

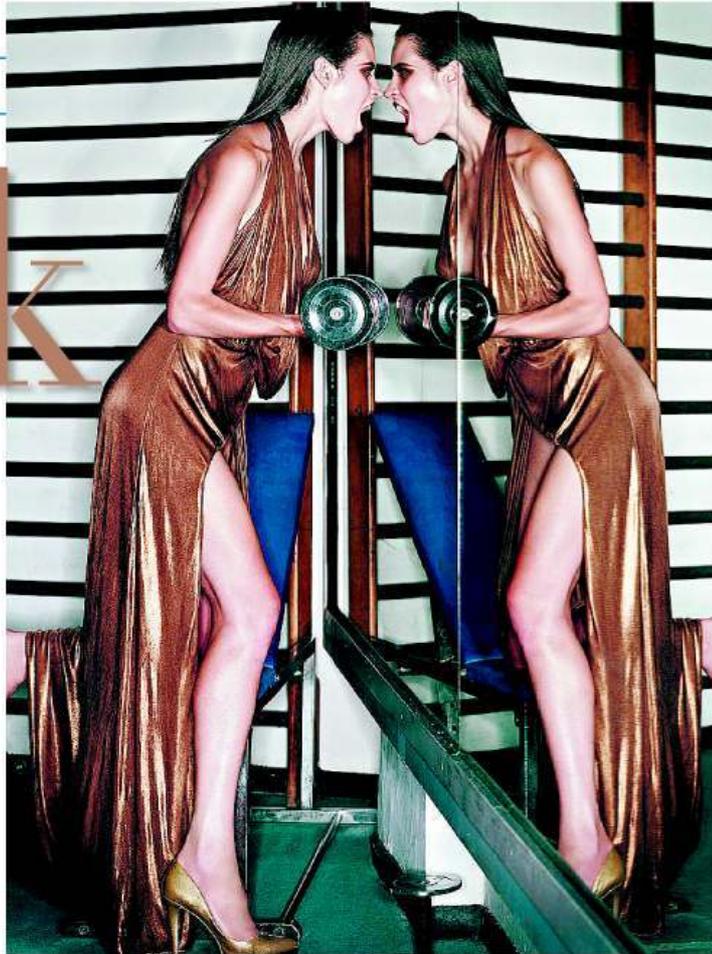


health

think YOURSELF thin

Losing weight is as simple as convincing your body you don't need to store excess fat. But how simple could that be?

Joanna Hall finds out.



Many people who have successfully lost a lot of weight experienced a defining moment that gave them the shove in the back they needed to get started.

For one person I know, it was the humiliation of being described as pregnant by a policeman when she pranged her car; for another it was the loss of her overweight mother to a diabetes-related health complication. For Jon Gabriel, author of the new book, *The Gabriel Method* (Gabriel Group), it was two life-changing events.

The first took place in August 2001. Weighing 186kg, feeling miserable, and having tried every diet known to man without success, Gabriel came to the conclusion that his body wanted to be fat. And while it wanted to be fat, there was

little he could do to lose weight.

The second event was a month later on the morning of September 11, when he was due to fly from New York to San Francisco. Instead of taking flight 93 – the hijacked plane that crashed into a field in Pennsylvania – Gabriel's business partner had booked him on a different flight to save money.

"I was given a second chance," Gabriel says. "I'd escaped death, and had a newfound appreciation for living. But I was also sick of fighting a losing battle with my weight, so I stopped fighting."

Gabriel also stopped viewing his body as 'the enemy'.

"I thought, what if it wasn't trying to kill me, but trying to keep me alive and going about it in the wrong way?" he says. Then he asked himself a key question: why would his body want to keep him fat?



He started doing some research. He believes the answer to that question is what he's dubbed FAT (Famine And Temperature) Programs.

"Your body has genetic survival programs built into it, designed to force you to either get fatter, or hold on to the fat you have whenever it feels that doing so will help keep you alive," he explains.

Long before fast food and supermarkets, man's survival was entirely dependent on hunting and gathering food. Hunger motivated him to travel great distances, risking injury and even death in search of a meal.

But food supplies were inconsistent, resulting in cycles of feast and famine. And if there was no food to gather, man rested – conserving the body fat he already had for warmth and survival.

To ensure survival during famine, "thrifty genes" evolved to regulate efficient intake and use of human fuel stores. Survivors were those who ate the most, moved the least and stored fat efficiently.

Over the last century, however, our environment has changed and food is no longer scarce. But evidence suggests that these "thrifty genes" have remained unchanged – they haven't had time to work out that the fridge is actually full.

According to Gabriel, a number of things switch these FAT Programs on – stress and dieting included.

STARVATION SIGNALS

"Stress is highly personal, but whatever your body thinks is fat-making stress will cause it to want to make you fat," he explains. "And diets don't work because they give your body the message that there's not enough good nutrition around. Diets make your body think you're starving to death."

Gabriel calls his weight loss system a method rather than a diet. There are no special recipes,

forbidden foods, or specific exercise programs. The primary aim is to turn off your body's "fat switch", and although eating less, eating healthier food, and being active are integral, this is achieved by adding foods that your body really needs, and using visualisation to tell your body what weight you want it to be.

Although he lost more than 100kg over two and a half years, Gabriel didn't lose weight quickly at first. "I lost about 11kg over the first six months, which is just under half a kilo a week," he says.

As time passed, however, his weight loss increased rapidly and he even lost those last few kilos which many dieters complain are almost impossible to lose.

"That's the biggest difference between taking the approach I discovered and a diet," he explains. "Diets start out the same way – you lose weight quickly at first, then your weight loss slows down. Finally you stop losing weight altogether."

Incredibly, unlike many others who lose a large amount of weight, Gabriel wasn't left with any excess skin – his body appears lean and taut with little evidence of his prior obesity. "I didn't have surgery of any kind," he insists. "As I lost weight I also lost skin to 'shrink to fit'."

Gabriel's philosophy is simple: if you have weight to lose and it's just not happening, it's because your body has a reason for holding on to the extra weight.

"Your body's the real boss, and as long as it wants to be fat it will," he says. "So rather than struggle in vain, all you need to do is understand why it wants to be fat and eliminate those reasons."





The method

- 1** Stop fighting your body and get it to want to lose weight: learn how to “turn off” FAT programs, and weight loss will be automatic and effortless.
- 2** Don't diet. It causes your body to think that food is limited, and makes it want to hold on to weight.
- 3** Add the good stuff. You may be eating a lot, but your body could still be starving nutritionally so feed it healthy food and it will eventually crave it.
- 4** Reduce toxins. Your body is using fat to help protect you from toxins, and to help insulate and protect your vital organs from the poisons in your food and your environment.
- 5** Don't over-medicate. Certain medications can artificially activate the FAT programs, so only take medication that your doctor says is essential.
- 6** Reduce your intake of processed foods, artificial sweeteners and flavour enhancers. They are radically different from the foods our ancestors used to eat and our bodies don't know how to handle them.
- 7** Handle mental and emotional “threats”. Your body treats them as if they were actual physical threats, and they can sometimes produce the same chemical signal in your body that starving and freezing produces. When this happens, your body thinks that you need to be fat in order to be safe.