

A Weighty Issue

Less is more.

Robert Browning

As Summer approaches, the warm sunshine brings thoughts about holidays and bathing suits. Perhaps some Spring cleaning of your body, losing a few pounds and toning those muscles might be necessary. Curiously, some people find it easy to shed those unwanted pounds, whilst others never manage to slim down no matter what diet they try. Is this about motivation? Is it just the trick of finding the right combination of diet and exercise? Or could there be some other hidden factors that contribute to excess weight?

Isn't it interesting that there are so many metaphors to do with being a 'heavy weight'? Ideas like 'carrying weight...being solid, strong, statuesque...taken seriously...grounded...a force to be reckoned with...stand your ground'. Size is associated with importance, too. 'Big, abundant, generous, majestic'...don't you just want it 'all'? This idea probably starts very young, during the formative years of childhood, when being small equals lack of power, and most children look forward to being 'big boys and girls'. And to make matters more complicated, 'losing' something is rarely seen as positive. No one wants to lose their wallet or their mobile phone, so perhaps it's no surprise that the idea of 'losing weight' doesn't motivate people.

Carrying excess weight can also be a protective barrier, literally keeping people further away, as well as giving a message about not being attractive to the opposite sex. It can be used as a device to postpone having to deal with certain situations or decisions. But how much of your life do you want to spend waiting, before you get to be the weight you want?

Marie presented a particularly complex example of the ideas that can keep excess weight stuck. Although as a teenager she had desired to be model slim, she admitted that she had always been 'solid' and 'plump'. However, over the past five years, her weight had suddenly ballooned. No matter what diet she tried, nothing worked to get it off. She no longer wanted to be super slim, she just wanted to have her old curvaceous body back. She thought that how she looked reduced her chances of attracting a new partner.

Because she had been a plump as a child, her mother became particularly concerned with her weight. So, no sweets or candy or anything fattening was ever allowed. This grew into a silent power struggle between mother and daughter that got worse as the weight increased. Her mother didn't realize that the unconscious message she gave her daughter was 'You are not OK the way you are – there's something wrong with you'. The daughter grew up feeling somewhat unacceptable, obsessed with her appearance, full of self doubt and believing she was unlovable. She so longed for validation, that she set off to prove herself through being successful and making her own way in life. Subconsciously, she continued to 'carry weight' with excess poundage to

give herself a more credible and strong appearance. She would never be a 'push over' that other people could control!

Unfortunately, she also got caught in a difficult double bind: If she ever lost the excess weight and looked slim – this would confirm her mother's belief that something had been wrong with her when she was fat. That meant she'd be agreeing with the belief that she was really only acceptable if her appearance fit the requirements. However, if she stayed fat, that would demonstrate that she was OK the way she was.....except that she didn't actually like her size! Either way she lost and she ended up feeling powerless.

To find a way through such a tangle of beliefs can prove difficult unless you release the original decisions, the negative emotions involved, and then access a higher, more powerful truth. So we explored the tremendous sadness she had felt as the child who came to believe she was unlovable. When her entire bag of tricks had failed to win her parents approval and attention, she had judged them as stupid, and fired them from their jobs. From then on, she had decided to raise herself and be independent. She focused on survival and gave up on love.

Luckily, she was able to access her Higher Mind and source of wisdom with ease. Quite quickly she connected to more useful and healing concepts. Although her life path had been challenging, the truth was that she had always been loved and acknowledged just for being who she is. Her parents had truly cared and loved her, they just had some strange ideas and ways of doing things. It was also important to acknowledge her huge capacity to both give and receive love. That she didn't need a bag of tricks and her acceptability was nothing to do with her looks. She forgave her parents for the mistakes and finally let go of the old anger and power struggle.

Then she began to look at the deeper issue hiding underneath: a future fear of whether she could be acceptable to a man and whether she could really be loved. In a way, her weight had made this issue wait until she was really ready to risk opening up, being vulnerable and truly loving. What would it take? What needed to change? She realized it was merely a matter of choosing differently, letting go of a little bit of control, and perhaps altering some of her behaviours. Her perception had clearly shifted – there was no struggle about the weight issue anymore. Now it would be easy for her to shift into being whatever size she chooses.

Nothing to Achieve, Nowhere to Go

*Only our searching for happiness
prevents us from seeing it.
It's like a vivid rainbow
which you pursue without ever catching,
or a dog chasing its own tail.*

Nothing to do or undo,

*nothing to force,
nothing to want,
and nothing is missing.*

Lama Gendun Rinpoche

How to find out what your issues about weight might be:

1. Personal metaphors for weight can be unique. Start playfully thinking about what you associate with excess weight, whether it is the size, the shape, the look, or the amount of extra pounds you might be carrying. Since food and love are often confused, consider also whether there might be some connection with a love substitute.
2. Food tends to stuff down the feelings, so you don't have to deal with the ones you don't want to face. Swallowing and feeling full are ways to dull down painful thoughts. The more you eat, the less you feel. Gradually the excess weight builds a wall of protection against further hurt, leaving you numb inside. Eating as a substitute for love is quite common, so sometimes overweight could be interpreted as a longing to be loved. Is your weight issue really about eating or wanting to be loved?
3. Sometimes the protective barrier you build up is a sign of protest. This could harbour old guilt, shame, or revenge because of something that happened in the past. The excess pounds then become a way of 'bleeding on someone's doorstep' showing the world what a bad person they are. [If they hadn't hurt you, you'd be happy, slim and fit]
4. Overweight as a shape makes people look like chubby babies. So excess weight can also be a way of holding onto something, needing to be taken care of, not wanting to grow up, or clinging to something for security. Look for issues of helplessness.
5. Excess weight as a 'look' can be about an overcompensation for inner insecurity, lack of self respect, fear of being unimportant, or feeling small. So by being big and taking up lots of space, people have to take more notice of you, and you look bigger and more important. In some cultures the bigger you are, the more spiritual power you are thought to have. Look for issues of worthlessness.
6. Weight can also be a metaphor for the burdens you've had to carry. Each time you've felt forced to do things rather than choose to do them, you might have had an unconscious sense of being hard done by, a feeling of hopelessness. Then of course, as a reward or compensation for the drudgery, you treat yourself with extra food. What message could this heavy weight be expressing?
7. Explore the benefits you've had by having extra weight instead of focusing on what's wrong with being the weight you are:

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*What does the extra weight enable you to do?
What does it allow you to avoid?
How does it help you to feel safe?
How does it affect how powerful you feel?
When did you start putting weight on, and what was happening then?
In what ways could it be associated with issues around giving or receiving love?*

8. Then explore the benefits of being exactly the weight you'd like to be:
How would you be different? What would you be doing that you don't do now?
*How differently would you dress? Would you feel more attractive?
If you were slim, would you expose more of your body to view?
How safe and secure would you feel in a slim body?
Would being slim mean that you had to face other issues?
Who else would be affected by how you look?*

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