

The Family Room

By: Dr. Roy Don Whitehead

Is Losing Weight Difficult for You?

"I can't seem to lose weight," Vera told me. (All characters in today's column are fictitious.) "My doctor tells me I need to lose fifty pounds. He said this will help my diabetes more than anything. Also, my weight puts an extra strain on my knees, and I'm having all sorts of problems with those."

Norma's problem was somewhat different. "I can lose the weight," he said. "That's no problem, but then I gain it back. I bet I have lost hundreds of pounds in my lifetime, only to gain it back and then some. My wife is on me to lose weight again, but I don't know if I have the heart to try. I'm tired of dieting and exercising only to gain back the weight that was so hard to get rid of."

Norma and Vera are not alone. Many Americans, perhaps as many as 60%, are overweight. More than 25 percent are obese (very overweight).

Why are we so heavy? Why can we not lose the weight when we know it would improve our health and appearance? Why do we gain it back after we have fought so hard to lose it?

"Being overweight is a physical problem, like alcoholism. Alcoholism was once considered a character flaw or a sign of moral weakness. Alcoholics were told to 'just stop drinking.' When they could not or when they stopped awhile and then relapsed, they were seen as poor creatures with no willpower."

"Letters"

(Cont. from A-2)

concentrate on giving the rich a free ride; allow coal companies to dump their silt ponds into the Rockcastle river.

When we go into the voting booth, and pull that curtain lets vote no to hard times, no to eating with the chickens, Yes to Chandler.

Jim Norton

"TJ's Journal"

(Cont. from A-2)

wonder if this war has a guarantee or a warranty of some kind. I'd like a refund. So far, the only ones who have benefited from the war are those poor Iraqis who have been downed under Hussein's harsh dictatorship. Then to make matters worse, some of the Hussein loyalists are joining our troops for target practice. The war has been officially over for weeks, but each day we hear of at least one or more of our troops who have been picked off with gunfire or involved in an explosion.

I'm afraid that before there's a democracy in Iraq, the U.S. will go broke from its efforts to aid a country of which less than half of its citizens are thankful for our presence. Governmental waste has always angered me. One of my pet peeves is the space shuttle. Yes, I know it's all scientific, and a lot of beneficial information has been learned from its endeavors. However, I've always felt that the funding could have been better spent here on Earth. To look back at the two space shuttle disasters, its cancellation would have saved a lot of astronaut's lives and their families a lot of grief. If men were meant to live in outer space, God would have put us there. No, I don't believe there's intelligent life in outer space (sometimes I wonder about intelligent life here on Earth). Santa Claus, or the Easter Bunny.

I wonder what would happen if the government would get their act together and spend multi-millions of dollars here in the United States. Could there be a cure for cancer, AIDS, or any of the long, long list of diseases that plague our country? This would end a lot of pain, grief, and suffering. Could there be an end to poverty and hunger in the United States? We don't have to go to Haiti or India to find these; just look in the inner cities and the backwoods rural areas. What could happen with increased educational spending? Our children deserve the best the dollar can buy, and the educators need a decent wage. Everyone in America deserves a home. Let's get the mentally challenged, the physically handicapped, the elderly, the unemployed, the runaway teens, the unemployed, and the worst disgrace of all, America's veterans off the sidewalks of America's cities. America's veterans represent the largest percentage of those who are homeless. There are untold masses that die each year due to the harsh elements, untreated disease, and starvation. I also think it would be wonderful if everyone could afford decent medical treatment and medicine without over-inflated prices. I say the buck needs to stop here in America for a while. After all, charity begins at home.

one who does not have those genes. When he drinks, bad things happen. He cannot be a social drinker.

We are beginning to discover that many of the same things which are true of being overweight are also true of being an alcoholic. Both are physical problems partly caused by genetics and the chemical makeup of the sufferer's body.

A recent study at the Imperial College School of Medicine in London, England shows why this is true.

In the study both lean and overweight people were given a hormone (peptide YY-36). Some were given a placebo.

They were then ushered into a buffet where they could eat as much as they wanted. Those who received PYY ate 30 percent less than those who received a placebo.

The hormone PYY is released by the intestine when a person becomes full. It signals the brain that it is time to stop eating. Some people do not

have enough of this hormone. The signal is not sent to their brains and they continue to eat, even past the time when they are full. Overweight people make less of this hormone than do thin people.

What does this study mean? It means that some people are chemically challenged when it comes to losing weight. Their bodies do not tell them when they are full, so they continue to eat. Their weight gain is not because of a weakness of character but because of the lack of the hormone that tells the body when to stop eating.

We have always thought that losing weight was simple: eat fewer calories and burn more calories. Weight loss, however, is not simple for everyone. Like alcoholism the physical body is involved more than we ever thought. That is one reason weight loss is so difficult.

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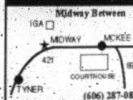
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