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Don't lose your mind

LOSE

YOUR



WEIGHT

RUJUTA DIWEKAR

'Rujuta has not just changed my body but also my mind and soul. She's the best thing to have happened to my life!' **Kareena Kapoor**

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This is for you, Bebo

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Foreword

For a long time, I used to think that diets were all about starving and punishing yourself. And I wasn't alone. A lot of people thought the same way.

Then I met Rujuta.

She totally changed my perception about diets and dieting. First, she told me it wasn't about starving but about eating well, eating right and eating regularly. I said, 'I'm a Kapoor, I love my parathas, paneer, cheese.' Rujuta replied, 'You can go right ahead and eat all of that and more.' I was like, cool, when can we start?

I started working with Rujuta around the time I started working on *Tashan*, and the results are there for all to see: my size zero became a subject of national interest. The media asked me if it was all diet, all exercise or both. My answer: it was seventy percent diet and thirty percent exercise (this through a combination of training and yoga).

Rujuta spent a lot of time understanding my work and my lifestyle, and gave me a diet totally customised to my needs. My diet on work days is different from my diet on shoot days, and even my shoot diets vary on days when I have a shoot or performance which requires dancing. Meals are planned according to level of activity.

When I am in Mumbai, breakfast is muesli and milk, or a chilla or paratha (no chai or coffee)—when I was shooting in Ladakh, breakfast was fresh fruit and pudina chai without milk. In Ladakh, I also ate momos and thukpa (on the last day of the shoot I was even allowed a pizza!). I had appams and idlis in Kerala, and in Italy, it was risotto and pasta with gorgonzola (half portions though, not full).

I make sure I eat every two hours, and my meal or snack ranges from a sandwich to a glass of soy milk. For Rujuta focuses on nutrition and not just calories. Amazingly, she helps you keep the nutritional value of what you eat, as compared to how many calories you consume, high. And still enjoy what you're eating!

I have learnt what Rujuta means when she says, 'Be smart about food'. Now, thanks to her book, you can too. I'm certain you'll find it good enough to eat!

Kareena Kapoor
Mumbai, 2008

Introduction

I climbed the six kilometres of glacier from Gaumukh (at an elevation of 4000 metres) to Tapovan (4400 metres), with my heart beating in my ears with every step, expectations mounting. I'd heard so much about 'Simla baba', how he had been living in Tapovan for many years; the severe winters he had survived with snowfall more than six feet; how many penances he had done; and all starry eyed, I was hoping to learn something profound from him. On reaching Tapovan, I went to his hut immediately and asked him, 'Baba, aapko yahan kaun laya?'

'Jo tanne yahan laya, wohi manne yahan laya,' he replied, with a straight face. (He who brought you here, brought me here.) 'That's it?' I thought, disappointed.

It took me many more years and realisations to figure out that simplicity is profound.

Simplicity is profound

Don't lose your mind, by complicating something as simple as feeding yourself (although these words appear in smaller font on the cover, they are really the bigger message). Losing weight, as you will realise by the end of the book (I hope), is incidental. A by-product of following a common sense approach to eating—eating right.

But there is a thin line between simplicity and oversimplification. And just like you do with generalisations, you miss the point completely when you oversimplify. Eating a balanced diet will keep you healthy: a simple statement of fact. The less we eat, the thinner we become: an oversimplification. Other examples of oversimplification: blood group, GM (General Motors), cabbage soup and orange juice diets.

In a bizarre way, oversimplification seems to work best through mystification. Theoretically opposites, but apparently a potent combination. The best example of this combo: miracle foods. The weirder sounding, the

better; Chia seeds, Acai berry, quinoa, etc, etc. We really want to believe that there is something miraculous in these ‘exotic’ foods, which will undo all wrong we have done to our bodies (oh we all know we have), but we have no idea how and we don’t even want to know.

When I started as a nutritionist about ten years ago, I struggled to find my place in the fitness and wellness industry (hardly an industry, but nevertheless). For starters I had to deal with the stereotype of a healthy (as in plump and preferably double chinned, not fit and lean) sari and apron wearing dietician, while I was a young postgraduate in tights and jeans. My clients were aghast that I was promoting weight training, yoga and running as a means to keeping fit. ‘Agar exercise karna hai, then why come to you?’ asked a concerned, well-meaning client. Everybody wanted to know how much weight loss I could guarantee, or ‘How much do you charge per kilo?’ (I felt I was selling onions.) It was easier to fool people into believing that starvation was the way, somehow there was a ready clientele for anything like: no banana, no workout, no food only juice, etc. Where was the thrill in ‘eating the right amount of food at the right time’ as I prescribed? Yet as I struggled to find a foothold, I was sure that eventually people would realise (obviously with the help of some fitness professionals, more access to information and some hard hitting experiences) that losing fat and getting into shape has much more to it than how many grams or kilos you have dropped in a week or six months.

About this book

Through this book I share with you my take on dieting, and how dieting or diet is the most misunderstood term in English. **There is no such thing as going ‘on’ or ‘off’ your diet.** Eating correctly has to be a lifelong commitment, and the diet should be a reflection of this. This automatically rules out any extreme diet or crash diets which require you to go ‘off’ them. Diet, or what you eat, should be planned according to your activity, lifestyle, fitness levels, likes, dislikes, genetics, etc. It should be part of our daily life, just as brushing our teeth is. **For diets to work they have to be personalised.** Oversimplification or generalisation has never worked. We are all genetically predisposed to carry fat in different parts of our body. So

for fun, pick up the book which has the shape on its cover you identify with more, apple or pear (but do know that the basics of fat loss and healthy living remain the same, regardless of your shape, size, gender, age, nationality, etc).

My other belief (which you will find in this book) is that **all food is good**. All foods contain nutrients which have their own role to play in our body. We need all kinds of nutrients, like carbs, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals, and depriving us of even one of them will create an imbalance in our system. Also, there is **no bravery attached to weight loss**. You can achieve it just by falling sick. What is most important is that you feel good about yourself, treat yourself well, **be committed to eating properly and exercising**; and weight loss, rather fat loss, will just happen. Punishing yourself by going on deprivation diets (liquid diets, low carb, high protein or any other fad diet) is never going to work. You will lose weight but at what cost? Not to mention that it will all come back, double of what you lost, in fact.

My book is about my philosophy of dieting which is a confluence of what I have learnt (and still am learning) in my studies of yoga and ayurveda, and during my Sports Science and Nutrition PG. Over the years I have come to understand that everything that we do or do not do is motivated by a strong desire to be happy. We want to lose weight because we think that it will make us happy. We want to, just have to, eat that pastry because it will make us happy. We don't want to eat karela sabzi because that will make us unhappy. The problem is that we are looking for happiness in the wrong place. Happiness is within us (clichéd but true) and when we get in touch with ourselves, our true being, we will discover happiness. Dieting or eating correctly, is a process, a learning tool, to go within. And when we see or experience that glimpse of reality within ourselves, it will (has to) reflect in our physical body.

Wikipedia on crash diets

A crash diet is a diet which is extreme in its nutritional deprivations, typically severely restricting calorie intake. It is meant to achieve rapid weight loss and may differ from outright starvation only slightly. They are not meant to last for long periods of time, at most a few weeks. Importantly, the term specifically implies a lack of concern for proper nutrition.

It is the last sentence above that is really scary. We just seem to lack that concern, that commitment to feed ourselves right. My clients often ask me what I feel about the so called

expert dieticians, (or diet therapists, diet doctors, whatever), who are making people go on extreme diets in the name of ‘guaranteed weight loss’, spot reduction, improving metabolic rate and stuff like that? I think we are barking up the wrong tree here. It’s a simple scenario of demand and supply. When people stop punishing themselves, fad diets will beat a quick retreat. That a lot of dieticians will find themselves out of a job is another issue altogether.

How to use this book

Using common sense when it comes to eating correctly is the central theme of the book. I have tried to put my view across in a way that all of us with or without a background in fitness and nutrition will understand. Throughout the book I have liberally used the experiences of my clients and the amazing stories they had to tell, as examples to illustrate my point better and to make it connect with you, my reader. I feel all of us will be able to relate at some level with these real life examples. Of course wherever required, I have used fictitious names.

At some places I draw parallels between food and subjects which may seem to be completely irrelevant or far removed from it such as politics or religion or our cars. But in my experience we seem to understand the politics of our country or the state of our car better than we do our body, hence the comparison. It is just my attempt to demystify diet and dieting.

Chapter 4, ‘The four principles of eating right’, is the cornerstone of my philosophy. It is the book in a nutshell.

Furthermore, for all the busy bees out there I have put a cheat sheet at the end of each chapter, summarising all the important points of the chapter. These are your takeaways.

I have used boxes all through the book for everything from exploding myths to relating interesting anecdotes, or to talk about anything supporting the text in the chapter. The box on crash diets is a case in point. I had the best time writing these boxes and hope you enjoy them as well, as you read and reread.

This book will urge you to think differently about your body, food, and the act of eating. At least that’s what I want it to do. I sincerely hope it does. As for how much weight will you lose? Two things. First, know that every

time you talk about weight loss, what you are actually trying to achieve is fat loss. Second, focus on the essentials: eating right and eating on time. Fat loss, remember, just happens. Once you follow the easy to understand and (surprisingly) easy to practice principles, you will notice that you feel different in as little as two weeks. You will get much more intuitive towards food, sleep better and feel much more energetic. In about three months you will see visible changes and drop a couple of sizes in clothes. You will also find that you naturally won't overeat, will understand how and when to eat that pastry, enjoy a sense of calm and peace and most importantly, stop worrying about how much you weigh.

Happy reading.

Rujuta Diwekar
Mumbai, 2008

What diet is not

My clients often ask me, ‘You mean I can eat chutney with coconut, aloo paratha and puri bhaji? But where is the “diet” in this?’ They sound almost disappointed. The word ‘diet’ has become synonymous with drastic weight loss, health loss, energy loss, metabolic rate loss and most importantly loss of sanity! **Diet has become a four letter word that it isn’t.**

I strongly believe that your diet has to be a representation of what you will be eating your entire life. It has to remain true to your genes, your likes and dislikes, your work life, your level of activity, and only then does it have a good chance of working. Can you lead a life where you have papaya or dudhi juice all day long? If the answer is no, then don’t go on that diet. **Diet is not starvation.**

A diet has to achieve much more than weight loss. Weight loss, or rather fat loss, is just one of the many wonderful side effects of changing your lifestyle. Dieting that has only weight loss as its primary goal is a failure even before you go on it. It’s like some boot camp you go to, kill yourself at, and come back thinner. You are glad to be back home; and within four days of being back home you become healthy (read fat) again. The challenge is to keep up with the routine you kept at the boot camp but it is impossible given your working schedule, sleeping hours, responsibilities, practical issues. **Dieting is not about ‘going on’ a diet.**

Let’s take a look at some of the popular diet fads and how they work against you.

Diet as punishment: the compensation diet

Real life example: ‘Compensation diet! What’s that?’ I asked. ‘What? [shocked, very shocked] You don’t know?’ I did the Indian way of nodding my head for, ‘No, I don’t.’ Now I was at a south Mumbai gym where the

owners where promoting me as a ‘superb nutritionist from the suburbs’. And the lady who sat across from me was already feeling cheated because she had never thought that she would need to explain ‘a compensation diet’ to a dietician. Fortunately, she was a compassionate socialite. ‘Rujuta, you should know your basics’, she warned. ‘Look, when you overeat and drink the night before, you visit a dietician the next morning and he or she can workout a compensation diet for you. Which means that the next day you eat very little or nothing and workout extra so that you can burn off everything you ate the previous night.’

‘Or,’ she went on, ‘when you know that you have a big party tonight you just don’t eat anything in the day. So you skip lunch but you can have low fat crackers, sukha bhel, tea and coffee, etc so that you can compensate for the night’.

Wow. ‘I knew people did this,’ I said, ‘but I didn’t know it was called the compensation diet’.

‘You are a typical ghat [slang for Maharashtrian with limited or zero IQ but a big ego],’ she joked.

Now it was my turn to speak. ‘I call it crime and punishment. The crime: overeating. Punishment: deprivation of food. Our relationship with food shouldn’t be about crime and punishment. We all overeat sometimes. So what? Fill it, shut it, forget it. Just get back to your normal workout and eating pattern from the next day. The body doesn’t discriminate and store last night’s calories in some special place so that next day when you kill yourself on the treadmill the body just exclusively burns that. And give yourself more space than this. It’s ok to overeat once in a while, just don’t carry the baggage forever. Get back to your diet plan from NOW.’

‘Maybe you can say that because you can “afford” to eat,’ said the socialite.

‘So can you,’ I assured her.

‘I could die for a body like yours.’

‘Great, but make sure you don’t kill yourself by trying to compensate. Just get on with life. Just like if you sleep with somebody other than your partner you still get on with married life the next day, right?’

‘You really are a ghat.’

Extreme diets just don't work: the detox diet

Most diets are impossible to keep at because they always advocate something extreme. Besides being difficult to maintain, they're harmful for you physically and mentally. Let's talk about one of my all time favourites: the detox, weight loss and maintenance programme.

Oh! I love this one. 'Detox diet', the most fashionable term in dieting. So first you accept that everything you have fed your body is toxic, then you become a saint for a week and detox. And how? Using juices of course. And to punish yourself for being fat you use the yuckiest vegetables and make juices out of them: karela, dudhi, turiya, etc. You gulp them down with the bravery of a Kargil war soldier.

Real life example: Kareena once related a sad incident to me. A friend of hers was desperate to lose weight. She signed up for a programme with a very 'successful' dietician cum naturopath doctor who has the reputation of creating 'magic' in as little as 15 days. As Bebo and her friends sat at the dining table one day, the friend, who had already 'successfully' lost 7 kilos in 10 days, broke down. 'How,' she asked Bebo 'can you eat paneer?'

'I am losing because I am eating,' replied Bebo. But by that time her friend was sobbing uncontrollably. She had lost her weight but she had lost her energy and power of reasoning too. And why not? For the last week she had been on a diet of 4 glasses of dudhi juice and 3 oranges a day. What's worse, to deal with the headaches induced by starvation she had been advised to have 6 cups of tea or coffee. The girl's mother was obviously upset; her daughter had blacked out twice in that week. But nothing could deter her from this detox diet. The next day the concerned mother called Bebo and asked her to give her daughter her diet secret.

This girl's diet of course would have to be planned differently from Bebo's, but one thing was for sure: she had to start eating.

Real life example: One of my clients (before she met me) visited a well known naturopath. The naturopath was popular because everything she recommended was from your kitchen. Of course there was no need to workout. (This is always sold as a special attraction. I think the whole plan is to keep clients dull and lazy.) The detox diet consisted of methi seeds and some kaju draksh soaked overnight and eaten first thing in the morning,

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