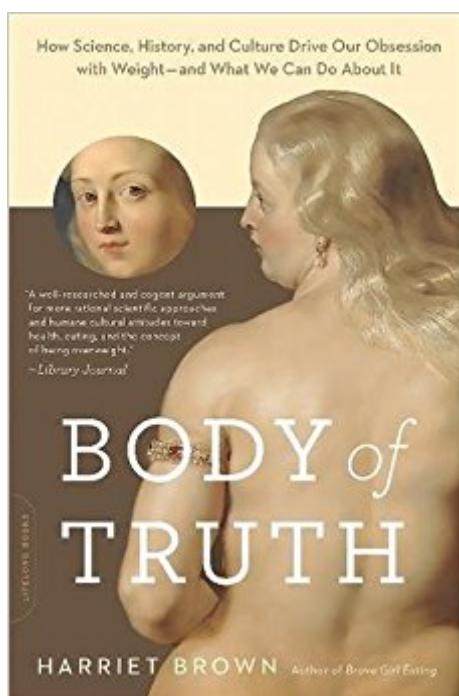


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# Body Of Truth: How Science, History, And Culture Drive Our Obsession With Weight--and What We Can Do About It



## Synopsis

Over the past twenty-five years, our quest for thinness has morphed into a relentless obsession with weight and body image. In our culture, "fat" has become a four-letter word. Or, as Lance Armstrong said to the wife of a former teammate, "I called you crazy. I called you a bitch. But I never called you fat." How did we get to this place where the worst insult you can hurl at someone is "fat"? Where women and girls (and increasingly men and boys) will diet, purge, overeat, undereat, and berate themselves and others, all in the name of being thin? As a science journalist, Harriet Brown has explored this collective longing and fixation from an objective perspective; as a mother, wife, and woman with "weight issues," she has struggled to understand it on a personal level. Now, in *Body of Truth*, Brown systematically unpacks what's been offered as "truth" about weight and health. Starting with the four biggest lies, Brown shows how research has been manipulated; how the medical profession is complicit in keeping us in the dark; how big pharma and big, empty promises equal big, big dollars; how much of what we know (or think we know) about health and weight is wrong. And how all of those affect all of us every day, whether we know it or not. The quest for health and wellness has never been more urgent, yet most of us continue to buy into fad diets and unattainable body ideals, unaware of the damage we're doing to ourselves. Through interviews, research, and her own experience, Brown not only gives us the real story on weight, health, and beauty, but also offers concrete suggestions for how each of us can sort through the lies and misconceptions and make peace with and for ourselves.

## Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Da Capo Lifelong Books; Reprint edition (March 22, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0738218820

ISBN-13: 978-0738218823

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 38 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #37,161 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Eating Disorders #50 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Medicine #300 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Gender Studies

## Customer Reviews

&#147;The introduction from Harriet Brown's new book is enough to scare the hell out of you. Finally. And for good.â •#151;Examiner.com&#147;Brown systematically unpacks what's been offered as the &#145;truth&#39; about weight and health&#133;Brown tackles the myths and realities of the &#145;obesity epidemic&#39; exposing the biggest lies driving the rhetoric of obesity.â •#151;Philadelphia Tribune&#147;Debunk[s] the dieting craze&#133;Inspiring? Yes, especially the author&#39;s concrete suggestions about weight, health and beauty.â •#151;Hudson Valley News&#147;Exceptionally well written, organized and presented&#133;Impressively informed and informative&#133;This is critically important reading for anyone and everyone that has ever struggled with the emotional impacts, social stigmas, and health issues related to being overweight.â •#151;Midwest Book Review&#147;More than a health guide: it's an important consideration for any social issues shelf and blends science, history and health in an examination of changing precedents for body image.â •#151;Midwest Book Review"[A]n inspired and inspiring book about our cultural obsession with weight, our fetishization of thinness, and out demonization of fat. Body of Truth is a compelling read, one that will make you rethink your attitudes towards your body and your health&#151;and, in the process, enable you to enjoy your life a bit more and count calories a bit less."&#151;Daphne Merkin, novelist, cultural critic, and author of *The Fame Lunches*"At turns harrowing and heartbreaking, Body of Truth is ultimately life-affirming and always, always brave and honest. A book every woman&#151;no, everyone&#151;should read."&#151;Ann Hood, author of *The Obituary Writer* and *An Italian Wife*&#147;Extensive research, which cumulatively starts to take hold&#133;Brown weaves in history, feminist theory, and studies into the nature vs. nurture argument about beauty ideals to give a well-considered look at why it is that we so often hate the bodies we're in&#133;Brown's writing is rousing&#133;This is not a tepid, guarded book. It makes its arguments and makes them with force&#133;Brown's book demands reconsideration of weight-based beliefs and principles, of how we fundamentally perceive and talk about weight.â •#151;Santa Fe New Mexican&#147;Brown&#39;s argument is an incendiary one: Stop the useless yo-yo dieting and accept yourself as you are.â •#151;Book Notes&#147;A well-researched and cogent argument for more rational scientific approaches and humane cultural attitudes toward health, eating, and the concept of being overweight. Written in an approachable style and peppered with short first-person interview narratives&#133;A solid general overview of the scientific and cultural issues surrounding fatness and weight loss with an excellent starter bibliography.â •#151;Library Journal&#147;Brown&#39;s conclusions&#133;will likely shock most readers and make them rethink much of what they assume, what they think they know about weight and fat&#133;This book may be just what most of us need, so we can be kinder to ourselves

and others and truly take care of the bodies we have. It's a revelation.â •#151;San Francisco Book ReviewWell + Good, 2/1/15" A must-read whether you're the most confident woman in the room (or bikini) or can't remember the last time you had a nice thought about your body." (One of the "10 Healthy Books You've Got to Read this Year")â#147;A must-read for anyone ready to start shaking this fat = bad, thin = good obsessionâ#133;Brown's book can help you love your body now.â •#151;Bustleâ#147;Brown takes on fad diets, unattainable body ideals and the misconceptions that shape how women view themselves.â •#151;Paradeâ#147;An excellent bookâ#133;must-reading for everyone who has spent their life obsessing about every bite of food they eatâ •#151;Canada Free Pressâ#147;[Brown] argues powerfully for the need to push back against weight-shaming. She advocates cogently for a new paradigm to transform how we think about our bodies and our body image. In addition, Brown aptly captures how our thin-at-any-cost culture promotes an obsessive, warped relationship with the daily nourishment we can't live without but whose caloric impact we often come to fear and mistrust.â •#151;Psychotherapy Networkerâ#147;Brown covers a wide range of topics beneath the umbrella of weight and weight lossâ#133;Brown writes with the credibility of someone who has done her research, but with the voice of a peer.â •#151;Radishâ#147;Argumentative and determinedly one-sided, Harriet Brown's Body of Truth is a highly useful corrective to the veritable flood of books warning people to watch their weight, change their weight, balance their weight, and pay constant attention to their weight in order to be healthy, fulfilled and happy. It is a book that will surely be read with relief, if not glee, by the legions of people who are weight-focusedâ#151;including those that are, yes, obsessedâ#151;but who are nevertheless unhappy in their own skin and unconvinced that all the dieting, careful food choices, and constant attention to weight have done them any goodâ#133;Body of Truth is essentially an extended argument that it is OK to be OK with the body you have.â •#151;InfoDad blogâ#147;[Brown's] book tackles the myths and realities of the obesity epidemicâ#39; and exposes the biggest lies driving the rhetoric of obesityâ#133;[It] offers ways to think about weight and health with more common sense, accuracy, and respectâ#133;[An] excellent bookâ#133;Read it and learn the truth.â •#151;Bookviews blogâ#147;You'll see that everything you thought you knew about weight may be a big fat lieâ#133;Read Body of Truth. You may have nothing to lose.â •#151;The Bookworm Sezâ#147;[A] quest to learn how we learned to loathe our bodies.â •#151;Energy Times

Harriet Brown is the author of *Brave Girl Eating: A Family's Struggle with Anorexia*, which has been translated into several languages and won a Books for a Better Life Award in 2011. She has edited

two anthologies and has written for the New York Times Magazine and Tuesday science section, O Magazine, Psychology Today, Prevention, and many other publications. Brown is an associate professor of magazine journalism at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. [harrietbrown.com](http://harrietbrown.com) [audsleyparents.org](http://audsleyparents.org) [projectbodytalk.com](http://projectbodytalk.com) Twitter: @HarrietBrown

September is turning into literary bo-po heaven, and it's fantastic. Harriet Brown knocked it out of the park with this one. Her work is admirably well-researched, facilitates some crazy good critical thinking about our cultural blind spots, and promotes a shift in perspective that would benefit us all. Did you know that it's possible to be fat AND healthy? If you didn't, that's not surprising. It's probably also fair to assume that you actually find yourself in immediate, defensive recoil; calling to mind a whole slew of reasons why that can't be true. I know I am guilty of that response at times. And it's no wonder! Our society has become inextricably invested in and obsessed with thinness. Insanely, devastatingly obsessed. The average person grows up bombarded with bazillions of messages telling them on a daily basis that fat is bad. The worst. Worse than death, even. (Not kidding. Research shows that many people would rather die than be fat. WTF.) If you're fat or even slightly overweight there's no way on earth you can be anything but miserable, unhealthy, and on death's very doorstep. And, further, if we care about people, we need to shame them into demonizing fat as much as we do so they can be thin healthy. As usual, it behooves us to challenge our biases. Because, turns out, these things are just not true! Health is individual, and only sometimes related to weight. As Brown points out, our collective fat phobia has led to some seriously destructive phenomena including yo-yo dieting (ultra bad for you, FYI), the mega-monster weight-loss industry, body shaming/bullying, eating disorders, immobilizing self-hatred, and some seriously wounded bodies and psyches. Even if you can't bring yourself to suspend your belief that fat automatically equals death and worthlessness (seriously, it doesn't), given that less than 5% of people are able to maintain long-term weight loss within the confines of our current diet-centric tyranny, it seems odd and unfortunate that we wouldn't even be open to re-thinking how we're talking about weight and health. I could probably hold all my thoughts about this book, but it would take me an infinite amount of time to write them all down. Do me a favor: open your mind, read the book, and if nothing else remember that humans (including yourself) are unique like snowflakes and need love, not shame. Five stars.

It's true: every woman should read this book. Superbly detailed research fairly presented. Author's powerful and poignant empirical knowledge plus variety of real-life case studies (different ages, lifestyles, body types) sprinkled throughout book pack huge impact. This sentence from Ellyn Satter's definition of what "normal eating" means stuck with me, "Normal eating takes up some of your time and attention, but keeps its place as only one important area of your life." Few nutshell takeaways: Be conscious about how you speak to any female about her physical self. Choose your words extra carefully with daughters, nieces, granddaughters about their physical selves. Don't abide self-talk that happiness equals a certain (lower) number on a scale. Be your own best advocate with doctors and other health professionals. After reading, Brown's *Body of Truth*, try your damnedest to share your raised awareness that diet supplements, weight-loss operations and other weight-loss/diet industry books, gimmicks, plans, and DVDs GUARANTEED TO WORK FOR YOU IN LOSING TONS OF WEIGHT are just marketing BS. The quick-fix? Is for a quick-buck. Exorcise negative messages from that first grade gym teacher or best friend who disparaged you as a whole person judging the body you're in. You, reading this review right now, are also too smart to not get the disingenuous promise that people will like you more and that you'll be okay if you look like a tabloid star. To paraphrase Brene' Brown's "The Gift of Imperfection," everyone has a story that will break your heart. A myriad of influences combine to make each of us who we are. Size 2 or 22, each of us is so much more than a size label. In Harriet N. Brown's "Body of Truth" first chapter, when her therapist asks her, "What if you were okay with yourself just as you are right now?" Well? I say, take the pledge. Be okay with you as you are.

I'm a big girl, and always have been. Through my 20s, I struggled with weight loss. I managed to lose a lot of weight, but I was still fat. Pretty soon, it became an obsession to lose the weight, and I kept doing crazier and crazier things to get the scale to go down, but I found that it became impossible to actually lose any more weight. I developed food obsessions and binge eating behaviors. I started feeling so helpless, out of control, and oh so lonely. I'm really glad I came across Harriet Brown's book. It was pure coincidence, really. I was doing some research for my blog, and came across a review of the book online with an excerpt. It was pretty eye opening, to say the least. I ordered it on Wednesday, got it Friday, and finished it on Sunday. I just devoured everything in it, pun intended. What a relief! I can't believe I was doing those things to myself. I can't believe I was letting society do that to me. I'm not going to die early just because I'm overweight! My binge eating

is connected to my dieting! Dieting isn't even worth it! I certainly feel less alone now, after having read so many stories about people struggling with the same problems I have. After reading the book, I stopped dieting right away. It's been several weeks now, and I haven't binged once. I'm trying to focus on eating at meal times and eating mostly healthy whole foods, but I eat until satisfied and I'm trying to let myself have treats if I want them without feeling guilty and using that as a trigger for a binge. In other words, I'm trying to figure out what it is to eat normally. This review isn't the best, I understand that, but I wanted to show that it's a very powerful book, and that every woman needs to read this book, whether you're fat or thin or in between. Thanks for the book, Harriet, and also for all the great resources in the back so maybe I can continue this journey towards being healthy.

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