

## QUIT SKINNY!

Stop Chasing a Number on the Scale,  
and Focus on the Important  
Measures of Wellness

***“By choosing healthy over skinny,  
you are choosing self-love over  
self-judgment. You are beautiful!”***

—STEVE MARABOLI

**I**n December 2009 I reached my highest weight ever, 211 pounds. My BMI (body mass index) was 42.6, which meant that I was morbidly obese. Sounds pretty bad, doesn't it? But how could I be pronounced seriously unhealthy based on two numbers, my height and weight? I had no control of my height, so based on one number over which I had control, I was unhealthy, according to the BMI. The BMI is a grading system that compares height and weight to determine who is underweight, normal, overweight, obese, morbidly obese, or super obese. I had reached that weight despite over 30 years of dieting.

I had also been diagnosed with prediabetes. I had painful arthritis in my hips and knees.

During that time I had trouble sleeping two or three nights a week. So, after all those years of dieting, why was I so unhealthy? Because my focus was wrong. For all those years I longed to weigh 120 pounds, which was completely unrealistic for me. According to the BMI, that's about where I should be, at 4'11" tall. However, I haven't weighed 120 pounds since I was 12 years old!

*Stop treating  
your body  
like a garbage  
disposal.*

The way I looked and felt was not acceptable. I decided I was going to find or create a system that would allow me to feel better physically and mentally, sidestep my strong family history of diabetes, look better, and lose some weight. I tried a couple more diets

and one last quick-weight-loss scheme before I decided to stop aiming for 120 pounds on the scale. I quit skinny.

I am most proud of the fact that once I quit skinny, I lost over 30 pounds. I no longer struggle with insomnia. My endocrinologist (diabetes specialist) released me from his practice and advised me to follow up with my primary care physician. My blood pressure, blood sugar, and lipid levels are perfect.

If you want to check my definition of perfect, research my numbers:

- Blood pressure: 112/57

- Pulse: 62
- Total cholesterol: 158
- HDL (high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, also called “good” cholesterol): 61
- LDL (low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, also called “bad” cholesterol): 78
- Triglycerides (fat carried in the blood): 95
- Blood glucose (about an hour after lunch): 93

These readings were taken at a health fair on August 24, 2013. After reviewing my numbers, the wellness nurse asked me what I did! She pronounced me healthy and told me to keep it up because she had no suggestions for improvement.

*Don't aim  
for perfection;  
aim for progress.*

On this plan, I want you to be well, mentally and physically. You'll have to take the time to retrain yourself. When you're getting enough sleep, exercising on a regular basis, drinking plenty of water, and eating the best foods for health, you will lose some weight and you will greatly increase your chances of living a long and healthy life.

## **Why Should You Quit Skinny and Focus on Wellness?**

I have a few reasons for you. First, the number on the scale is only a number. I have a coworker who is tall and thin and about 30 years old. She has a difficult time with high cholesterol. The coworker has a strong family history of high cholesterol. She is probably at a greater risk of heart

*Don't settle  
for second rate  
medical care.*

disease than I am. This is only one example of how the scale should not be the sole basis that we use to determine who is healthy and who is not.

A recent article in *Essence* magazine<sup>1</sup> profiled five women. These women varied in size. A couple of them were curvy, one was thin, and one was voluptuous, but based on a “health score,” these women were well regardless of whether they were considered skinny or not. The health score was based on their age, height, blood pressure, total cholesterol level, fasting blood sugar, weight, physical activity, tobacco use, and alcohol consumption. For more

*Wellness is how you  
feel and look and so  
much more than how  
much you weigh!*

information on this process of assessing health and wellness, check out the Johnson & Johnson Digital Health Scorecard which is available in the iTunes Store or Google “Digital Health Scorecard.”

A recent study by the National Cancer Institute<sup>2</sup> found that adults who exercised on a regular basis lived longer than those who did not exercise. Even overweight adults who exercised lived longer than their slender counterparts who did not exercise. In an article titled “Can Being Overweight Help You Live Longer?” Melinda Wenner Moyer noted that the BMI is viewed as a

---

1 “Be Healthy at Every Size,” by Gina Roberts-Grey, July 2013.

2 To read the article, go to [www.plosmedicine.org](http://www.plosmedicine.org). For an overview of the findings, visit <http://www.nih.gov/news/health/nov2012/nci-06.htm>

flawed standard because it relates weight only to height.<sup>3</sup> Wenner Moyer added that some studies suggest that body fat may have a protective quality if a person is sick. She also reported that those viewed as overweight and obese may receive better health care because doctors may treat obese patients more aggressively. So we see that being thin does not equate to wellness.

## How Do We Measure Wellness?

Let's start with how you feel. Really think about it.

- Do you have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep?
- Are you always tired?
- Are you usually grumpy?
- Are you out of breath after climbing a flight of steps?
- Do your hips, knees, and feet hurt?

Pain lets us know that something is not right. If you are in pain on a regular basis, chances are you are not well. There is no reason to accept pain and discomfort as normal.

For years, I tolerated hip pain and stiffness. My knees were often painful too. I felt that if I discussed these issues with a doctor, I'd get the same old advice, "lose weight." Finally, I made an appointment with an orthopedist. He did a clinical exam and took X-rays. After being diagnosed with degenerative arthritis, I was offered injections for my

---

<sup>3</sup> The article was published in the June 2013 issue of *The Oprah Magazine*.

knees and physical therapy for my hips and knees. I accepted both. I worked with a physical therapist once or twice a week for about six weeks. He taught me exercises that I could do at home and at work, as part of my normal routine. I completed my course of physical therapy several months ago, and I had three injections in each knee about eight months ago. My hips have never felt better. My knees are sometimes sore and swollen, but it's not nearly as bad as it was before I received treatment.

### Caution Signs

Is your blood pressure high? Do you have diabetes? Have you been told that you have prediabetes? Do you have problems with acid reflux? These are all indicators that you are not well. So, what is wellness? I define wellness as feeling your best mentally and physically, and being able to engage in activities you enjoy. Some conditions are asymptomatic, so you can't completely rely on how you feel.

*Get at least  
10 minutes of  
sunshine every day  
to improve your  
mental health.*

I tested my wellness on the [www.healthcalculators.org](http://www.healthcalculators.org) website. I also assessed my cardiovascular disease risk by answering a few questions. My risk of having a major cardiovascular event in the next 10 years is 1%. I'll take that!

I recommend seeing a doctor at least twice a year. See your gynecologist once a year for a pelvic exam, Pap smear, and

breast exam. Your gynecologist will usually check your blood pressure and pulse. She should ask if you are having any problems or unusual symptoms. Six months after you have the appointment with your gynecologist, have an appointment with your internist. He or she should order fasting blood work to check for diabetes and elevated lipid levels. By staggering these appointments every six months, you could catch some ailments early. See your health care team more often, if recommended. Consider yourself the most important member of your health care team because you are!

## Mental Health Matters, Too

Now, if you are always tired, sad, nervous, or grumpy, that's not normal. Definitely review the chapter on sleep. If you're following all the recommendations on this plan and you're still tired, sad, nervous, and/or crabby, you should consult a mental health professional. You may have depression and/or anxiety. If you were walking around with a broken arm, you'd see a doctor, wouldn't you? If your mental health is poor, you should see a professional. You may need some counseling or you may need counseling and medication. Heredity, life events, and environment can cause anyone to experience mental health problems. There is no shame in getting help. There are many resources online and at the library on mental health.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> For a short, easy to understand article about mental health, visit <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mental-health/MH00042/METHOD=print>.

## QUIT SKINNY!

---

So Quit Skinny! Stop believing that being thin means you will be healthy. To be well, you actually have to go deeper than size and weight. You have to assess how you feel physically and mentally. You have to look at blood pressure, blood sugar, and lipid levels. Try one or all of the measures of health mentioned in this chapter to assess where you are and where you would like to be.

### QUIT SKINNY NOTES

Use this section to write down ideas, goals, and questions.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---