

So, Your Ambition is to Become a Circus Fat Lady?!

Part II

By Ken Hutchins

For the upcoming SuperSlow[®] Convention this year, we have assembled a diverse spectrum of speakers on diet. I believe that this will foster an open comparison of the issues.

My views are slowly changing on diet, but mostly in areas of micronutrients, not so much macronutrients. And while I surprise myself by permitting those who would argue against calorie counting to speak at all, I still feel obligated to state my strongest argument for calorie counting before allowing the sequitors to proceed before the premise, so to speak.

There are many health issues that are affected by diet. It is important to note that *what* one eats may make a tremendous difference for some conditions. My stance is that, with regard to obesity, *what* you eat is not nearly as important as *how much* you eat in terms of caloric quantity, regardless of the quality or identity of the food.

Therefore, in this article, I am not addressing any condition directly other than obesity. For instance, I am not addressing food allergies, diabetes, gout, arteriosclerosis or a host of other concerns. These other concerns are beyond the scope of my present understanding. Hence, we proceed with a diet discussion regarding fat almost exclusively.

Many healthcare workers hear patients state some of the following answers when asked if they are counting their calories as a means to reduce body fat:

- “I don’t like to count calories.”
- “When I count calories, it just makes me eat more.”
- “I don’t count calories, but I watch what I eat.”
- “I don’t count calories, but I eat healthy.”
- “Counting calories has never worked for me.”
- “I don’t count calories, but I count fat grams.”
- “I don’t count calories, but I count carbohydrates.”

I still believe strongly in three principles regarding diet and body fat:

- I am *that* fat because I eat *that* much. (The problem resides in the fact that we must define what *that* represents.)
- The Calorie is the only unit of measurement that exists as a common denominator for all three macronutrients regarding their food energy values (to determine what *that* is).
- For energy needs, the body can interconvert, to greater or lesser degrees, between the macronutrients (upholding the first law of thermodynamics: *Energy can neither be created nor destroyed*).

I admit that the preceding principles may not be perfect, but we must at least start here as a grounding in the analysis. And I am afraid that few people are properly grounded as they commence their journey into nutrition study and conclusion.

If I cause a car wreck where someone is maimed, my insurance company is pledged to compensate the injured with a money settlement. Will the money settlement make the injured person perfectly whole again?... No. Does it really fix the discrepancy?... No. But it is the only system we have to right a wrong. It is an imperfect system, but it is the best solution we have.

Much the same is true of counting calories. Is counting calories perfect?... No. Does it truly reflect all that the body does with the food energy?... No. But I believe that it is the best that can be hoped for.

To be sure, there are many other factors to consider in controlling body fat. The glycemic index is one extremely important factor that has emerged in recent years. But I do not believe that use of the glycemic index obviates our fundamental dependency on calorie counting.

The Check Book Analogy—When I was 23 and stationed with the Air Force in Abilene, Texas, I kept a checking account in Lubbock. On two occasions I lost track of my balance and risked overdraft. This occurred merely because I failed to keep good records.

Fortunately, I had some older friends in Lubbock who owned the Lincoln/Mercury dealership and who covered my account for me. The feared discrepancies did not involve much money, but they did require one of my friends to leave his busy management position twice for nuisance trips to my bank. On my next visit to Lubbock I got some strong and very sage advice.

Mr. Jimmie Gunn lectured me on how to make sure I never again overdrew my account due to mismanagement. He carefully explained that the problem is prevented at the point of purchase... that I must obey the rule to consistently enter the check amount in the register before writing or presenting the check. No check was to ever be presented until the register was satisfied. I never experienced this problem again.

And the same is true of counting calories. To really know what you consume you must never consume a food before you record it.

What if you traveled all about your community for a month writing checks without first recording the amount, the date, the check number, or the receiver? What would happen?... Probably a big mess with your account... Right?

And what if after doing this, the bank president called you on the carpet and told you that you could no longer bank there, that you were not responsible enough to have a checking account? Then you whined, “But I only bought things that were on sale.”

Do you see how this is similar to “I don’t count calories, but I only eat healthful foods (or low-calorie, or low-fat, or low-carbohydrate, etc.)”

What you eat does not absolve you of your responsibility to record the calories.

It also annoys me to hear those who dispense with calorie counting as though millions of people had tried it and failed to achieve results. I can find many people who talk about counting calories, many who tried it for several days and possessed no consistency long enough, many who did not obey the *record-before-eating* rule, some who completely or nearly quit eating as a substitute for counting and became ill, and many who flat lied about it, but I have never seen anyone who counted calories properly and not get some modicum of positive results. Most of the time, the results from accurate calorie counting are spectacular. This is not to say that the discipline to count is easy, but calorie control works!

It is inane to condemn as faulty a practice that practically no one is doing in the first place. As Arthur Jones said many years ago about an article by Fred Allman condemning the barbell squat—“This article affords millions of Americans an excuse to avoid doing an exercise they weren’t doing in the first place.” Now the authors of most all of the latest diet books now on the bookshelves are affording millions of lazy Americans an excuse to avoid counting their calories.

Americans seem to be in constant search of the easy way out with regard to so many aspects of their lives, including weight loss.

An example—I personally supervise the workouts of a 50-year-old woman who has done SuperSlow Protocol for three years. I lectured her on calorie counting just as I do all clients for several weeks off and on when they start the program. With this woman, I gave up after a while, getting the impression that the exercise was her only interest.

Recently, she complained that her body just never seemed to become as firm as she desired. And I also had not noticed any improvements in her body for the duration. In fact, the texture of her skin was very loose and fleshy.

With this complaint, I reopened the calorie-counting issue, and she talked as if she had never heard before that calorie control was the answer to her problem. I was very strong with my statements to her, but she took what I said with a good attitude.

To my surprise, she started counting her calorie consumption. Within 10 weeks she had a body that was firmer and more youthful appearing than what she remembered it being when she was 20.

Calorie counting is not particularly fun. It may seem a daunting task or simply more trouble than it’s worth. Yet, from my observations and experience, for a large percentage of people in our society (especially women), their attitude about themselves, their self esteem or self respect—these states of mind are tremendously influenced by whether or not they feel good about their physical appearance. And whether or not they are overfat greatly determines their attitudes about their appearance. Yet they refuse to commit to something so uncomplicated as calorie counting, and they would rather rationalize some way of not having to be accountable for how much they eat and still lose unwanted fat.