s.

This epidemic of weight gain has led to a seemingly endless wave of miracle diets, each offering the panacea of weight loss with only a minimal adjustment of one's eating habits, and each promising permanent results. Yet a 1992 study conducted by the National Institutes of Health found that an astonishing 99 percent of all people who did go on diets regained every pound they had lost within three to five years after completing the diet! I don't believe that we are simply weak and lacking in sufficient willpower to stay with these diets. On the contrary, I think that most dieters perform heroic feats of deprivation that are not really necessary to begin with.

In the years I've spent working with people who had problems reducing or maintaining their weight, however, many of my clients have come in complaining of weight problems, only to reveal on closer examination that they have difficulty handling stress, or finding enough energy to balance the demands of working and raising a family. In some cases this potent combination has led to chronic exhaustion, fatigue, anxiety, and depression, which they often have to treat with antidepressant drugs. Conversely, patients coming to see me for help with depression and fatigue have very often reported difficulty controlling their eating habits and their weight. It didn't take me long to realize that the connection between overeating, overweight, fatigue, and depression also extended to poor diet and lack of proper exercise. And the clincher is that the weight-loss programs so many of my patients had embraced before coming to see me only made their condition worse. This dilemma is summed up rather succinctly in the recent case history of a patient I will call Jason.

JASON'S STORY

When Jason came to see me, he was pretty much at the end of his rope. He had heard me on the radio show I co-host describing how I had treated one of my patients suffering from weight gain and depression with a totally new approach to diet and exercise. Although Jason had no idea at the time that the two symptoms were related, he came to me because he, too, suffered from a numbing combination of manic bipolar depression and out-of-control weight gain. Several years ago he had weighed 150 pounds, but he was now at 220 and climbing, including a 20-pound gain in the last 4 months. Jason had been on numerous diets with little success, and after 6 months of his latest regimen—a high-protein diet that he had heard about on TV—he found himself completely unable to control his eating. His wife, Susan, who accompanied him, said that not only had she never seen Jason binge on food so much in his life, she had also never seen him so depressed. He had been taking one antidepressant after another prescribed by his psychiatrist; each one worked for a while until he complained of the side effects. In the last month, for instance, his hands, feet, ankles, and other parts of his body had started to swell up. His medical doctor had run a full gamut of tests and X rays but found nothing wrong.

While interviewing Jason, I learned that initially he had lost a few pounds with the high-protein diet, but then inexplicably had started gaining again. I asked him if he was craving anything and he replied that, as a matter of fact, he craved *everything*. “I’m starving all the time!” he said with visible anguish. When I asked if he could be more specific, his wife jumped in and said that she had noticed he was craving carbs and sugars like crazy. “I would catch him eating pancakes off the kids’ plates at breakfast,” she said, “and he would still be hungry!” For the first time in his life, Jason’s appetite was totally beyond his ability to control.

I explored Jason’s depression further in an attempt to identify the underlying cause. He was a busy executive who was shouldering lots of responsibility; he had to remember hundreds of details and delegate jobs to numerous people all day long. I told him that a large part of his problem stemmed from stress, which we now know is linked to 80 percent of all disease, and that his body was responding to every aspect of his life as a constant emergency. “You got that right,” he said.

Then I explained our plan. “We have to teach your body how to handle the stress in your life calmly, without the constant sense of emergency.”

Perking up, he asked, “Is that possible?”

I responded with my favorite analogy. “Look at a hurricane,” I said. “The eye of the storm is calm and almost motionless, yet the bigger the eye, the more powerful the winds that surround it. You have lost the eye of your hurricane. We have to restore to your nervous system a calm that will become the central hub of everything you do.”

To begin with, I addressed Jason’s daily eating habits. Once again, Susan jumped in and said that he rarely ate breakfast, just coffee, and was always too busy for lunch, with the result that he was generally starving by mid-afternoon, and by six o’clock was totally wiped out physically and emotionally. All afternoon he would inhale soda,

coffee, candy bars, and corn chips to keep him going, and he had been doing this for 20 years.

I told Jason that our next goal was to get him to make it through each day without craving anything. “If you have a craving,” I said, “it means that your body needs something so badly that it sends up an emergency flare, which triggers the release of stress-fighting hormones and free radicals—potentially damaging molecules that are the primary cause of disease and aging. That’s all right in a real emergency, but if you do that day in and day out for 20 years, you’re flirting with disaster.”

During our session, I gave Jason a quick survey of the events that had led him to his present state of near-despair. Restricting the kinds of foods he could eat on the diets he’d been following tended to cause cravings, usually for sugars in various forms, to which he eventually gave in by bingeing. That fluctuation between restriction and bingeing creates peaks and valleys in the blood sugar levels that control our feelings of energy or depletion. Over time, fluctuating energy levels lead to physiological exhaustion, deep-seated chronic fatigue, and finally depression. Overweight by itself is only part of the problem—a symptom, but a very disturbing one. You may be able to make it go away for a while, but if you don’t address its underlying causes, it will return with a vengeance—as Jason was discovering firsthand.

Finally, I explained that I wanted to replace Jason’s high-protein diet with a weight-balancing plan that I had perfected over years of working with clients with his very problems. This plan, I told him, would reset his body’s ability to metabolize fat as fuel—something it had lost because of stress generated over 20 years of disastrous eating habits and deprivation diets. “As long as your body thinks life is an emergency,” I informed him, “you will crave emergency fuel in the form of carbohydrates and sugar, and you will mistakenly blame them for your weight gain. The real reason is that in this emergency, the body thinks it will never get enough to eat again, so it stores emergency sugars as fat for back-up fuel. That’s why you keep gaining weight even when you go on diets.”

Jason nodded his head in agreement, but his eyes expressed confusion. “I don’t get it,” he said. “What about all the research? I thought these diets were supposed to be scientifically proven!”

I sympathized with Jason, all the more because I knew he wasn’t alone. Recently, for example, another patient of mine told me that she had read the best seller *Potatoes Not Prozac* and decided that she was not eating enough complex carbohydrates to balance her moods, as recommended by the author. Like Jason, Cynthia had been suffering from a troublesome combination of weight gain, mood swings, fatigue, and incipient depression. Impressed by the scientific studies cited in the book, she began eating lots of potatoes. Then she picked up the best-selling diet book *Sugar Busters!* and found that potatoes have the highest “glycemic index” of any vegetable (meaning that they contain more sugar and place a higher level of stress on the pancreas); therefore potatoes are to be strictly avoided! Both books claim that the diets they

promote will result in improved general health, higher energy, weight loss, and balanced blood sugar levels. “The most confusing part is that both books are backed up by good research and science,” Cynthia had lamented. “Who do I believe?”

The fact is that the authors of both those books are right to some extent, as we will soon see. I have great respect for scientific research when it is done properly; the problem is that we have such an abundance of research today that by citing selectively, authors can back up just about any claim that suits their dietary agenda. Furthermore, for every scientific study that supports a high-protein diet with irrefutable results, I could find another equally unimpeachable study that will show such a diet is potentially harmful. The same is largely true for each diet to appear over the past fifty years or so. Why is it so difficult for us to agree on a single diet that will work for most humans?

The answer is so simple that I am amazed by how many contradictory diets have been able to proliferate for so long, all missing the point. We don’t find much discussion of diets in the natural world. Animals know nothing about proteins, carbohydrates, fats, or calories, yet they are just about the only beings left on the planet with perfect nutrition. Animals have lived by the same program of food consumption for millennia, just as our ancestors did. Yet during the last century, despite our supposedly superior knowledge of science and our grasp of technology, we have been taking a very unsettling roller-coaster ride from one ineffectual diet to the next. The reason for this unacceptable state of flux is that each new diet has merely attempted to solve the problems created by the previous diet without ever addressing the root cause of those problems. Unfortunately, as I will show, what we get from these diets is symptomatic relief that does little or nothing to identify or resolve the underlying issues.

After studying nutrition, fitness, and weight management and working with thousands of patients over the past 19 years, I have come to some simple but startling conclusions. The fad diets with which we as a nation have suffered for decades can be reduced to three essential types: low-fat/low-calorie diets, high-carbohydrate diets, and high-protein diets. Not only can proponents of each of these kinds of diets cite the latest scientific research proving that theirs is the only diet you will ever need, they can also support claims that the other two kinds of diets are inappropriate and even harmful.

Pick up a book promoting the Pritikin, Dean Ornish, Fit for Life, or any other low-fat, low-cholesterol, or high-carbohydrate diet and you will find competent scientific studies establishing beyond the shadow of a doubt that a high-protein diet causes weight gain while putting the body at a greater risk of certain kinds of disease, including cancer. You will also learn that the human body was designed to eat fruits and vegetables, not to devour meat, fish, and poultry. Then pick up a high-protein diet book such as *Dr. Atkins’ Diet Revolution* or the Eadeses’ Protein Power Diet book and you will be confronted by equally impressive research contending that humans have been eating meat since we first evolved and that our downfall was caused by—you

guessed it—the development of agriculture and the increased availability of grains and other complex carbohydrates. This second group of books claims that if you eat only protein—all you want, in fact, including heavy cream, mayonnaise, and lots of red meat—you will lose weight and feel more energetic than ever before.

So I'm not surprised when patients walk into my office totally confused about their diet because they have just come from the bookstore and don't know which well-researched, doctor-approved, best-selling diet to believe. The only research lab that I've found to be proven consistent over a long period of time, however, is nature itself, which has been feeding humanity for thousands of years without the least confusion. Nature's blueprint for our nutrition is an annual cycle, not a daily one. In nature there is no such thing as an RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance), because it is a flat-out impossibility to meet all of your nutritional needs in one day or even a few weeks; it takes a year to meet all those needs. As the seasons blend into one another, we change the clothing we wear, the outdoor activities in which we engage, even the way we set our clocks. But how much thought do we ever give to changing the kinds of foods we eat?

THE 3-SEASON DIET

The question raised by diet gurus and their conflicting nutritional research has a surprise answer. They are *all* right—but only *in part*. Each of these diets works—but for *just about 4 months of the year*. Nature actually designed each of these diets into our lives on a cyclical, seasonal basis, never intending any single diet to get us through the entire year. When people first hear of my 3-Season Diet, they usually ask what happened to the fourth season. The seasons I'm referring to are three growing seasons and harvests that have their conceptual roots in the oldest medicinal traditions on earth. According to the 5,000-year-old system of health and medicine known in India as Ayurveda, the year is more properly divided into six seasons that can ultimately be reduced to three primary growing seasons and three harvests. (Chinese medicine, incidentally, divides the year into *five* seasons, which is most likely owing to climate differences).

In nature, one of the four traditional seasons is always a dormant or resting season, most commonly winter. If you lived on a farm, you would naturally follow a 3-season diet, eating and craving the foods harvested with each of the three *growing* seasons. Now, so you are not restricted to eating only locally grown foods in season, foods from around the world are classified into one of the three harvests. You can eat it all—just wait until it is in season.

The first harvest comes in spring and consists mainly of roots, sprouts, and bitter greens that burst from the ground aided by spring rains and melting winter snow. Summer provides a much more plentiful and longer-lasting harvest of fruits and

vegetables that are picked continually during its extended growing season. Finally comes the fall harvest that precedes winter, gathering the last growths of vegetation along with the nuts and grains that will see us through the long winter months. This is when the grapes are harvested and crushed to make wine, when people traditionally put up preserves and gather hay into barns. I refer to this season as winter because although the foods are harvested in fall, they serve us all through the long, cold winter months.

These three harvest seasons translate easily into the three major diets as I described them: low-fat/low-calorie in spring, high-carb in summer, and high-protein in winter. In nature, both animals and humans have always gotten most of their protein and fat for the year in the winter months—just think of squirrels and nuts—and have gotten rid of the excess protein and fat in the spring with a naturally occurring low-fat diet of spring greens and sprouts. During the summer, when the days are longer and the body needs more energy, nature provides us with an abundance of high-carbohydrate fruits and vegetables for boundless vigor and vitality. Based on this observation, one could say (although not exactly) that the Dr. Atkins Diet, or Michael and Mary Dan Eades's Protein Power Diet, both of which recommend getting 80 percent of your calories from *protein*, are somewhat good *winter* diets. Dean Ornish, Jenny Craig, and Weight Watchers—all *low-fat, low-cholesterol* regimens—work well in *spring*. Pritikin, Eat to Win, Potatoes Not Prozac, Fit for Life, and various vegetarian diets that stress getting 70 to 80 percent of your calories from complex *carbohydrates*, are excellent in the summer.

In one sense, then, all these diets are right—but not for the rest of your life! They each work best for about 4 months of the year, although as promulgated they are also a bit more restrictive than might occur naturally. The problem with trying to follow any one of them all year round is that it leaves out two-thirds of nature's requirements—or what I sometimes call your Recommended Annual Allowance. The imbalance created by such a restrictive diet will eventually manifest as a craving for what that diet denies you, whether it's carbohydrates, protein, fats, or sweets. Humanity has survived all this time without counting calories or carbohydrate and fat grams—and without our current epidemic of obesity and heart disease. When we had an agricultural society, people ate much more naturally than we do today, consuming different kinds of foods as they became available in different seasons, balancing their intake of protein, carbohydrates, fats, and sugars. They might have gained a little weight in the winter—just as bears do as they go into hibernation and their metabolism slows—only to burn it off in spring and summer as our metabolism picks up along with the workload and daylight hours. It's no wonder that people cannot stay on fad diets for long. In an attempt to manipulate or trick the body into burning fat, those diets restrict the foods our bodies have long been conditioned to eat at certain times of the year. Whenever you restrict certain foods from the diet for long periods, the body will naturally begin to crave what it is not getting, and that begins the cycle of binge eating, weight gain, guilt, and depression, followed by yet another heroic attempt to stick to a new restrictive diet. Protein, carbohydrates, fats, and sugars are all essential to total health, and in much more balanced ratios than most diets would have us believe. To attempt to

eliminate or severely restrict any of these groups will not only fail to bring about lasting weight loss, but will also create health problems down the road.

These highly restrictive diets also complicate the matter of eating, which should be as natural as breathing, and a source of pleasure and contentment. How contented can you feel when you're doing long division to decide what percentage of the calories in a piece of bread comes from fat? Yet the prevailing attitude embraced by many diets seems to be, "If it feels easy, something is probably wrong." I have my own golden rule that I will ask you to follow as you read this book and practice my suggestions: "If you don't like something, don't do it!" The reason is simple: If you are doing something you don't like, you probably will not stick with it. For the past twenty years, for example, 80 percent of Americans have not exercised regularly, and that figure has held constant, despite all the articles about exercise in health magazines and the rising number of fitness centers nationwide. People don't stick with exercise because they don't like it. They often say that they would do it if

QUICK START

TO GET STARTED right away, turn to the 3-Season Grocery List on page 109 and simply shop from the spring list in spring, the winter list in winter, and the summer list in summer. Without even noticing that you are making dietary changes, you will be eating with the seasons and craving foods that are coming into season. They had time, but as you know, if you really like something you'll find time for it. (If you really like ice cream, you don't have trouble making time in your busy schedule for a dish of Ben & Jerry's!) As the old Chinese master Lao-tzu said thousands of years ago, the harder you try, the less success you will have.

EATING MEDITERRANEAN STYLE

Before you get the idea that I just don't like popular diets, let me say that there is one diet that deserves the attention it has received in recent years. A study conducted a generation ago by Dr. Ancel Keys and colleagues at the University of Minnesota examined the relationship between diet and heart disease rates in seven countries and found that people who lived near the Mediterranean Sea suffered vastly lower rates of heart attack and coronary death than those who lived in the United States and other Western industrialized nations. The researchers discovered that their Mediterranean subjects consumed dietary fat that was mainly derived from vegetables, as opposed to the highly saturated animal fats from meat and dairy products consumed by the subjects from other industrialized countries. The so-called Mediterranean Diet was found by subsequent researchers not only to ward off the risk of heart disease but also possibly to help prevent a number of common cancers. But the best part of the diet

was that it was so easy to follow and the food was so enjoyable that most people who were put on it tended to stay on the regimen. It seems that enjoying what you eat is the first step to good health—proving my golden rule!

What researchers did not fully understand about the Mediterranean Diet, as they tried to pigeonhole it into some version of counting fat, carbs, and proteins, is that the people in those regions just ate what was seasonally available. What they ate was closely connected to the produce of local farmers and to nature's harvests, combining generous servings of fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, and nuts with moderate portions of fish and only occasional red meat or dairy. They also took time and relaxed during meals rather than eating on the run or while driving. It's such a reasonably balanced diet that for many people it would be far preferable to the Standard American Diet (or SAD). But by altering the ingredients somewhat from season to season, and by broadening and fine-tuning the range of foods available, especially fruits and vegetables, we can easily improve on the basic strengths of this diet with one that will leave you craving exactly what you need, as each season sets you up to crave the harvest of the next one.

Unlike so many fad diets, the Mediterranean way of eating is not based on an arbitrary manipulation of scientific data, but on traditional agricultural wisdom. Like the so-called French Paradox—the fact that people in France and certain other countries eat a diet rich in fats, yet have less than half the rate of heart disease and obesity than we do—the Mediterranean Diet stresses simplicity and enjoyment without excess.

KNOW YOUR BODY TYPE

I told my overweight and depressed patient Jason that the next step in bringing him back into balance was to read his owner's manual. Whether you drive a Volkswagen, a pickup truck, or a Porsche, you have to know that vehicle's specific requirements to keep it in good running order. If you do not know whether you are closer to a sports car or a family sedan in basic metabolic body type, you're going to run into trouble sooner or later. Your basic body type is derived to a large extent from your ethnic heritage, as we will see when I discuss constitution in more detail in chapter 7. If your ancestors hail from the Mediterranean region, Scandinavia, Asia, or Africa, you are likely to share body type qualities indigenous to those areas. Many recent diets base *everything* you eat on your individual body type or blood type (which is itself related to ethnic roots as well). These diets certainly have merit, and I do believe that your individual type needs to be taken into account. But individuality should be an overlay on what nature harvests, a way to fine-tune your basic diet to the seasons and your ethnic background rather than dictating the diet itself.

Everyone is different, but just as I believe that all diets can be reduced to three

essential varieties based on the three harvest seasons, so all body types can also be reduced to at least some combination of three basic types that correlate to the same three seasons. Some people are cold all year long, and are considered “winter” body types. Others are warm the year round, and so are said to have a “summer” body type. And still others retain water all year, giving them a “spring” body type. Based on which body type you resemble most closely, you can fine-tune and individualize my 3-Season Diet to make it even more appropriate for you. In chapter 7, I will show you how to identify your predominant body type or types, and will help you use this information to mold the basic 3-Season Diet for your specific needs.

I explained to Jason that his particular type had a lot of fire and heat. In the summer he would get overheated and stressed more easily than in spring or winter, and when he overheated he would get angry. Because he had more of a summer constitution, he would need to eat cooling foods from the summer grocery list, which I provided for him, more strictly during those hot summer months to avoid overheating. Like Jason, most of us need to emphasize one or two of the seasons that predominate in our body type. The point is that we all must eat with the seasons, but once you know which seasons you favor, you can adjust your diet to suit your individuality. For an in-depth discussion of body types, turn to page 133.

THE SURVIVAL RESPONSE

Perhaps the most serious problem with highly restrictive or “starvation” diets is that the moment the body senses that it is being starved, it goes into what is known as “emergency” or “survival” mode. When the body perceives an emergency—because it is being starved of either fats, protein, or carbohydrates, or is under extreme stress of any kind—it responds in precisely the opposite way from what we want. Under stress the body produces a degenerative stress-fighting hormone called cortisol, which triggers the body to dump stored sugar from the liver and muscles into the bloodstream. Insulin levels rise to get the blood into the cells to make that emergency energy available. High amounts of insulin inhibit the burning of fat for energy and store available fat for later use. The body responds by craving more “emergency” fuel that is high in sugar and carbohydrates. In a genuine emergency—a life or death situation—the body needs quick energy to fight or flee.

Unfortunately, if the body is responding not to a real life-or-death emergency, such as the sudden appearance of a predator or human enemy or some natural catastrophe, but to the stress of a starvation diet, it responds in much the same way. The emergency fuel the body craves, in the form of chips, chocolate, cola drinks, cookies, and breads, provides temporary, symptomatic relief, but ultimately leads to low blood sugar, lower energy levels, and another craving. The survival mentality generates overeating, overweight, and the thousand ills that too much flesh is heir to.

The same survival mentality, when applied to exercise, can have equally counterproductive results. No diet plan, however balanced, can work to perfection without some consideration of exercise. Unfortunately, exercise has become one more source of stress in our lives, presented in such a punishing way that it either harms the body or is so unenjoyable that most people eventually give up regular exercise altogether rather than prolong the agony. Clients who come to me believe that exercise has to hurt. They have accepted the prevailing wisdom of “no pain, no gain,” which says that we have to break ourselves down physically to build ourselves up and burn fat. Once again, the facts are just the contrary. The more intensely you exercise, the more carbohydrates and sugar you burn for energy; the less intense the exertion, the more fat is metabolized as energy. Workout intensity and fat burning are inversely proportional to each other (see Figure 1, page 192) because fat is the body’s nonemergency fuel and sugar is used primarily in survival situations. No wonder people get frustrated. Because conventional exercise also builds muscle and stores fat, both of which are heavy, after weeks of sweat and tears at the gym devoted to working off the pounds you can actually *add* weight!

When people exercise strenuously, they usually find themselves huffing and puffing in the name of weight loss or fitness. Unfortunately, this gasping for air is perceived by the body no differently than if you had been confronted by a bear in the woods, a tornado, or a maniac with an assault rifle. It will trigger degenerative, stress-fighting hormones and the release of damaging free radicals. In emergencies, your adrenaline flows and your heart races for good reason, and you don’t care if you sustain minor injuries, because your survival is at stake and anything goes. But if you lived that way every day, you would soon have trouble maintaining both your physical and mental health—like soldiers who suffer post-traumatic stress after years of combat. Yet this is what we do to ourselves, albeit less intensely, when we stress our bodies with strenuous exercise and the wrong food. But not to exercise at all can also be debilitating, so what’s the alternative?

During my studies in India, I learned a simple breathing technique that lets you control when you push the emergency button. I will cover this method in detail later in the book, but for now I will point out that most of us take very shallow, upper-chest breaths all day long—letting just enough air in and out to get through the day. These shallow breaths stimulate the stress receptors that predominate in the upper lobes of the lungs, triggering the survival stress response. By contrast, the nerves in the lower lobes of the lungs are predominantly supplied with calming and rejuvenating receptors. When you consider that we take between 24,000 and 28,000 breaths every day, you will understand that the kinds of breaths you take, and the areas of the lungs that are stimulated, can have an enormous impact on how you feel and function. By following my simple directions later, you will learn how to take 28,000 calming and restorative, fat-burning breaths during all aspects of your daily life.

Applying these principles of breathing to exercise, I will show you how to make certain that you burn fat as fuel during exercise by never triggering the survival response. I have proven that during vigorous levels of activity, you can reproduce the