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WEIGHTY CONVERSATIONS

By Michelle May, M.D.

Do you allow a number on your bathroom scale to make or break your day? Wouldn't it be absurd to let the temperature, the date or the Dow-Jones determine how you feel about yourself or how your day will go? They're all just numbers but for some of you, weight has the power to change your mood and ruin your morning.

The scale does not measure your self-worth. It simply measures the weight of your tissues (including your bones, muscle and fat) and substances that are just passing through (like water, food and waste). Your weight can fluctuate dramatically depending on time of day, hormones, when you last ate and other factors – none of which have anything to do with your value as a person.



Weight a Minute!

One of the reasons for the popularity of low carb diets is the dramatic weight loss some people experience initially. Of course it's mostly water weight but an otherwise sensible person gets so excited that they "lost weight" that they forget that the goal is to lose fat, not water. Needless to say, they regain it very easily.

When you're losing weight gradually (clearly the best way), you may not see significant changes in your weight day to day, and perhaps even some weeks. Further, when you exercise you'll build muscle and lose fat so although the numbers might not change, your body composition is improving. If you're depending on a needle on a scale to tell you how you're doing, you may feel discouraged and tempted to give up even though great things are going on inside.

Weighed Down

The Weight Control Registry reports that people who have lost weight and kept it off weigh themselves regularly. However, many of the people I work with have had a different experience. For them, weighing themselves can backfire. Have you ever said to yourself...

- I did so well this week. I deserve a treat!
- I was so good but I didn't lose any weight. I might as well eat.
- I don't have to weigh in until next week so I'll splurge now and make up for it later.
- I was terrible this week and I still lost weight. I guess I don't need to be as careful as I thought.
- I only lost a half a pound. It wasn't worth it.

These thoughts are so counter-productive that I only weigh participants at the beginning and end of my 8-week Am I Hungry? Workshops (and sometimes not at all). Therefore participants

aren't tempted to skip a session because they've "had a rough week" – a week they need to show up for more than ever!

Recently, one of my participants weighed herself after five weeks on the program. She told me she'd lost nine pounds - and ate for three days afterward! Although it can be motivating, losing weight can also be scary. There may be a little part of you that doesn't believe you deserve it or that you'll eventually gain it back anyway so you sabotage yourself.

Weigh to Go

Of course, some people say, "But I want to be held accountable." Accountable to me? Accountable to a metal rectangle on the floor? Accountable to a three digit number?

My role as an Am I Hungry?® Facilitator is to guide you toward long term weight management without restrictive dieting – not to be your judge and jury. I would rather have you focus on the *process* not the *outcome*.

Why Weight?

Your weight is a surrogate measurement of your body fat so it's helpful for monitoring long term changes. Newer body fat scales are helpful but even those are only useful over time.

Your weight can also be used to calculate your Body Mass Index (BMI) which is a measure of your weight in relation to your height. (Caution: BMI can be misleading in highly muscled individuals.) The National Heart Lung and Blood Institute has an easy BMI calculator at <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>. BMI can help you and your health professional assess your risk for common conditions associated with excess weight. Even though BMI is widely used these days, it is only one piece of information.

Weight Around

Your waist circumference is another number your doctor might want to measure. A waist circumference over 40 inches for men and 35 inches for women is associated with metabolic syndrome and may increase your risk for certain diseases including diabetes and heart disease.

Take the Weight Off Your Shoulders

- Be honest about how the numbers affect you. If knowing your weight tends to backfire, put your scale under the sink or out in the garage. You can decline to be weighed at your doctor's office or ask that they record it without out telling you the number.
- Decide how often you need to weigh yourself. Some people prefer to be weighed only when they go to the doctor but for most people once a week or even once a month is a good interval.
- You never need to weigh yourself more than once a day; if you do, you're playing games by measuring meaningless physiological fluctuations.
- Let go of old benchmarks. You may never again reach your wrestling weight or your wedding day weight but you can live an active lifestyle and make conscious choices that will serve you now.
- Don't weigh yourself to confirm what you already know. When you've been mindful of your choices don't take a chance that the scale will give you an answer you didn't expect and derail your confidence.
- Don't use the scale to punish yourself. When you know you're off track, focus on the changes you'll make rather than beating yourself up.

No Weigh

A man I met at a conference recently said, "I don't need a scale; I have pants." I smiled at the simplicity and accuracy of his method of monitoring himself. A few ounces won't make a difference but a few pounds will determine how comfortable he feels. Look for other ways to assess your health and progress too:

- Resting heart rate, blood pressure, cholesterol or fasting blood sugar
- Minutes of walking, steps on your pedometer or pounds of weight you're able to lift
- How do you feel? Tune in to your energy level, mood and stamina

Weigh Your Options

A scale is an external device that doesn't accurately measure what's going on inside your body or your head. If you've been consumed by the numbers, skip the scale for awhile – and remember, meaningful change takes place from the inside out.

Wishing you optimal health and joy,

Michelle May, M.D.

AM I HUNGRY?® FACILITATOR TRAINING JULY 19-22ND IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA

If you're passionate about helping people make revolutionary lifestyle changes, offer Am I Hungry? Workshops in your office, fitness center, hospital, company or community. Information and registration: <http://www.amihungry.com/health-professionals.shtml>. Questions? Send an email to Training@AmIHungry.com.



(Please note: Am I Hungry?® is a registered trademark and cannot be used in conjunction with your workshops unless you are trained and licensed by Am I Hungry?® If you are already utilizing our materials with your clients, please join us to learn the most effective techniques and access the best tools for helping them become healthier and happier! <http://www.amihungry.com/health-professionals.shtml>)

AM I HUNGRY?® WORKSHOPS NEAR YOU AND BY PHONE

Am I Hungry?® Workshops starting soon – Petoskey, Michigan; Charlevoix, Michigan; Somerset, New Jersey; Chandler Arizona; Phoenix, Arizona; and Annapolis, Maryland. Go to <http://amihungry.net> and look in the lower right-hand corner for "Find a Facilitator."

Am I Hungry?® Tele-Workshop – Live, interactive workshop with the same great content AND you can participate from the comfort of your home, office, car or even hotel room on vacation. Includes materials, 8 sessions and email support with your Licensed Am I Hungry? Facilitator between sessions. Next session starts soon:

Tuesdays, June 19 - August 7, 2007

5:30-7:00 p.m. Pacific time

Phone lines are limited to allow maximal interaction so register now:

<http://www.profcs.com/app/netcart.asp?MerchantID=59012&ProductID=3481546>

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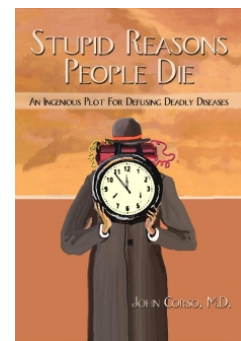
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NEW BOOK OFFERS LIFE-SAVING GUIDANCE

My friend and fellow author, John Corso, MD, has just published *Stupid Reasons People Die*, a book that will show you how to find and defuse hidden ticking time bombs – deadly medical problems that only cause symptoms after it's too late to stop them. His valuable message compliments ours as part of an overall wellness plan so I wanted to share it with you.



On June 12th, as part of a special promotion through Amazon.com, you'll also receive valuable bonuses. Go here to see the details:
www.corsomd.com/specialoffer.htm

PAY IT FORWARD!

If you've ever read anything in this Am I Hungry? E-newsletter that inspired or intrigued you, please pass it on! They'll get a bonus copy of "101 Things to Do Besides Eat" to hang on their refrigerator when they order their own complimentary subscription at:
<http://www.amihungry.com/enews.shtml>.