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Self-Help

The Diet Joke: A Reprogramming Guide for Perpetual Consumers
Lisa Pedace
Timothy Warren, illustrator
Big Shot Press
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Readers who feast on *The Diet Joke* will not miraculously slim down overnight, but the odds of lightening up over one's weight loss worries are pretty darn good. Lisa Pedace hilariously highlights the contradictions of an America equally in love with big portions and skinny bodies. Her witty, self-deprecating, and down-to-earth advice book takes direct and doleful aim at how Americans think about diets and why most waist watchers fail.

Comic and actor Pedace notes she's a "non-celebrity, non-doctor, non-expert." She's just a 40-ish woman who has more or less successfully battled her own waistline for a decade. Mostly, she wants us to know, it's as much a what-we-eat as a how-we-think problem. Pedace mixes punchy prose with assured comic timing, in a voice equal parts Joy Behar, Dr. Oz, and *Eat This, Not That*! She suggests a fundamental but not too strenuous reprogramming built on the dullest of directives: eat less, move more. The funny part, of course, is it's the only thing which works.

The book is easy to read, easy to laugh along with, and easy to dismiss as a pep talky primer on the benefits of movement and how calories, the food pyramid, and nutrition work. Dismissing it, however, would be a mistake.

Sure, it's sort of silly, as one of Pedace's "Reprogramming Activities" suggests, to watch television commercials and tally up the number of overweight people, or guess the packaged food based on its (lengthy, chemical-sounding) ingredient list. And yet, these activities trigger greater awareness in a populace which has forgotten that a polyglot of body types is actually the norm, and food is really fuel. In a section on portion sizes (cup of rice equals a tennis ball; an ounce of cheese, a pair of dice), she notes, "Notice nothing is about the same size as a football or a basketball."

There is humor on every page, funny illustrations by Timothy Warren, and a warm tone

of camaraderie throughout; the writer is on the reader's side. Her suggestions are sensible, not strident, and she's prudent, not preachy: "Plain old consistent and reasonable effort," is what's needed. Most of the time, have a peach, not the praline ice cream; but if it's your birthday, grab a spoon and then later, do take a hike, only don't end up at the donut shop.

In a world in which, as the author points out, Nestle owns Jenny Craig, a book with a sense of humor about weight loss deserves a place on the menu.

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