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Overweight: What Kids Say

Robert A. Pretlow
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Healthcare professionals agree that obese children and adolescents are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes as adults. They also agree that the best way to lose weight and maintain a healthy weight is through food portion control and exercise. For some people that's easy, but for many, resisting food in our fast-food, sedentary-oriented culture is a challenge.

In Overweight, Dr. Robert A. Pretlow begins by providing in-depth information about how kids become obese and current options to treat the disease. Popular hypotheses about why obesity has become an epidemic in America are discussed, but the author doesn't endorse a definitive theory; he focuses instead on treatment. The second chapter introduces the Web site on which the book is based and explains the various sections, how kids use the site, and why they like it. Remaining chapters delve into the subject's core: How overweight children think and feel about themselves and food.

Incorporating messages from thousands of overweight children, the book discusses the reasons that kids hide their true feelings and live with guilt and shame, when they feel motivated to lose weight, and what sabotages their efforts. (Some children even say they enjoy being overweight and encourage others to join them.) Weight loss camps are discussed, along with other fun exercise routines. The book shares weight loss success stories and outlines the "vicious eating cycle." The final chapter explains how to move forward and make healthy eating and exercise a permanent lifestyle choice.

Dr. Robert A. Pretlow is a board certified pediatrician and child obesity specialist. He founded Weigh2Rock, an online weight loss system for teens and preteens that is used by clinics, schools, private healthcare practitioners, hospitals, community centers, and health clubs worldwide. His book offers realistic—and often raw—insight about kids' struggles with obesity and its effect on their self-esteem. Attention is given to the psychological triggers for overeating, including comfort, stress, boredom, portion control, and cravings. The author notes that food can be a psychological addiction that many healthcare professionals overlook.

Many parents struggle to help an overweight child control their eating and weight, and this book could provide valuable assistance, since it may help them see exactly what their child is going through.

The content of Overweight is important, but the format and organization of the book would be more user-friendly and accessible had it been arranged and edited for print rather than simply dumped from a Web site. That said, this format would most likely appeal to individuals who don't spend much time online. Most of the statistical graphs and other illustrations are reproduced well, but quality of the black and white photos and captions is inconsistent.

Overall, it's the information and firsthand accounts that are useful here. Kids don't often share their thoughts and feelings with adults, and this "fly on the wall" perspective provides insight that could possibly save lives.
ANGELA BLACK (July 1, 2010)

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