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Doctor's Journal

Emotional Eating - Why Diets Don't Work

Why do diets fail? 1) they bring an all-day focus on what is put into the body, making your stomach your God. 2) this obsession with image gives fuel to the false belief that the secret to happiness is thinness. If this were true, the few folks who get thin on diets or with the surgeries, etc., would stay that way! 3) the changes required for staying at a natural weight are emotional (looking at our past) and educational (lifetime nutritional change) - they come from internal, not external controls. 4) diets invite us to remain child-like victims of someone else's definition of proper intake for the body. Then we don't have to grow up and be responsible for what we eat. We tend to want to be taken care of emotionally and physically (either because we have been forced to take care of others our entire life, or because we were abandoned). But, instead of facing the loss of our childhood and doing the hard work of grieving and finding healthy ways of getting our needs met today, we stay in the victim role and focus on weight, food, clothing, and other aspects of our image. It is easier to just keep cleaning the outside of the cup. For the above reasons, I implore you to leave the yo-yo dieting prison before you pass the pattern on to your children; it doesn't work. Refuse to have a scale in your home, read Hollywood magazines, or judge yourself based on your eating patterns. Get some books by Genene Roth or Karen Koenig on how to break free from emotional eating and learn about the family dynamics that led you to replace love with food. Get some help from a small group or counselor with grieving your losses and discovering healthy ways to get your needs met today so that you can eat to live, instead of living to eat.