

DIET JOURNAL

You will be given a Park Avenue Diet journal that will serve as a tool to discover some of your innermost thoughts about your appearance, your attitude towards your appearance, and irrational thoughts about food that may have influenced your habits and health.

You will be using this notebook for several weeks to record some of the “self-talk” that takes place when you think about food, when you think about losing weight, and when you think about keeping off the pounds you lose. You are going to write down the feelings that are associated with those thoughts as well.

“Personal myths” are philosophical statements that constantly run through your mind, reflecting deep-seated feelings and motives. Some of them may be reflected in your appearance. Dropping pounds and keeping them off is not a matter of developing an imaginary force called “will power.” Weight loss involves something much more basic, namely an inner as well as an outer transformation. And this entails rewriting negative personal myths.

Describing your feelings on paper helps you to organize your thoughts, remind yourself of important issues, and focus on goals for the future. Reviewing and rethinking them is therefore an active process, an excellent technique for improving self-confidence and motivation.

Here are examples of “personal myths” that you may discover in the process:

“I deserve to eat whatever I want after a stressful day at work.”

“If I don’t serve my family enormous portions of food, I am not a good parent.”

“No one else cares what I look like, so why should I?”

Here are some examples of journal entries that can show how rethinking a personal myth can lead to better behavior:

“I attended an office party today and limited myself to small portions of healthy foods. I enjoyed every single bite. I really liked the technique of taking pleasure from each bite, taking pleasure in each delicious taste, each savory smell, and each crunchy bite. I am enjoying food more even while I am eating less of it.”

“Today I went with my friends to a buffet luncheon. I find it very hard to eat sparingly at a buffet. I was

thinking, well, I am paying for all this food, so I must sample everything to get my money's worth." On reflection, I changed that thought: I am simply paying to have a good meal, and I can eat well even if I only select small portions of the dozens of offerings."

"I went to a restaurant for dinner with some friends tonight and the food was first-rate. But they served super-size helpings of everything. I ate just enough to be satisfied, and then asked my waiter to put the rest in a take-home carton. I will freeze this, and will enjoy it later in the week."

"When I picked up groceries at the Supermarket today, I was shocked at the bins of cheap candy all around the store. I had never noticed this profusion before, but now my awareness has been raised, and I notice much more about food placement in supermarkets and grocery stores. The management wants its costumers to keep buying, but I have decided to outfox them and only take what I need".

When you get the idea of journaling your thoughts and feelings, you can understand the usefulness of reviewing them from time to time. This process will remind you of your journey to a healthier body and an enhanced self concept. It will also reveal what works and what doesn't work!

Eventually you will have recorded a number of beliefs, attitudes, and personal myths about eating, weight loss, and body image. You will also have described the feelings that accompany this "self-talk." Then you can check off the beliefs and feelings you want to reinforce or hold onto and cross out or delete the beliefs and feelings that will lead to temptation and failure. It is also important to write a sentence or two about how you will extinguish, modify, change, or eliminate the personal myths that are counter-productive. Here are some examples:

"What most troubles me is that when I walk into a restaurant and smell something delicious, I feel as if I must order it. I can hardly wait until my serving arrives. I decided to change this pattern radically. I learned how to enjoy the smell without thinking I had to place an order. I realized that I really was not hungry; I was simply turned on by the smell. But I realized that I could enjoy the smell for its own sake."

"I grew up in a poor family. Whenever there was food available, we ate our plates clean because we did not know when we would get another good meal. I developed a personal myth, 'Don't lose a chance to eat because tomorrow there might be no food on your plate.' But now I have a good job and that old myth is irrational. I taught myself to turn down second helpings. And if there was food left over, we would refrigerate it and have another tasty meal later in the week."

"Since starting The Park Avenue Diet, I have learned a great deal about my body image. My personal myth was, 'It does not matter what my body looks like, as long as I possess inner beauty.' Now I realize that inner beauty, harmony, and magnificence must be reflected externally as well. An ancient philosopher once wrote,