

NAAFA Newsletter

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NEWS AND COMMENT

PROMINENT HEALTH WRITER OPPOSES COMPULSIVE DIETING

JANE BRODY, OF NY TIMES NEWS SYNDICATE, ENDORSES SETPOINT, DECRIES DIET OBSESSION IN AMERICA

A pair of articles authored by Jane E. Brody, the nutritionist and health writer, have taken an unusually strong position in condemning some popular notions about dieting and weight control. In the first of the two articles, in her "Personal Health" column, which appeared in the New York Times and throughout the United States in other newspapers on March 18, Brody used the title, "For women who haven't gotten the message yet: Thin isn't necessarily in."

According to Jane Brody, "The time may finally have come to learn to live normally with food and to accept the body that results. While fitness is a desirable goal regardless of your weight, fashion-model thinness is not, unless you happen to be among the small percentage of people who are genetically programmed to sport a lean and hungry look..."

She goes on to say that "our societal obsession with weight has exacted a serious toll on mental and physical well-being...large numbers of young people now risk impaired growth and maturation from diet-induced nutrient deficiencies." Brody points out that low-calorie diets can actually increase your risk of getting fat or fatter by so depressing the body's metabolic furnace that weight is regained quickly when you resume a more normal caloric intake..."

According to Brody, "If you are now eating 1,800 to 2,200 wholesome calories and exercising vigorously for an hour a day, then consider accepting your present weight as normal for you." She states that "other experts say that unless your health is threatened by your weight, perhaps you should not try to lose at all."

In her article, Brody offers herself as an example of someone who gave up dieting and compulsive eating, and lost 35 pounds permanently--but also describes Nancy Roberts, author of Breaking All the Rules, as someone who, while not losing weight, "did gain self-esteem and a sense that she, not food or some weight chart, controls her life". Brody recommends Nancy Robert's book to her readers, and goes on to suggest that the book Fat is Where It's At, by June Bailey, could also be helpful.

Finally, Brody concludes with the following: "Consider, too, joining a chapter of the National Association to Aid Fat Americans, a group devoted to enhancing self-acceptance and erasing prejudice and discrimination against fat people." And she included NAAFA's address and telephone number.

Brody's second article, printed in the Science Times section of the New York Times on March 24, is headlined, "Research Lifts Blame From Many of the Obese"--and subtitled, "Some would be better off fat. Only about one dieter in 10 achieves lasting success." Two statements in her article deserve special note: She says, "One by one, obesity experts are concluding that many, if not most people with serious weight problems can hardly be blamed for their rotund shape and that, given the effects and effectiveness of current methods of weight reduction, some would be better off staying fat."

She quotes Dr. George Blackburn, an obesity specialist at Harvard Medical School, as saying that "at least half of obese people--those who are more than 30 percent overweight--who try to diet down to 'desirable' weights listed in the height-weight tables, suffer medically, physically and psychologically as a result, and would be better off fat. Blackburn said that "The whole premise that the goal of weight reduction should be to reach 'desirable' weight is the major flaw in weight-loss strategies... it's the first 10 percent of weight loss--not the last 10 percent--that's important."

Other scientific data quoted by Brody in her article emphasized the genetic origin of much obesity, and also some of the new research in better understanding the nature of weight gain and loss.

COMMENTARY

Every few years, an event occurs in the "fat acceptance" movement that must be considered a milestone. NAAFA's founding in 1969, Louderback's Fat Power in 1970, Bennett & Gurin's The Dieter's Dilemma in 1982, and about a dozen other events (publishing and otherwise) in the last 20 years, count as milestones in the movement. You can pick your own favorites...

Jane Brody's published position is a milestone. It should go far to helping "liberalize" other writers, and influence public thinking on the subject for some time to come. Brody is an important new ally, especially since for many years, ideas similar to what she is endorsing have been falling on deaf ears. Now, perhaps, more people will listen.

It is NAAFA's intention to secure reprint rights from the Times, and send copies of the Brody articles to all NAAFA members, and members of the press who call NAAFA for information. And on April 4, the Board of Directors voted to offer Jane Brody our highest honor: NAAFA's Distinguished Achievement Award. We sincerely hope she accepts it!

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A QUESTION ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

By Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D.

Dear Dr. Ernsberger,

My doctor has told me that if I don't lose a great deal of weight right away that I will die of cancer. I haven't had a period for many years and my doctor says it's because I'm fat. He also gave me some pills to make me have my period, but I don't want to take them because he said they may cause side effects. My doctor says that my uterus has an overgrowth from my being so fat, and that I must get thin very quickly or else it will turn to cancer. Is this right?

Reply:

A woman's weight can affect her menstrual cycle. The heavier a woman is, the more likely she is to have irregular periods, missed cycles, or no cycles at all. This is because fat cells have the ability to manufacture estrogen, one of the female sex hormones. Because heavy women have extra fat cells, they may have higher estrogen levels. The extra estrogen can create a hormonal imbalance, causing ovulation and/or menstrual periods to become irregular or even stop, resulting in reduced fertility. By no means does this happen to all fat women, even though many heavy women are wrongly told by their doctors they are infertile, simply because they are fat.

Many heavy women, if they are not trying to start a family, may not be troubled by irregular or absent periods and might not even bother to go to a doctor. However, there is a real reason for concern. If the lining of the uterus is not purged by a regular menstrual period, it can build up and may eventually become cancerous. This is probably the reason why fat women are up to six times more likely to develop uterine cancer than average-weight women.

Uterine cancer can be successfully treated in its early stages, usually by hysterectomy. Early detection can often be made by the pap smear that is part of the routine gynecological exam. Because of their higher risk for uterine cancer, fat woman should be sure to get pap smears regularly. Fat women who have irregular cycles or do not menstruate at all should see their gynecologist. Their doctor may prescribe progesterone, another female sex hormone, which counteracts the excess estrogen and allows menstruation. Taken periodically, progesterone can prevent excessive buildup of the uterine lining. Side effects, if any, are usually mild. And, if side effects are experienced, progesterone is now available in several different forms giving the doctor the opportunity to select the best form for the patient.

Gradual weight loss through dieting has been shown to restore hormonal balance in some fat women. However, improvement seems to take place within a few weeks, before a great deal of weight is lost. It's possible that the improvement during dieting could be due to improved nutrition rather than to loss of fat. Nonetheless, if you are able to lose some weight and keep it off permanently, this may be one solution. However, with appropriate gynecological care, fat women can drastically reduce their risk of severe uterine cancer.

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Articles in this **Newsletter** do not necessarily reflect the official policies of NAAFA, Inc., unless specifically noted. Please contact the NAAFA office about specific NAAFA policies. Commentaries in this **Newsletter**, unless otherwise noted, were prepared by the Editor, and/or NAAFA's Founder.

LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS EXPANDED

by Russell F. Williams, Maryland
Activism Co-Chairperson

NAAFA members frequently send letters to the media, (TV programs and personalities, newspapers and magazines, etc.) whom they consider guilty of offensive remarks about fat people. Many of our members also send copies of their letters to the NAAFA office--where copies are distributed to various committees, including the Activism Committee. (The Activism committee then, in most cases, sends a second letter to the offender.)

But we have two new programs under development for which we need your cooperation and assistance:

First, it would be helpful if members who write to an objectionable television show, when sending us a copy of their letter, would also include a list of the show's sponsors. This information would enable NAAFA members to write, not only to the show, but also to the people who pay for the show.

Secondly, with these lists in hand, we plan to begin an activism column in this Newsletter that will announce the names of the worst offenders of that particular month and provide all the information that you will need to write your own informed letters to the show and its sponsors.

Does letter writing help? Often it does. Just ask Geneva Chapman and June Bailey of Ohio who wrote complaint letters to the Oprah Winfrey show. Their letters led to an invitation to appear on her show to express their views on the air!

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CONVENTION '87 UPDATE

Plans for the 1987 Convention are well under way, according to Bunny Peckham and Nancy Summer, Co-Chairs of the event. The convention is scheduled for Thursday afternoon, September 3rd through Monday afternoon (Labor Day), September 7th, and will be held at the Newark Airport Marriott in New Jersey. (If you've attended past conventions, please note that the convention is starting a day earlier than usual.)

The Newark Airport Marriott is offering a \$65 per night room rate from Wednesday night through Monday night. The hotel is elegantly appointed, handicapped accessible, and located in the center of the airport grounds. The hotel features an indoor-outdoor pool, hot tub, health club facilities, 24 hour room service, two restaurants, a pub, gift shop, and ample parking. Airfares into Newark Airport are the cheapest fares into the metro-New York area. An inexpensive express bus is available from Manhattan to the airport, and free jitney service is available from the airport to hotel.

The tentative schedule includes workshops, rap sessions and SIG meetings on Thursday through Monday, plus a series of fun and educational events as follows:

THURSDAY: Sightseeing (Circle Line boat tour of Manhattan); Orientation meeting; Pool party/with dancing in outdoor pool area.

FRIDAY Fashion Show Luncheon; International Dinner Dance (Dancing begins with ethnic dances and changes to standard D.J. dance music at 10 PM.)

SATURDAY Awards luncheon, (guest speakers, Chairman and Founder's speeches); Dinner Dance with live band.

SUNDAY Chapter's Brunch including President's speech and speeches by Chapter representatives; Pool Party; Dinner and Talent Show.

MONDAY Farewell Luncheon featuring personal "testimonials".

A more detailed description of the events, the guest speaker program, and more information on the workshop and rap session schedule will be mailed to all NAAFAs within the next two months. And watch this Newsletter and the Ad Supplement for late breaking convention announcements.

CONVENTION HELP WANTED...Applications are now being received for a number of interesting "jobs" at the convention. Are you interested in modeling or showing your line of clothing? Kimm Bonner is looking for models and fashions.

Do you have musical or theatrical talent? Are you a dancer or comic? Write Aglaia Koras-Bain and describe your talent--or send a tape of your performance.

Do you have professional expertise that you would like to share in a workshop? Write, or better yet, call Nancy Summer.

In fact, we have lots of "jobs" from ticket taking to hospitality suite "sitting". Write any of us in care of the NAAFA office.

AN INVITATION FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS...

by Nancy Summer, Managing Editor

Have you ever wanted more out of NAAFA? Maybe you've felt like you really weren't part of things? Or that "they" all know each other, and you're left out.

Perhaps you've considered volunteering, but you were afraid that you couldn't be much help. After all, "they" all seem to do things better than you can. Or maybe you think that you're just too busy to offer much time.

If you have thought about any of the above, consider this article an open invitation to get more out of NAAFA by volunteering. There are many projects that could be tackled if NAAFA only had the personnel. Right now there are several committees that are in need of chairpeople and members.

If you have professional credentials, but lead a very busy life, you might volunteer to act as an advisor to a committee working in your area of expertise.

If you have office or organizational skills, but you don't know much about a subject that interests you, you might volunteer to handle the administrative end of a committee. Many wonderful ideas have died from the lack of a typist, or an expediter, or someone to answer correspondence.

Maybe you're better talking to people on the phone. If you can donate the phone expense, there are a number of places where you are needed.

What's the pay check for volunteering? Sometimes it's knowing that you've helped to make the world a little better by your actions. Sometimes it's feeling like part of the NAAFA community. I'm sure you've heard the old saying, "You only get out of something what you put in to it."

In 1983, we published an article called "After the Party" by Chicago member David Whiteis in which he quoted a college professor who once told him, "Everyone here is involved in consuming things together, but the only way you'll really feel like a community is if you work together on producing something. You have to be active with one another, not passive."

David went on to ask, "Do we truly believe in our stated ideals, or is (NAAFA) just a way for each of us to 'get mine' and then move on?"

For some people, it is. But for the many NAAFANS who would like to get more involved, but they're not sure they're wanted and they don't know where to start...this is an open invitation from the Board of Directors to write us, and here are some of the areas in which you might consider volunteering.

The following is a partial committee listing of NAAFA's 39 committees. If you have other areas of interest, write us and a full committees list will be mailed to you.

<u>COMMITTEE</u>	<u>CHAIRPERSON</u>	<u>COMMITTEE ACTIVITY</u>
Anthropometrics	C. Blickenstorfer	Studies space and weight problems such as seat widths, seat belts, turnstiles, restrooms, escape hatches, etc.
Insurance	Lynn McAfee	Investigates availability of insurance and related problems.
Teen/Young Adult	Nellie Hensley	Plans to update NAAFA literature aimed at teens, young adults, and parents of fat children. Committee needs an advisor and someone with writing and secretarial skills.
Area Facilitators	vacant	Needs chairperson to coordinate by mail a network of NAAFA members in areas not covered by local chapters, for the purpose of providing personal contact and support to isolated NAAFANS.
Crisis	vacant	Replies to mail and phone calls from persons in crisis. Professional background preferred.
Health	vacant	Answers letters and calls about health matters, keeps NAAFANS informed of new knowledge concerning physical and mental health. Professional expertise required.
Legislative	Neil Dachis	Formed to investigate and report the effects of present and proposed legislation on fat people.
Legal Action	Neil Dachis	Makes referrals and offers limited advice to those who have problems for which a remedy exists in a court of law. Legal or paralegal expertise preferred. <input type="checkbox"/>