

The Secret Life of Fat: The Science Behind the Body's Least Understood Organ and What It Means for You

Sylvia Tara

W. W. Norton & Company (Dec 27, 2016)

Hardcover \$28.95 (288pp)

978-0-393-24483-0

Fat is not the antithesis of health, as this insightful book shows.

The Secret Life of Fat by Sylvia Tara takes a fresh look at a taboo.

The word “fat” is so often associated with succinct, negative labels like *bad* and *gross*. But Tara shows that that's not the whole story of this bodily organ—even the thought of it as an organ rather than a near-parasite is a revolutionary shift. Beginning from the question “Why is it easier for some people to stay thin than others?” Tara investigates the biology of fat and its vital purposes in the body, from reproduction to immunity; then she examines the genetic, dietary, and other types of influences on body fat; and finally, she offers powerful yet commonsense strategies for managing fat for health and well-being.

While this research and insight is deeply perspective-shifting, solutions are a bit less surprising, though they're empowered by new understanding of what works and, more importantly, why it works. The result is well rounded; no fad diets here. *The Secret Life of Fat* equips people with the knowledge and strategies they need not only to achieve physical health but also to pursue it in a mentally healthy way.

Tara's expertise in biochemistry, and her lifelong struggle to stay thin, give the book a balance between authority and friendliness. Her voice is engaging as she shares her research. The pace is quick without sacrificing depth or clarity; the book requires no in-depth background knowledge in science or health. Tara uses popular references in the introduction but, for the most part, allows this important and relevant topic to hook people on its own merit.

The book offers a refreshingly balanced view of fat: not all bad by a long shot, but certainly not the-more-the-merrier, either. This approach will appeal to health- and body-conscious people who want deep understanding more than they do easy answers. It will also prepare dietitians, physicians, and other health professionals who want to better equip those in their care to be healthy.

The Secret Life of Fat proves that fat is far from lazy and, by showing that fat is not the antithesis of health, gives hope for workable path to well-being.

MELISSA WUSKE (Winter 2017)

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