

Welcome to Your New Lifestyle

It seems like just yesterday, I decided that I had reached my limit. I was tired of being overweight, tired of wearing clothes that didn't fit, tired of the way people looked at me, and tired of not having control over my eating. I'm not sure how it happened, but I suddenly had the realization that I was 100 pounds overweight and I did not want to continue living my life this way.

As someone who has been on just about every commercial diet, I simply did not have the energy or enthusiasm to go on another program with pre-packaged foods and weekly visits with people that had no idea of the eating issues that I faced. Sure, they were nice people and seemed well-intentioned, but I wanted something that would work, and work fast. Let's face it; I knew that I needed to lose 100 pounds, and even under the best circumstances, losing that much weight would take me probably a year on most programs. For me, my weight issues were directly related to my relationship with food. In fact, I had such a great relationship, that I seemed to always be eating. Food had somehow taken over my life and I no longer had control.

I needed a solution that would allow me to take a break from food, allow me to lose the weight, and allow me to begin living a new life. Unfortunately, that solution did not exist. So, with few choices, I was forced to get assistance from a large commercial diet program that offered little support, little understanding, and no empathy for what was really going on with me. Sure, their brochures said they offered all kinds of support, but in reality, unless you have been or are a large person, and faced the day-to-day issues, it's an issue that is almost impossible to understand.

Now, this is not to say that many wonderful medical professionals are not concerned about their patients' well-being, but simply, they don't understand that losing weight and maintaining the weight loss has less to do with food, and more to do with the reasons behind the eating. So, in choosing a diet, I quickly came to the realization that while my doctor could offer me advice on the right caloric formulas to follow and the biochemistry of what was going on with my body, he simply could not offer me what I really needed—the true understanding behind my eating and the necessary skills for keeping the weight off. Fortunately, I was able to recognize this early on and with no other options available to me, I learned to keep my mouth shut and not press the issue. But it didn't take long to realize that while I could lose weight, the real demons that I faced were still around.

The fact is that while I was losing weight, I was painfully aware that I was not overcoming the hard issues. And, in knowing that, it became clear that unless I was able to overcome these issues, I was destined to repeat the past and put the weight back on. What made matters even worse was that I felt totally alone in what I was facing.

Clearly, my doctor did not understand me, and my wife, who did not have a weight issue, did not understand me either. As anyone with a weight issue knows, it can often feel like you are on your own

island of eating insanity. In fact, I came to believe that I was the only one in the world that had these feelings or acted in crazy ways when it came to food. For example:

- If ice cream was in the fridge and I didn't want my wife to know that I had eaten some, I would carefully remove only the top layer.
- If my wife did any sort of baking and I discovered the plate of goodies, I would immediately take as much as I thought I could without it being noticed on the plate. And I would even go so far as to rearrange the items, to make it appear that none had been taken.
- When sitting on the couch, I would always hold a pillow in my lap. This way, I could pretend that my belly didn't exist.
- At work, my morning break would usually consist of what most people eat for lunch. Then, at lunch, when going out with co-workers, I would claim that I wasn't that hungry. It was as if I had gotten overweight from some sort of external factor that was out of my control. Surely, since I didn't eat that much (in public), it wasn't from overeating.
- No trip in the car was complete without food by my side. So, when going on any sort of errand, provisions were always necessary. Whether it meant going through a drive-through for fast food, or grabbing something at the check-out counter, driving never ceased to offer the lethal eating combination of privacy and convenience for eating.
- I used to ride on a train to get to work and this was what I would consider my secret snacking time. Basically, before getting on the train, I would pick up some candy, and then when riding, I would try and put the candy in my mouth without anyone noticing. I was a Secret Candy Agent on an

almost daily commute mission to see what could be consumed without anyone noticing.

- Going to the grocery store meant only one thing—eating while shopping. Surely, I couldn't be expected to buy the food without trying it first! So, as I would enter the grocery store, I would immediately open up a bag of something and munch on it as I cruised around. And no trip to the grocery store was complete without having to arrange something in the bag for the trip home. Yes, it was only three blocks, but how could I survive without something to munch on? In fact, it got so bad that I would arrange the items on the checkout cart so that my “on the way home survival food” would be strategically placed on the top of the bag. Of course, what really was bad about this was that my wife thought I was the most helpful guy in the world. Always more than pleased to go to the grocery store to pick something up, without her knowing the true nature of my grocery store missions.
- No matter what the charity event, everyone in our neighborhood knew that whether they were selling candy or cookie dough, I was definitely their primary customer. And, upon buying it, I would always say, “But it's for a good cause...I didn't buy it for me, I bought it to help the kids, school, etc.”
- Vacations were not about enjoying the trip, but about the new and exciting foods that had yet to be discovered and eaten.
- Going on a business trip only meant one thing...full access to the mini bar. And they restock it each day!! Of course, I would then have to explain why I had a \$300 dollar mini bar tab on my expense sheet. Funny, but the excuse that I was entertaining clients only seemed to work once.

- “Leftovers” in our house was really just code for...wait until my wife goes to sleep, then polish off the evidence.
- When clothes became tight, this was not a sign that it was time to start a diet, but a sign that it was time to buy bigger clothes.
- When cooking, I always bought extra food to ensure that during the critical taste testing process, I would have plenty to taste while cooking, and plenty left over for eating when done.
- Elastic waistbands were not made for large people; they were made for people who were so active, they needed pants to stretch with them.
- When buying take-out food, I would often ask for several sets of forks, napkins, sodas, or an extra sandwich, or any number of other stupid things to make it appear that I was ordering for more than one person. Of course, I wouldn’t want anyone to think that I was buying all of that food for myself. And, of course, this would only lead to eating the evidence...a vicious cycle!
- Moving from Large to XL to XXL to XXXL was a sign of progress that should be rewarded with going out to dinner.
- Feeling hungry and tired was not just a temporary state of mind, but a constant existence. However, to fight this problem, I would rely on coffee and candy throughout the day for energy—a slippery slope that only further exacerbated the problem.

And my own personal list went on and on. Now, I’m not suggesting that every overweight person has the same sort of issues that I did in my own life, but it’s a fairly well known fact that most

people use food to comfort themselves or to handle stress. In a way, it's become our modern day drug of choice for handling discomfort and providing a moment of caloric bliss when faced with stress of family or work. And, if anyone knows about this, I do. In fact, I think it's safe to say that I was once the poster child for comfort and stress eating. Unfortunately, overeating is one of those problems that we literally wear on our bodies. Unlike someone with a drug or alcohol issue, when you are a larger person, people know it the moment that they see you. And, in my case, the more that I used food for various reasons in my life, the more obvious it became with each pound that I put on. Of course, like anyone with a problem that they don't want to admit or aren't ready to deal with, I had a huge list of excuses for not only my eating, but for the evidence that was often left behind, including:

“The guys at work today left their lunch bags in the car.”

“The candy wrappers are from the free samples being handed out at the grocery store.”

“I told the guys to take their chips with them, but I guess they forgot.”

Amazingly, the more I would say these sorts of things, the easier it became to actually believe them. Then, you wake up one day, look in the mirror and realize that denial is not a river in Egypt, but the way that you have been living your life.

So, if you're feeling like you are a little out of control, please know that you are not alone. I once faced the same issues and I understand what you are going through. And if someone like me was able to overcome these issues and learn to develop new behaviors in my life, then anyone can do it.

As per my own story, I would like to say it started with my weight loss, but the true adventure did not begin until a very sleepy

afternoon in 2002 when I decided to start a discussion board on the internet to talk about my own weight loss and the issues that I was facing. And, for the most part, having no idea what I was doing, I spent a few days writing my thoughts in various posts. I didn't have any systematic approach to what I was doing, but just being able to write my thoughts down seemed to provide some peace of mind for the first time in my life.

But, not surprisingly, I soon became tired of writing and I lost interest. I also thought that no one was reading. Remember, this was just a discussion board that I created for fun and while it was accessible to anyone on the internet, I didn't really have any marketing behind it. So, after about a week, I stopped writing and found myself back in my own private world of my own eating issues that no one around me could really understand.

A couple of weeks passed, and then, a very amazing thing happened—I received an e-mail from someone asking me why I had stopped writing. And, to my amazement, upon returning to the discussion board, I found that several hundred people had begun posting and discussing their individual eating issues and the challenges that they were facing.

So, in seeing other people posting about the same feelings and thoughts, I can honestly say that for the first time in my life, I did not feel so alone. Or I was at least not the only crazy person in the world. Either way, it was great to discover that I was in good company and that the issues that I was facing were shared by people not only in the United States, but by people in every country in the world. And, regardless of where they were from, we shared the same thoughts and issues, and often lacked understanding from family, friends, or physicians. Consequently, for the first time, I found that I was not alone and before my very eyes I had somehow created a

unique community where hard to discuss issues could be openly talked about in a supportive and understanding manner.

So, I continued to develop the discussion board and literally talked with thousands of other people about their own issues and challenges. And, in doing so, I came to the realization that while many different options exist for dieting, every dieter faces the same universal set of challenges. And, unless these issues are dealt with, managed, and overcome, the person dieting is destined to repeat the past—no matter how successful they were on their diet.

Like most people, when I originally thought about losing weight, all I really wanted to do was figure out a way that I could lose the most amount of weight, in the shortest amount of time. My entire focus was on the end goal, with very little thought on why I had put on the weight to begin with, or what was stopping me from putting it back on when I had lost it all.

With this determination and focus on the end goal, I continued dieting and eventually reached my goal of losing 100 pounds. I proved that it could be done!!! However, with very little guidance, I did it through the school of hard knocks. And, when I reached my goal, I realized that while I had successfully lost the weight, I should have also been preparing for my new life ahead. Sure, I had some handouts to read and I had a few discussions about this with my doctor, but to truly prepare oneself for maintaining the weight afterwards takes much more. Basically, it takes coming to terms with one's own issues, facing these behaviors head-on, and learning how to create a new lifestyle!

Over the next 5 years, I analyzed my own thoughts and behaviors, and began documenting the challenges of others on the board. And, in doing so, I not only successfully addressed my own issues, but was able to create a set of thoughts and approaches that would allow others to overcome their own eating and weight loss issues. To put the

program to the test, I founded the New Lifestyle Diet. Not surprisingly, when people applied these principles along with a healthy weight loss program, the results were incredible. In fact, the New Lifestyle Diet has now gone on to help thousands of people lose weight, get control of their issues, and change their lives forever. However, I didn't start the discussion board or the diet as businesses, I created them as mechanisms to allow people to come together and overcome the same issues. So, with that same sprit, I decided to write this book. Being someone who has lived with the issues of overeating and being overweight, I know how hard life can be. So, I wrote this book with one simple goal in mind—to allow anyone on any diet the opportunity to gain control, create new skills and behaviors, and learn to keep the weight off for the rest of their life.

I'm very proud to say that within this book are not only my own experiences and observations, but also very valuable personal lessons that are located at the end of each chapter. These lessons are presented to you in the shape of *Personal Ingredients* that will provide you with various opportunities to think about the issues in your own life and provide you with skills that you can begin using immediately. As you progress, it's important to remember that the process of creating a new lifestyle is much like the process of preparing your favorite recipe. While each ingredient that you add to a recipe requires preparation, when you put them all together, they create the perfect balance. As a result, as you progress through the book and work through the Personal Ingredient included with each chapter, you'll learn a little bit about yourself and develop the skills for overcoming past behaviors and developing new ones that are critical to long-term weight loss success. Then, as you go about your life and encounter different challenges or recipes along the way, you'll be equipped with your personal ingredients list and ready to take on any challenge.

I have no doubt this book will bring you inspiration, laughter, and the thoughts and knowledge to truly create a new and healthy lifestyle. While some things may seem awful and others hilarious, the insight, inspiration, approaches, and new behaviors that you'll develop are all put together to ensure your success. It's amazing, but as you progress on your journey, you'll look back on the overall experience and remember the little things the most. Yes, reaching your goal weight is an exciting event, but it's the things that most people take for granted that will stand out the most to you, including:

- Shopping for clothes and not having to enter a store and wonder if they carry your size.
- Having strangers smile at you for no reason at all.
- Having people take you seriously and not pre-judge you by the way you look.
- Actually wanting to have your photo taken.
- No longer viewing your clothes or hair as a vehicle for hiding your body, but as a vehicle for showing it off.
- Viewing exercise as not something that you have to do, but as something that you enjoy and truly look forward to each day.
- No longer feeling self-conscious about eating in public or ordering food.
- No longer sweating or feeling hot all the time.
- Discovering that the medication you are taking today may not be necessary when you've lost the weight.
- Discovering the amazing feeling that you aren't hungry 24/7.

- Taking back control from those around you and no longer feeling that you are being taken for granted due to your size.
- Being attractive to your spouse and having them look at you like they did when you first met.
- Looking forward to traveling again and no longer fearing the looks of strangers as you board a plane looking for your seat.
- Getting back in touch with your body and learning to appreciate the look and feel of it.
- Taking back control of your eating, instead of being at the mercy of your cravings and the temptations around you.
- Feeling proud of your accomplishment and being seen by your kids, friends, and family as a role model.
- Giving yourself a new lease on life and beginning to live life to its fullest.
- Being inspired to take on new challenges and accomplish goals you never thought possible.
- No longer going to the doctor and being embarrassed or dreading the impending weight conversations that you know are going to come up each time.
- Being able to put on clothes and feel sexy.
- Waking up each morning and feeling good about being in control of your body and your eating.
- Looking in the mirror each day and truly enjoying the reflection that is looking back at you.

These are just a few examples of the things in your life that are going to change. But let me assure you, the list is infinite! So, what I

really want to impress upon you is that if you are not already excited about what it is you are doing for yourself and how your life is going to change, then start smiling—because you have a very exciting life ahead of you.

Creating a New Lifestyle isn't something that happens quickly. It is a gradual and evolutionary process that involves slowly changing your behaviors and mindset. During the course of your weight loss, you'll go through a number of different changes. The biggest change is being at peace with yourself and the ongoing personal journey of development and modification. And, while the physical weight loss was your initial motivation for change, you'll come to realize that the true nature of change comes from the new habits and lifestyle that you are developing. Ultimately, to succeed, you'll learn to leave behind the old habits that allowed you to become overweight and develop new habits that will allow you to enjoy a healthy fit body for the rest of your life. As you can imagine, implementing these new behaviors is not easy, and it's not uncommon for most people to feel a little panicky as they begin the diet. However, once you discover that you can successfully apply new changes, you'll feel a fresh sense of empowerment. You'll not only start to feel better as a result of your weight loss, but you'll also find yourself becoming more excited about the future ahead of you.

If you are like most people, you'll be a little anxious or have negative thoughts with regards to the process of creating change in your life—especially as it relates to weight loss. For example, have you ever found yourself saying, “What is going to be different about this diet from all the rest?” Or “I've failed so many times before, why is now any different?” The answers to these questions are simple. For the first time in your life, you are going to take responsibility for the behaviors that you've already developed, and for the actions that are required to overcome them.

Losing weight is not just about eating less. It's about getting to the root of the issues, truly addressing the actions that are causing you to be overweight, and putting together the necessary steps to allow you to live a new and healthy lifestyle. What is often intimidating about taking responsibility is that most people believe they don't have the necessary skills, knowledge, or drive to successfully lose weight or keep it off. But, by the very act of reading this book, you've already proven that you have the drive and the desire to change.

So, as you read this book, keep in mind that the book has been designed to address many topics that are to be read and thought about individually. And, while each chapter focuses on a new subject, the contents within them can be read cover-to-cover, or enjoyed one at a time. Regardless of how you choose to read the book, take the time to think about the issues being discussed and enjoy the journey. And, as you progress, you'll soon find yourself with the skills to not only reach your goal weight, but to be in control and have the confidence that you can live your life free of your eating and weight issues.

Now, if you're ready...let's create your New Lifestyle!!

Sincerely,

Hamilton C. Erridge