

PRAISE FOR DAVID NICO AND *DIET DIAGNOSIS*...

Nico's enthusiasm for sharing the Healthnut way—a lifestyle guided by informed choices that enable physical and spiritual vitality—shines throughout this comprehensive guide on how to be a thoughtful food consumer. From toxins to fad diets to GMOs to cholesterol, Nico speaks to the hot topics at the edge of nutrition to make his points accessible to all readers interested in addressing health where it starts: on your plate.

—Michael F. Roizen, MD

Four-time #1 *New York Times* best-selling author

More than just another weight-loss book, David Nico's *Diet Diagnosis* covers everything from detoxification to intermittent fasting, creating an easy-to-apply roadmap that helps you successfully navigate the ever-changing world of fat loss and optimal health to become your best self. A must read!

—J.J. Virgin

New York Times best-selling author, *The Virgin Diet*

When one is ready to make a change and choose life, this information is necessary. David's book can help you in your transition. You can abandon your past and let this book become your life coach on the journey to better health.

—Bernie Siegel, MD

New York Times best-selling author, *The Art of Healing* and
A Book of Miracles

What a fantastic book! David Nico has written one of the most comprehensive yet practical and easy-to-follow books on healthy living that I've ever read. A primer on wellness and the food industry, a multifaceted life plan, a summary of the best research on diet and nutrition—this book has everything you need to remake yourself into a healthier and fitter you. With Dr. Nico's help, we can all become Healthnuts while enjoying the journey of transformation.

—Jeff Levin, PhD, MPH

Professor of Epidemiology and Population Health

Professor of Medical Humanities

Baylor University

Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

Duke University School of Medicine

Author, *God, Faith, and Health*

If you are among the millions of Americans who struggle with obesity and are bewildered by the hundreds of diets that have come and gone, let Dr. Healthnut be your guide. This book is based in good science and good sense. Dr. Nico's advice honors the integration of body, mind, and spirit, without which food doesn't nourish and diets don't work.

—Larry Dossey, MD

Former chief-of-staff, Medical City Dallas Hospital
New York Times best-selling author

At age ninety-five, and in excellent health, I may be the senior nutrition educator to wholeheartedly endorse this excellent new book. Dr. Nico shares helpful tips, insightful strategies, and practical approaches that can work for anyone. Although most people struggle with dieting, I believe this book has great potential for helping Americans and others worldwide find a better pathway to health and nutrition. Tell your friends and family members to get this book!

—Dr. Mary Ruth Swope

Author, professor, and nutrition education pioneer

I have known David Nico for several years and have found him to be a kindred spirit in the world of health and wellness. He is not content with just quick-fix methods that invariably fail after a time, like many so-called experts are, but he is interested in the holistic, long-term healing of the body, mind, and spirit. His depth of insight into the physiology and biochemistry of our complex bodies and minds are impressive for a non-physician. His understanding of the connection between our physical and spiritual health is vitally important in our world today. And he is able to distill the jargon down into understandable language for the common people seeking answers and hope. Dr. David Nico will be a credible voice in the world of health and wellness for many years to come.

—Alan W. Gruning, DO, FACOEP

President, International Center for Health and Wellness
President, Christian Health Ministries and the Southwest Florida Free Pain
Clinic

If you are either confused about diets or interested in learning more about the dozens of different diet programs and which one might work best for you, then David Nico's book *Diet Diagnosis* will be a valuable resource. But *Diet Diagnosis* is more than just a survey of different types of diet programs. It discusses a wide range of important topics like GMOs, artificial sweeteners, agricultural toxins, and the underlying causes of obesity, plus a healthy dose of encouragement to find the diet that is right for you.

—Ross Pelton, "The Natural Pharmacist," RPh, PhD, CCN
Author, *Drug-Induced Nutrient Depletion Handbook*

Ever feel like you can't believe the news you read about diet and nutrition advice because it is constantly changing and contradictory? If your answer to this question is *yes*, then *Diet Diagnosis* is a must-read for you! David Nico shares cutting-edge knowledge and research in an easy-to-read format. This book is the definitive guide on the what, why, and how of diet and nutrition.

—Christopher P. Neck, PhD
Author, *Fit to Lead*

Out of the swarm of advisories that emerge daily on how best to fuel our precious machine, few measure up to stellar status. David Nico's *Diet Diagnosis* reflects his twenty-year experience in extracting the essence of nutritional science. This book is a recipe to live by.

—Walter Bortz, MD
Clinical professor, Stanford University Medicine School
Author, *Dare to Be 100*

The choice between healthy living or disease living begins with what you put in your mouth. In *Diet Diagnosis*, David Nico helps his readers move beyond gimmick-based diets, which rarely provide longstanding weight loss, to a personalized lifestyle change that provides lifelong wellness. Wellness requires solutions, and solutions to the obesity epidemic require identification of the contributors to obesity. Dr. Nico identifies some of these contributors, the obstacles to wellness found in obesity, and the misguidance found in the weight-loss industry, and he tackles them head-on to provide real-life Healthnut solutions to healthy living. Read Dr. Nico's book to move from disease living to healthy living.

—Nathan Goodyear, MD, FAARM
Author, *Manboob Nation*

Sometime in the twentieth century, science began accumulating facts upon which to base dietary advice, and a veritable flood of “how to” books have appeared, disappeared, and reappeared in different covers, because the fact is, diet is a major factor in everybody's life and well-being. Many myths and erroneous notions have been promulgated in good faith, occasionally leading to the wrong road. David Nico's book is a comprehensive collection of almost all of the sensible diets available. He also gives important help for determining *your* best choice, with alternatives if it doesn't work out the first time.

—Warren M. Levin, MD, FAAFP (ret.), FACN, FAAEM
Author, *Beyond the Yeast Connection*

Paleo? Vegan? Mediterranean diet? There is so much information (and misinformation) about nutrition in our world! Dr. David Nico's book *Diet Diagnosis* will help you navigate the diet maze and get you on the right track, not only for weight loss but also to meet your health goals and truly nourish your body!

—Dr. Izabella Wentz, PharmD, FASCP
New York Times best-selling author, *Hashimoto's Thyroiditis*

As a practitioner of functional medicine, I am frequently asked, “What is the best diet?” so I am delighted to see *Diet Diagnosis*. It helps you discover your unique plan in a way that is easy to understand and apply. It is a powerhouse book of tips, tactics, and approaches that simply work!

—Hyla Cass, MD
Author, *8 Weeks to Vibrant Health*

There is nothing nuts about *Diet Diagnosis* written by David Nico, “Dr. Healthnut”! In fact, it is a spot-on ultimate resource when it comes to navigating the maze and craze of diets and health in our modern day! Bravo—what a fun and engaging read. This is another tool I can give my patients who truly just want to feel amazing.

—Holly Lucille, ND, RN,
Naturopathic physician and author

As a life coach, I see many people who have created strategies for career success. But those same people frequently have no plan for success in their health. In *Diet Diagnosis*, David Nico shares clear systems for being as intentional about success in your health as you would expect to be in business. It’s not genetics, and it’s not luck. It’s either having an intentional plan or not.

—Dan Miller
New York Times best-selling author, *48 Days to the Work You Love*

Trying to make sense of the jumble of published nutritional programs is a real challenge, especially since many of them seem to conflict. With this comprehensive, practical, and useful book, Dr. Nico has provided a wonderful reference to help guide us through this nutritive maze.

—Julius Torelli, MD, FACC
Author, *Beyond Cholesterol*
Consulting editor, *The Inflammation-Free Diet Plan*

“How can I lose weight?” is the wrong question. Or at least not the question we should be asking first. Instead, we should approach our nation’s weight problem by asking, “Why am I gaining weight in the first place?” David Nico’s book *Diet Diagnosis* will help you understand the “why” of weight gain and then follow that with the “how” of weight loss. You’ll finish his book with a clear plan for lasting weight-loss success.

—Michael A. Smith, MD
Senior health scientist
Life Extension Foundation, Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Author, *The Supplement Pyramid*

To lose weight and regain your health, you need a lifetime plan. Dr. Nico not only does an excellent job of outlining the maze of different diets out there, but more important, gives you the blueprint to end the diet cycle. Find your *Aha!* Choose your healthnut fans who will inspire you, keep you accountable, and accompany you on your journey to optimal health!

—Trent Orfanos, MD, FACC, ABIHM
Cardiologist
Associate Professor of Medicine
Indiana University

Nico is a Healthnut master, and he lives and breathes well-being, which should be the primary goal of health care. His beautiful enthusiasm for your ability to make your own culinary, medical, physical, and spiritual choices can help you eat better, live better and refuel better. Nico helps you take your health into your own hands, where it rightfully belongs, with flavor and with love.

—John La Puma, MD
New York Times best-selling author, *ChefMD’s Big Book of Culinary Medicine*

This fast-moving book shows you exactly what you can do to lose weight, sleep better and have more energy—all day long!

—Brian Tracy
Chairman and CEO, Brian Tracy International

Diet Diagnosis is packed with great information. In this insightful book, Dr. Healthnut breaks away from the one-size-fits-all mentality about healthy diet and lifestyle by exploring a variety of options to help individuals find what works best for them. We all have our own journey, and I believe *Diet Diagnosis* provides the tools to navigate that journey, helping us to make wise decisions toward overall health.

—*Beni Johnson*

Senior pastor, Bethel Church, Redding, California

Author, *The Happy Intercessor*

DIET

DIAGNOSIS

DIET DIAGNOSIS

DAVID NICO, PHD



WHITAKER
HOUSE

Note: This book is not intended to provide medical advice or to take the place of medical advice and treatment from your personal physician. Neither the publisher nor the author takes any responsibility for any possible consequences from any action taken by any person reading or following the information in this book. If readers are taking prescription medications, they should consult with their physicians and not take themselves off prescribed medicines without the proper supervision of a physician. Always consult your physician or other qualified health care professional before undertaking any change in your physical regimen, whether fasting, diet, medications, or exercise.

DIET DIAGNOSIS:
Navigating the Maze of Health and Nutrition Plans

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO YOU, MY READERS.
MAY GOD RICHLY BLESS YOU WITH ABUNDANT LIFE. JOHN 10:10



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INTRODUCTION

Do you or someone you love struggle with dieting, weight loss, or just knowing how to eat right? As a passionate advocate for wellness, I have often wondered why health books continue to offer their one-size-fits-all approach to dieting. If you've considered this with me, we're not the only ones.

THE PROBLEM

The *U.S. Weight Loss & Diet Control Market* study estimates that out of the approximately 150 million people in the US who are overweight or obese, roughly 90 million are do-it-yourself dieters.¹ And yet, worldwide, it is estimated that at least 2.3 billion adults and children struggle with being overweight or obese.² According to the World Health Organization, an unhealthy diet is one of four major global health risk factors that lead to diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease.³

If it is so easy to eat right, lose weight, and reduce disease risks, why do so many fail in dieting to achieve a healthy weight for life? Is unhealthy eating the only factor that produces a vicious cycle of life-long disease and weight problems? From diet confusion and environmental stress to genetically modified foods, negative emotions, and other complex health issues, you may be confused about potential solutions to the overweight and obesity crisis—collectively known as “OB.” *Diet Diagnosis* will provide you with the tools to overcome OB through effective lifestyle principles that you will incorporate into your daily routine—which naturally leads to the lifetime healthy weight remedy you seek.

This book will teach you how to eat like people who make healthier, eco-friendly, and green choices—the people I consider to be the healthiest on the planet. These “*healthnuts*” really aren't crazy—they just want to eat the right

foods for their bodies so that they can be active and disease-free. In fact, the following is the main premise of the book, and it's probably something you've heard many times: *What you put in your mouth ultimately transforms into how you feel and look.*

The problem is, although most of us know we need to eat better, most of us don't know how to incorporate it into our busy lives. This book teaches you how to identify the unique solution that works for your lifestyle. Some of the information you may already know, but you'll learn how to apply it in your unique schedule. Most important, keep in mind that some of the information I discuss is girded by science and other information by my personal experiences and observation. This work is based on my twenty years' experience coaching individuals, leaders, and healthcare professionals, as well as observation of my personal health.

THE SOLUTION

Diet Diagnosis will unveil the specific lifestyle practices to help you achieve the same results healthnuts use to melt unhealthy fat and achieve a lifelong healthy weight. I believe just about everyone can benefit from these principles. You may be a leader of an organization seeking ways to reduce rising health care costs—you will appreciate the healthnut summary points. Or you may be a mom with family members who struggle with their weight—you'll enjoy learning how to create a healthy lifestyle plan. Or you may be an expert in all the diets, but feel they have failed you—you will benefit from a lifelong reference of practical health tips. You may be a viewer of the television shows *The Doctors*, *Dr. Oz*, or *The Biggest Loser*. You may read popular health magazines, listen to health radio programs, be a member of a wellness facility, or just want to promote health in your company. This book will help you become more knowledgeable about your available food choices so you can help yourself and those you love.

Diet Diagnosis provides an overview of the diet industry by decoding the major diet and lifestyle options. You will also learn the differences between toxic and real foods, practical shopping tips, preparation tools for successful meal planning, and how to develop your own comprehensive lifestyle plan. I'll admit, creating your unique wellness blueprint is not for the faint of heart. If you are willing to put in the effort, I guarantee you will discover a major link to your personal health code.

Diet Diagnosis is divided into five parts.

Part One: Dr. Healthnut World

Part One explains why you intuitively have a desire to live at your ideal weight and the three major causes of OB. Why do you struggle? Contributing to the problem is the plethora of diets that bombard you with contradictory messages about weight loss. In chapter 1, you'll learn the three major causes of OB. Chapter 2 describes some of the diet marketing techniques that keep dieters captive year after year. In chapter 3, you'll also learn how to identify the program that works best for you by introducing you to the *Healthnut Life*.

Part Two: Dr. Healthnut Decode

Part Two helps you decode several diets. Chapter 4 reviews the typical American diet and the three major diets. Chapter 5 discusses the three most popular diets. In chapter 6, you'll discover three specialty diets. You'll also learn why calorie-counting is not necessarily part of successful long-term dieters' lifestyle plans.

Part Three: Dr. Healthnut No-No's

Part Three explains which foods and beverages are most damaging. You'll gain an understanding of the foods that are harmful because they contribute to addictive eating patterns, destroy your metabolism, and prevent you from sustaining a healthy weight. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 inspire you to avoid negative habits by revealing toxic food culprits that prevent you from ever losing weight or body fat. In chapter 11, you'll uncover the champion toxin, which may surprise you. Chapter 12 describes the three toxins we commonly consume that our bodies do not recognize as food. In chapter 13, you'll learn the differences between three stimulants that disrupt homeostasis.

Part Four: Dr. Healthnut Real

Part Four helps you shift from fake to real foods. Chapter 14 demystifies the three healthy food principles. You'll also learn about the three real food types. Chapter 15 teaches you how to eat like a healthnut. You'll know which foods are better for you. In chapter 16, you'll learn how to self-test to assess which foods work well by listening to your body.

Part 5: Dr. Healthnut Action

Part Five instructs you to take action—the healthnut way! You'll create your roadmap for the lifestyle that works for you. Chapter 17 shows you the

Healthnut Life by providing the healthy lifestyle principles that you adopt into your personalized program. In chapter 18, you'll create your own plan based on the principles you align with from the book. You (not me, not anyone else!) decide what you will eat or won't eat. The program will provide the framework to encompass whichever foods you specifically include over the seasons of your life, and as long as you are choosing to incorporate real food into your lifestyle plan, you will inevitably and even immediately see healthier results. Finally, chapter 19 summarizes the ultimate perspective for sharing your newfound lifestyle.

Look, I know what it's like to struggle with lifestyle and health issues. I've wrestled with chronic pain and disease on one extreme and have experienced healing and vitality on the other. The choices we make on a daily basis add up over time. When you make healthier choices, it's like you are providing your body the chance to be optimized, healed, and restored.

YOUR WHOLENESS

Ultimately, my goal is to provide the best of my advice and experience for you. To accomplish this massive task, I rely on my faith in God to really help me. My prayer is that you would not only identify some great tips, but ultimately experience the wholeness that God has designed for you. Wholeness is a complex topic and incorporates multiple dimensions of health—spirit, soul, and body. Don't worry if you're not ready to broach this complex subject in one day—or one week, or one month. I believe that by just taking one step, and then another, to eat healthier, you'll *get well, restore hope, and be alive!*

What are you waiting for? Join me in the epic shift to *healthnut-ize* the world.

PART ONE:
DR. HEALTHNUT WORLD





HEALTHNUT CHOICE

Have you ever wondered why obesity and being overweight, collectively known as “OB,” continues to be an epidemic in our nation and throughout the world despite each year’s influx of new diets? According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, more than two in three adults are overweight or obese—and more than one in three adults are considered to be obese.⁴ One in three US kids aged 2–19 struggle with OB, which is triple the figure thirty years ago. They are also twice as likely to die by age 55 compared to children with a healthy weight. According to the American Public Health Association, the direct costs of medical care and indirect costs of lost productivity, etc., totals hundreds of billions of dollars annually.⁵ Furthermore, the Mayo Clinic estimates that nearly 7 out of 10 Americans are on prescription drugs.⁶ Integrative and lifestyle physicians are bombarded with the rampant growth of lifestyle diseases stemming from OB.

RAMPANT OB

Dr. Bill Wilson, an integrative medical specialist who addresses weight and body composition issues, has conducted body composition measurements on over 18,000 patients. Dr. Wilson points out that *overweight* is defined as “excess body weight” and *obesity* as “excess body fat.”⁷ For those struggling with OB, excess body weight or excess body fat is identical in terms of health consequences. A tremendous healthcare tragedy arising from OB has been brewing globally for decades, and the associated problems and solutions are more complex than ever.

For example, some patients' disease is masked by the guise of being outwardly "thin" but inwardly "fat." So is the internally OB person better off than the outwardly OB person? To add to the perplexity, a recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* claims that those slightly overweight with a higher Body Mass Index (BMI) than non-overweight individuals have a lower death rate.⁸ However, the results of this study fail to consider other ramifications. For example, what is the benefit of having a lower death rate if you live a lower quality of life with OB and have to take a prescription drug? Or, how many of the participants in this study were already on prescription drugs? Compare these results to the reality of those who might live one year less but die without a debilitating or chronic disease. You may realize that you care about what maximizes and prolongs the *quality* of life, not the *quantity* of years lived! You want to feel and live *better* and not just *longer*.

Certainly, the OB dilemma contributes to preventable deaths associated with cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and other chronic conditions. Do you think there is a correlation between the 69.2% of the population struggling with these mostly lifestyle-related diseases and the almost 70% of the population on prescription drugs?

And what about the other one-third of the population—you know, the healthnuts?⁹ Why don't they struggle with OB? Well, healthnuts endeavor to reduce their exposure to the negative effects of toxicity to virtually eliminate the chances of OB and many related lifestyle diseases. This does not mean healthnuts are perfect and experience vitality in every area of life during every second of the day. There are other factors involved in health that go beyond the food aspect. However, it's undeniable that what we put in our mouths is a significant contributor to our health and vitality. Wanting to be a healthnut is really about the *desire* to live a higher quality life and to learn how to live it consistently—for years to come.



HEALTHNUTS...

- Avoid lifestyle practices that lead to OB.
- Experience a lifelong freedom from OB.
- Are not really crazy...they just want to be healthy!

THREE MAJOR CAUSES OF OB

CAUSE #1: BODY TOXICITY

There are three major causes of OB: body toxicity, soul toxicity, and info toxicity. The first major cause of OB is body toxicity. How do you know if you have body toxicity? You can take a quick test to determine whether or not you have body toxicity. Check any of the following symptoms below that you experience regularly.

BODY TOXICITY SYMPTOMS

- bad breath
- brain fog
- dry skin
- body odor
- pain
- dandruff
- fatigue
- joint pain
- belly fat
- acne
- sleep problems
- constipation
- digestive difficulties
- bloating/gas
- food addiction



Now, I don't mean to scare you or point the finger at you. Whether or not you checked any or all of the above, the chances are that you will experience toxicity at some point in your life. It's not the temporal body toxicity symptoms listed above that are of concern, but the pervasive, slow-growing pattern of systemic toxicity over time that is most damaging. Let's take a look at some of the factors that cause body toxicity.

BODY TOXICITY SOURCE #1: UNCONTROLLABLE FACTORS

An uncontrollable factor is a factor that exposes your body to toxicity against your will. An example of an uncontrollable factor is when you inhale or ingest environmental pollution while traveling or even crossing the street. Another example is breathing secondhand smoke in a public air space. A third (less significant) example is your genetics and the (more significant) modified impact on your genetics from your lifestyle choices and your environment. Each of these uncontrollable factors may influence your level of body toxicity at any given phase of your life.

It is said that what you inherit will not change. How much of a role does genetics have in influencing the expression of your personal body toxicity? Your genetics account for about between 20%–30% of your health (some researchers place that figure as low as 5%). The other 70%–80% of your health outcomes are related to your lifestyle choices. There are now many uncontrollable factors that may impact your level of body toxicity. Yes, your DNA can be switched on to express disease characteristics, sometimes without your control.

The field that studies these genetic factors is called “epigenetics.” Epigenetics is more than just understanding your genetics. Epigenetics also explores the genetic expression and dynamic response of your body to diet, lifestyle, behavior, and toxins through chemical alterations.¹⁰ Your genetic expression is a critical lifestyle element because it tells your body how to function in our environment. If your genes intend to transform to a monstrosity via uncontrollable factors, you may experience more dysfunction in your body, one of which is OB. In the medical community, patients who have unknowingly been exposed to abnormally high levels of lead and mercury experience the uncontrollable factor of toxic element exposure. Additionally, evidence emerges that chemicals such as pesticides and BPA are linked to metabolic dysfunction, insulin resistance, and ultimately predict OB.¹¹ The overabundance of exposure to these toxins may increase the risk factor of complex diseases.



HEALTHNUTS...

- Recognize the importance of uncontrollable factors in body toxicity.
- Understand genetics has less influence on OB than lifestyle practices.
- Respect the larger role of the epigenetic risk for OB.

BODY TOXICITY SOURCE #2: CONTROLLABLE FACTORS

A controllable factor is a factor that's within your power; you can choose whether you allow that source of toxicity into your body. For example, one controllable factor is deciding what to eat—for example, whether you choose to snack on potato chips or on peanut butter and celery. A second controllable factor is what you put on your skin—for example, whether you regularly use spray-on tans or vitamin E. A third controllable factor is what products you bring into your household—for example, whether your laundry consistently comes in contact with chemically enhanced dryer sheets or all-natural detergent. Keep in mind that although there are varying levels of healthy and unhealthy, what's most important is taking steps in the right direction to create a higher quality of life.

In the US, similar to other developed nations, the leading source of OB is malnutrition. How is this possible in a land with such easy access to food? Because we have increased the amount of food but decreased the nutritional quality. We spend more on food that is lacking key nutrients, which causes an overfed form of malnourishment. During a recent conversation with my friend Dr. Jacob Tietelbaum, who is an integrative physician expert in lifestyle medicine, he disclosed the truth of nutrition in one simple phrase: "Malnutrition is at an all-time high."¹² Surprisingly, although we have more food availability throughout the world today than probably ever before in history, our cells are still starving for fuel.

If you want quality food, you will either have to pay for it or farm it yourself. Thankfully, there are agricultural movements aimed at making farming more sustainable and ecological through efficient food-growing systems such as hydroponics or fish repopulation strategies. Ultimately, there is no way around accessing high quality food sources. More than ever, you must make a choice to be conscious about the foods you purchase as a small part of creating a market demand for healthier food. Otherwise, you may continue to struggle for the rest of your life, both personally, because of your own weight and health issues, and more generally, with not being able to find healthy food. The choice is yours.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

Choosing the wrong food leads to an increase in weight and Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is often the standard used to determine a healthy height

and weight balance ratio. However, BMI is one of the worst indicators of overall health. Regardless of your level of systemic body toxicity, one of the most accurate methods to measure your body composition is through a Dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) scan. A DEXA scan accurately snaps a big picture of your body composition by measuring bone mineral density. You might say, “Wait a minute I don’t want a dose of radiation.” I don’t either, but rest assured that a DEXA scan actually uses less radiation than a typical chest x-ray.¹³

A less invasive and an inexpensive option for determining your lean and fat mass ratio is body fat calipers. When I was a professional fitness trainer many years ago, I always began with a new client by taking their baseline body fat and lean mass measurements. The clients’ goal was to reduce negative body fat levels, and thereby decrease inches in pant, dress, and waist sizes. Measuring your body fat levels is far superior to weight measurements alone. It’s possible to lose weight, but increase unhealthy fat mass, which will not help your goal to be healthy.

Also, keep in mind that losing weight and becoming thin does not always equate to health and vitality. You can be thin but have toxic fat buildup around your organs. What you want is a balance of a healthy weight and body fat ratio that works for your height, frame, and makeup—the ideal you! The real you is not about comparing yourself to anyone. It’s about maximizing your God-given health to optimal function. Crash dieting, or bouncing from diet to diet, is about the worst thing you can do to be healthy and lose either weight or fat.



HEALTHNUTS...

- Acknowledge the importance of controllable factors.
- Avoid foods that cause malnourishment.
- Focus on balancing body composition and reducing inches instead of weight.

CAUSE #2: SOUL TOXICITY

The second major cause of OB is soul toxicity. I define the soul as your mind, will, and emotions. There are soulish aspects of OB that include your

mind and emotions; science is only now beginning to address the influence of the mind and emotional aspects of the soul on the physical body. A recent analysis of obesity-related behaviors in 67 peer-reviewed articles from 1976 to 2013 found that neurocognitive dysfunction creates reductions in activity, poor eating habits, and higher intakes of food.¹⁴ It is plausible that the combination of OB and neurocognitive decline energizes the vicious cycle of a negative soul feedback loop. In other words, effects from a negative soul contribute repeatedly to poor choices with bad physical outcomes. Most of this research is tangible but there are other soul-related factors that are less physically apparent.

THE PLACEBO REALITY

Ted Kapchuk, Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard, believes that what has been called the placebo effect, or the success of a harmless but ineffectual treatment simply because the patient cognitively believes that it is working, may be authentic—a belief that parallels what some of the top scientists may also sheepishly and quietly admit. Kapchuk acknowledges the limitations in research and does not necessarily claim to exactly know how the placebo works.¹⁵ If the placebo effect, however, is real, what is most important to take away is that the mind (or intellect), will, and emotion of an individual is an influential part of health, even if we don't yet fully understand how.

During one of my international trips, I explored this topic with Dr. Frans Cronje, who is a world-renowned lecturer on the interdisciplinary nature of medical science and healing. In a conversation over breakfast, Dr. Cronje wondered aloud why unexplainable things could happen in medicine. During one intense moment in our interaction, he exclaimed in his stern but articulate, convincing tone, "It's because the placebo is real!"¹⁶ Up until that point, I've always thought placebo was anecdotal. It was not science. It was the unexplained that just happened by chance. It was the sugar pill phenomenon.

He then dropped a rather large term: psychoneuroimmunoendocrinology. "What is that?" I inquired. Essentially, he explained, psychoneuroimmunoendocrinology (PNIE, for short) is an entire field that attempts to explain the interrelations between the mind and body. It claims that your mind and body communicate, and in that communication, they may influence one another.¹⁷ This is the very reason Dr. Cronje postulates that a branded placebo sugar pill and branded drug achieves better success than a non-branded

placebo or a non-branded drug. The mind-body gap in our understanding is closed by the fact that the placebo is acting as an authentic representation of the unconscious conditioning of belief along with a conscious expectation of benefit in an individual's mind.¹⁸ Their research contributes understanding to what I call the placebo reality. Expect to see more research on the placebo reality in the coming years.

MIND-BODY CONNECTION

You may already be familiar with mind-body medicine, which emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century and is related to the placebo reality. Far more significant than mind-body medicine alone, I believe the next big wave that twenty-first century science will explore is spirituality. Some believe, including myself, that there is a spiritual dimension, separate from the soul and body, which interacts and communicates with the soul and body. Dr. Harold Koenig, who is the co-director of Duke's Center for Spirituality, Theology, and Health, describes the importance of addressing spiritual issues in healthcare as more studies continue to identify the relationship between spirituality and better health.¹⁹ However, spirituality is more challenging to understand, observe, and measure from a scientific perspective, at least in terms of the frameworks we are familiar with in science or even in anecdotal evidence today.

(Because of that complexity, I do not include much spirituality in this book. Spirituality and health needs its own book, even multiple books, to begin to ask the right questions in the process of understanding its health-related dynamics. However, I've attempted to address it in *Leading Wholeness*, a multidimensional theoretical framework for leaders and health professionals to positively impact the health of nations with spirit, soul, and body.)

So how does the placebo reality affect your mind and body? Consider that some pharmaceutical drugs may only need to achieve a minimum of 1% effectiveness above placebo to be approved in clinical trials. Did you know the placebo effect might be as high as 30% or more? Wellness coaching is a health framework to exercise and work with your mind to proactively and positively influence your physical body by focusing on lifestyle solutions that are meaningful, motivating, and manageable.

This is nothing new in terms of health communication. World-renowned psychiatrist, Dr. Daniel Amen, in his book *Change Your Brain, Change Your Body*, describes the benefits of the brain's influence on the body. I've learned

from Dr. Amen that when the mind harmonizes with the body, patients get the best results.²⁰ It's no different for you. Your mind is the most powerful influencer of your body.

HEALTHNUTS...



- Know there is a possibility of experiencing the placebo reality.
- Acknowledge the impact PNIE has on brain, hormone, and body weight.
- Understand that a positive mind-set may improve success for a healthy body.

EMOTION-BODY CONNECTION

The other half of the soul connection to your body is your emotional outlet. Science is obliging, as researchers continue to explore the connection between biological actions such as food consumption and the emotional aspects of the mind.²¹ In my work coaching physicians and organizations to help their patients achieve a healthy lifestyle and weight, I've found emotions are influential on both spectrums, whether positively or negatively. Depression, anxiety, fear, worry, anger, and frustration will prevent success in overcoming OB.

Ultimately, negative emotions may drive us to seek new health professionals, new diets, or even harmful substances to remedy our health challenges. A major problem with today's diet industry is that it does not take into account your long-term success—even though long-term success is one of the biggest obstacles in dieting! Your emotions play a powerful role in accepting or rejecting this lifetime plan, whether positive or negative.

There are entire fields of study dedicated to comprehending the connection between emotional status and OB. One of my favorite books that I encountered in graduate studies was *Emotional Intelligence* by *New York Times* best-selling author Daniel Goleman. Dr. Goleman was the first to emphasize that healthy emotional expression must be considered as important as sheer IQ alone.²² Your Emotional Quotient (EQ) is a measure of your emotional abilities. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a complementary measure of emotional insight and understanding. A good percentage of your EQ and EI

self-leadership capacity is related to the influence of your surrounding environment.²³ For example, if you put a child in a negative learning environment, their chance of success is much lower than a child who was placed in an area of positive emotional support.

Dr. Ben Carson is a famous neurosurgeon responsible for the first separation of twins conjoined at the head. As a young boy, Dr. Carson did not have a present father. However, he had a strong mother and supportive teachers. Although he was not in the best possible atmosphere, there was a positive system and strong accountability when he was growing up.²⁴ It could be argued that he had a gift that helped him supersede the negative constructs of his environment. That gift would not have fully developed had he not had the right support, encouragement, and accountability. This is why a supportive community is vital to health success.

Your emotions are real. Don't allow anyone to downplay your positive emotions. Sometimes, there will be an unknown, a question mark, or an unidentified factor that will bring you success in finding your health goals. You may not always be able to put a finger on what caused a considerable shift in your life—it may have been something you read, one word from a close friend or colleague, or even one small, successful eating achievement that lasts for years—but one thing is all it takes to never give up. It might take some time, but with God's help and your willingness to keep moving forward, positive emotional support will be a strength for you.



HEALTHNUTS...

- Understand emotions will either positively or negatively impact OB.
- Increase Emotional Quotient by reducing negative stress.
- Use positive emotional support for life-long healthy weight success.

CAUSE #3: INFO TOXICITY

DIET CONFUSION?

Did you know that the diet industry profits off your struggle with OB—through something I call info toxicity? Info toxicity is the overabundance of

conflicting information that causes confusion from the influx of new diets annually. Consumers spend \$61 billion per year in the US alone, just on diets.²⁵ The diet industry develops a new diet fad, celebrity solution, fantastic food, or beverage product daily. Keeping the market full of so-called new and improved solutions is how they increase revenues every year. The diet industry is incredibly savvy and knows exactly which buttons to push to get you into their program. They know 99% of people will fail long term on their diet programs, and will require a new program to keep them motivated.

But the money-driven industry will never be able to offer you a long-term solution because you weren't designed to fit someone else's program. You need a plan that was designed for you—a plan that is unlike anyone else's.

STRUGGLING WITH OB

If you battle with OB, is it your fault entirely? No! Part of your situation is your choice, and the other part is a lack of quality information. The knowledge and information to live healthy is either kept from you or you have not discovered it yet. You may know what you need to do, but if you don't have the resources to do it, you'll never be successful. The majority of the burden of making food more accessible and affordable rests on the producers or gatekeepers to our health, which include the agricultural industry, food production, manufacturing of products and services, media and advertising, and food delivery systems.

We can change this current system with a grassroots approach by linking our arms together in cohesive unity to demand the healthiest and most eco-friendly choices to be readily available to each of us, everywhere. Essentially, we all become healthnuts of some sort, with different levels and approaches.

If you want to be a healthnut, you deserve a fair shot to be healthy for life. Remember, being a healthnut is not about being crazy, or excessive, but simply maximizing the quality of your life by making healthier choices daily. It's not just for the elite, it's for those of you who want to be healthy, for your families, and for your coworkers. You have a right to be healthy! You have a right to good food! You have a right to know that what you eat will either harm or help your body! At the very least, you should have a right to choose to eat healthily or not!

You may think you can just go on the Internet and research your answers, but there is simply too much misinformation and over-information to be able

to navigate a plan that is right for you. How do you know that information you've read is accurate? How do you know it will work for you? What is the source? For every study that shows the benefits of x, y, or z, there is more than likely another study that shows everything but the benefits of x, y, and z!

We're living in a culture, even in the scientific community, that prizes knowledge. To live healthily, however, we need more than knowledge. We must move from knowledge to insight to wisdom on the right path at the right time with the right support community. A colleague and mentor to me, Dr. Titus Parker, who is a brilliant anti-aging physician, frequently states during his lectures, "Real information costs something."²⁶ The investments you make in educating yourself with real information are priceless.



HEALTHNUTS...

- Are not duped by the diet industry.
- Participate in lobbying for true information about healthy food accessibility.
- Seek authentic health information from knowledgeable experts and use it.