

# I

# Introduction

## I've Been There

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If you ever lay in bed at night recounting everything you ate that day...  
If you've woken up and rehearse what you might eat the upcoming day...  
Or, if you've said the words, "I'm going to start my diet on Monday"...  
*I get you.*

If missing a workout makes your world feel out of control...  
Or you find yourself comparing your body to everyone you meet...  
*I feel your pain.*

If your moods are affected by your weight...  
Or you avoid social settings because you're on a diet or don't want to face  
the temptation to eat the wrong foods...  
*I've been there.*

If you have have tried diets...  
Or taken fat burners...  
Or read books hoping to find help but instead find yourself more messed up than before...  
*I absolutely relate.*

But I have good news for you.  
I used to do all of that too.  
*And now I don't.*

**I quit obsessing over food and my  
body, and ended up weighing less  
and feeling better than I had before.**

And I believe you can too.

I am writing this e-book to fulfill a sort of silent vow I made nearly fourteen years ago,  
when everything changed...

## My Story

I was 31 years old, and I had spent about half of my life struggling with my relationship with food, exercise and my body. Though I had tried countless diets and exercise programs, nothing solved my problems. I felt like a prisoner in my own mind and body.

My college degree was in Sports Medicine, and I had spent all of my adult life teaching fitness classes and working as a personal trainer. I wished that something in all of that education might provide me with what I needed to establish a healthy relationship with my own body.

But no.

No program I had ever been on – even when they helped me lose body fat or temporarily feel good about myself physically – ever gave me the peace that I longed for. As soon as I lost weight, or met a goal, I became anxious that I might gain it back, or face some situation where I wasn't able to keep up my program.

For seasons, I tried to just embrace myself and love my body however it was, but the truth is that without the tools to change my deepest, habitual thoughts, I would inevitably return to an obsessive focus on myself and my body. **And, frankly, I knew that I felt best and was happiest when I was lean and fit.** Maybe this isn't true for everyone, but I think for most of us it is.

I was envious of friends who seemed to be free in their eating, and never worried about their body. I called them my “naturally skinny” friends, and I wished I was one of them. Instead, I believed that only through stressing and starving and being a slave to my workouts could I keep my weight under control.

Perhaps the most challenging time of all in dealing with these inner battles was during my first two pregnancies. Any moments of control I might have experienced before pregnancy flew out the window as I spent each pregnancy struggling to accept myself and sadly preoccupied with my diet and body. It took away from what should have been a blessed time.

Eventually, I became desperate. I didn't want to continue living as a prisoner any more. It was affecting my marriage and my parenting, and I just hated the daily struggle that had become my normal. So one day I bravely chose to get to the root of the problem, and face the source of my obsessions: my mind.

Because in my most honest place I knew that I wouldn't be free until I figured out how to think differently. After all, no external change had brought me internal peace. I had avoided this all along because simply following another diet or making external changes was much less painful than facing thoughts that were so ingrained in me.

One day I dared to ask myself: “What if those people who I called ‘naturally skinny’ are really no different than me? Could I be one of them? Could that be possible?” The thought was wild and silly, but even as I asked it a tiny spark of hope sprung up within me.

I set out to tackle my thinking. Being honest about my thought life, and making radical changes to reprogram my thinking was at first very uncomfortable. Downright painful. You'll hear more about the process in future chapters, but the really amazing thing was: as soon as I began the process, I simply knew that I was on the only real road to victory. My confidence grew.

Without anyone to walk with me through this (there was no e-book :) I had to figure it out as I went. With God's grace, day after day, I began to find a new way to think and to live.

And it was working.

As the weeks passed, I found more and more mental freedom. But something else was happening as well: my body was changing. No, I wasn't gaining weight and losing all sense of control like I had feared. Instead, I felt lighter and healthier. When I finally weighed myself, I was at my ideal weight.

It seemed too good to be true.

**I wondered: "Why have I spent half of my life obsessing over diets, exercising compulsively, and completely preoccupied with my body, if I actually could achieve my goal weight by letting go of all of that?"**

I felt like I had just discovered a miracle weight loss pill, that was not a pill at all but instead a new way to think! I wanted to tell everyone!

And that is exactly when I promised God and myself that if this was actually for real – if this change that I was making would bring me lasting peace and contentment, (and my ideal body weight to boot!) – then I would be willing to share it with the world.

**I just needed to see if it would withstand the test of time.**

So I kept practicing the new ways to think. There were some challenging days, but I never turned back. It got easier and easier. I had two more pregnancies over the next 10 years that were a world of difference from the first two. I actually enjoyed the pregnancies, and I gained less weight than I had in the first two, even though I was in my mid- and upper-30s. I celebrated my body, and had no anxiety over my weight.

It has been nearly 14 years since this began. Today I continue to live with complete freedom. In fact, the struggles that filled my mind for 15 years are a distant memory now.

**My weight has remained the same.**

Best of all, my mind is free, and available for the more important things and people in my life.

So here I am, to follow through on my promise. I want to help anyone that struggles in this area. I am here to give you what I did not have – a hand to hold when you are ready to tackle your issues at the core. I want to tell you that things can get better. You don't have to be a slave to diets or exercise.

You can love and enjoy food... without being *in love* with food.  
You can love and enjoy your body... without obsessing over it.

And in the midst of it all, you can achieve your ideal body weight.  
In fact, I think the real secret is: your “naturally skinny” friends aren't so different from you after all.

It's time to reclaim your territory.

You can overcome your struggles, and I will show you how!

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**Take this little quiz to help you decide if this book would be helpful you.  
Answer Yes or No to the following ten questions:**

- 1. When I wake up, food, diet or something related to that is the first thing on my mind.**
- 2. I often count calories (or carbs, or points, etc.) in the foods that I eat.**
- 3. I have feelings of guilt related to enjoying food.**
- 4. How I feel about my weight affects my moods.**
- 5. When I go to bed at night, I often review what i have eaten during the day.**
- 6. I HAVE to workout to maintain my weight.**
- 7. I feel guilty when I do not exercise for a few days.**
- 8. I have anxiety about not having the ability to exercise (travel, a busy week, etc.)**
- 9. I avoid social settings because of my diet, or how I might be tempted to eat.**
- 10. When I am on vacation or celebrating a special occasion, my eating is different from how it is on an ordinary day.**

If you scored YES on even one of the items on this quiz, I think you'll find useful information in this book!

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**IMPORTANT NOTE ON JOURNALLING:**

Before you dive in to read the rest of the book, grab a pen and paper! I have designed each chapter to end with a journaling prompt which will really help and guide you in engaging with this material. I think you will find a valuable part of this experience!