

Diet & Health

April 2014

Today

Loving Movement

- What's the point in exercise?
- Running: the road to greater health or a shortcut to the grave?

Jimmy Moore

talks cholesterol

Ryan Turner

brings you more delicious low-carb recipes

Sell by/Best before - our food writer explains

We want to be slim so what's stopping us?

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Diet & Health Today



Get a move on!

First, a huge thank you to everyone who downloaded and shared the first issue and for the valuable articles from the various contributors. Thanks to you, the first edition was a great success, and we hope that this issue builds upon that.

We have a few contributions from activity specialists this month, and we make no apology for that.

As human beings, our bodies are designed to move. And move quite a lot, too. But the question always arises: what kind of activity did we evolve to participate in?

Some say running marathons is normal, while others say that lazing in the sun is equally so. Whatever your view on activity, there can be no doubt that our complex frames are built to support a range of movements and we hope that the views of this month's contributors will be thought provoking.

Many of you have taken the time and effort to write in with suggestions for articles and content for future issues of this magazine, and we'd like to thank you for doing so. We really hope that the effort that's being invested to grow the readership this year will mean that we have a strong base for years to come, which will give a great platform for new contributors to share their thoughts with the open mindedworld.

If you'd like to contribute to this magazine with an article, recipe or a real-life health story, please send in your submissions to editor@dietandhealthtoday.com.

We hope you enjoy this second issue and do feel free to share it with whomever you wish.

Very best wishes

Andy & Zoë Harcombe

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Thank you for sharing and supporting the work of the contributors of this magazine.



We want to be slim, so what's stopping us?

Zoë Harcombe

In a study of formerly obese people, researchers at the University of Florida found that virtually all said that they would rather be blind, deaf or have a leg amputated than be obese again [1]. That is the extent of our desire to be slim and yet two thirds of people in the UK, USA and Australia are overweight and one quarter obese. Why?

This paradox has been of complete fascination to me ever since I found myself overeating and gaining weight as a teenager. I wanted to be slim more than I wanted anything in the world and yet I found myself irresistibly drawn to food. Not just any food - refined carbohydrates essentially: chocolate; crisps; cereal; bread; biscuits; sweets; chips; tomato sauce; ice cream. Funnily enough, I never craved meat, fish, eggs or vegetables.

Why do we overeat?

The desire to understand why we overeat, when all we want is to be slim led to a great deal of research (before the internet made it easy) and culminated in my first book *Why do you overeat?* When all you want is to be slim (2004).

I'm not going to go into detail about this book, as many readers of *Diet & Health Today* are familiar with my work. For people who have not come across this book, the headlines are that I discovered (and experienced) three common medical conditions that cause insatiable food cravings. The three conditions are: Candida; Food Intolerance and Hypoglycaemia (see next page).

The final piece of the puzzle was that traditional dieting - trying to eat less (let alone do more) leads to these three conditions and my books explain how and why.

That has hopefully got everyone to the same base level understanding that there are physical reasons for food cravings. I then defined food addiction as a four stage process. See if you empathise with this definition:

Food addiction

Step 1) You have a craving for a particular substance (alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, sugar). Let's say that your craving is for chocolate.

Step 2) You develop increased tolerance, so that you need more chocolate to have the same effect.

Step 3) You become physically and/or psychologically dependent. You get to the point that you need the substance to avoid feeling bad. Chocolate gives you a short lived 'high', but *not* having chocolate produces a profound 'low'.

Step 4) You suffer consequences of your chocolate consumption. In the case of food addiction, the usual

I discovered (and experienced) three common medical conditions that cause insatiable food cravings.

consequence is weight gain. Sometimes it is type 2 diabetes that shocks people into change.

If we didn't suffer consequences of addiction (alcohol related illness; smoking induced lung damage; sleep loss with excess caffeine and weight gain with food addiction), we would have no reason to change. We would carry on drinking, smoking and eating as we wanted to and there would be no consequences. However, this is not the case. There are consequences and, in the case of food addiction, it is the scales that tell us we're at Step 4 and we need help.

The Harcombe Diet® was designed to be the perfect diet to overcome the three conditions that cause insatiable food cravings. (Phase 1 was created by taking the medical dietary advice for each condition separately and combining the advice to produce the 'common denominator' - the foods that all the physicians, expert in each condition, would advise for their individual area of expertise). If you have food cravings and haven't yet tried Phase 1, this article may have helped you already.

My key focus in this article, however, is for people who know what to do and - for some reason - aren't doing it. You may be a Jimmy Moore follower. You may have come across Paleo and find it makes perfect sense. You may have been inspired by any of the great content by Sean Croxton, Michael Eades, Chris Kresser, Robert Lustig, Gary Taubes - and many more - books, blogs or videos. There are numerous routes through which you could have discovered

"real food." The issue is - are you now doing the right thing? Or is something still getting in the way?

The fundamental drivers of human nature

Let's go back to basics. At the most fundamental level, humans have two basic drivers. We seek to move away from pain and towards pleasure. The stick and carrot are the two sides of these motivators. Hunger is pain, food is pleasure - we are driven to find food and eat. Loneliness is pain, companionship is pleasure - we are driven to socialise and mate. These are the most basic pillars of survival instincts.

I'm going to lob out a potentially controversial observation, which follows from these facts about basic motivation: If you know what to do, but aren't doing it, at a fundamental level the pleasure of where you could be and/or the pain of where you are now is/are not great enough to motivate you. You're actually more content than you realise. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it's important to be aware of.

The biggest loser

The before and after weight-loss stories, which the media are after, play on these two fundamental motivators. They want the headline to capture the pain or pleasure that finally drove the person to change e.g. "I got stuck in an airplane seat" or "I walked down the aisle in my dream dress." Feature editors probably don't consciously know that they're tapping into this foundation of human beings - they just know what sells copies.

The person that we see in these magazine articles had huge pain or huge potential gain (or both) driving them to lose weight. I suggest that what makes these people reach their goal is one simple fact - they never revisit their original motivation; they never question it. They let the original drive carry them

through to the end goal. The successful slimmer is on auto pilot. The original mindset prevails. This is beyond powerful.

Now, we all know - most of us from personal experience - that weight loss from a calorie controlled diet is rarely sustained. The exception, the individual who manages to keep weight off, is almost certainly starving and able to calorie-restrict and deny hunger for life. But making the switch to real food/managed carbohydrate intake *can* lead to lifelong natural weight and health. So what's stopping us?

Sacrifices

If motivation at the fundamental level is about pain/gain, we need to look closely at our own pain/gain balance to understand why we might not be achieving our goals. When we do this, there is an important additional factor to consider. We want to be slim, but the cost to each of us is different. We need to talk about sacrifices.

It is undoubtedly easier to grab a cereal bar on the way to work, a muffin mid morning, a readymade sandwich for lunch, a bar of confectionery late afternoon and then ping a microwave meal in three minutes for dinner. If we could eat in this way and not end up with obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease etc, we probably would. However, we

cannot eat in this way and stay slim and healthy. So we need to make sacrifices and sacrifices are different to different people.

- Sacrifice & specific foods: If being slim means giving up wine, cheese or dark chocolate - is it worth it to you personally? This is all about you and your motivation. Giving up processed food to be slim and healthy should be an easy choice for any sensible person, but what about when real and pleasurable foods may need to go? What are you prepared to give up (sacrifice) to reach your goal?
- Sacrifice and socialising: Is it more important to you to 'fit in' and eat and drink as your friends do? Or are you prepared to look and feel different by declining dessert, maybe not drinking and asking for salad instead of potatoes? How much do you socialise? How much are you prepared to sacrifice to make sure that meeting your friends doesn't derail you from your goal?

Sacrifices change. You may want to lose weight,

The three conditions

Candida is a yeast, which lives in all of us, and is normally kept under control by our immune system and other bacteria in our body. If Candida stays in balance, it causes no harm. If it multiplies out of control, it can create havoc with our health. Candida causes cravings for all sugary foods, floury foods and vinegary/pickled foods.

Food Intolerance means not being able to tolerate a particular food. Food Intolerance develops when you have too much of a food and too often and your body just gets to the point where it can't cope with that food any longer. The real irony is that Food Intolerance causes people to crave the foods to which they are intolerant - the most common culprits being wheat, sugar and dairy products - the things that we consume several times a day in the modern world.

Hypoglycaemia means mean low blood glucose. Hypoglycaemia describes the state your body is in if your blood glucose levels are too low. When your blood glucose levels are too low, this is potentially life threatening and your body will try to get you to eat. Hypoglycaemia can cause cravings for any carbohydrate - even fruit.

but not to the point that you can't get merry with the girls on Friday night. This may be more important to you in your 20s than your 30s or 40s. In your 30s, being a healthy weight to conceive may be worth whatever sacrifice is necessary.

The motivation to lose weight before a wedding/big birthday/cruise/graduation ceremony etc is very different to the standard 'Monday' diet with no particular event in mind. The motivation to lose weight for health reasons (as with giving up smoking when lung cancer is diagnosed) may tip commitment in favour of doing something rather than not.

Events change priorities. When we suffer a crisis/bereavement/ill health etc, priorities rightly change. You may think about your weight constantly until you, or a family member, is diagnosed with cancer and then you'll find the scales completely unimportant. People often lose weight following a bereavement or divorce - food becomes insignificant - literally "the last thing on their mind".

Our priorities, the importance that we attach to losing weight and therefore how much we are prepared to sacrifice constantly change. Have events changed your priorities recently? Has weight actually *not* been a priority for some time and maybe this article has helped you realise this? Should it be a priority? Have you got your priorities right or wrong?

What to take away from this

First, understand the stages of food addiction and be aware that there are physical conditions that can cause food cravings. If you recognise that you are currently addicted to food, use The Harcombe Diet® to overcome food addiction.

When you are no longer physically addicted to food, think about where you are now and where you want to be. What pain are you experiencing as a motivator for change? What gain could you achieve as a motivator for change? Are you actually more content with your current position than you

realised? Do you want to re-evaluate this?

What would it take for you to close the gap between where you are now and where you could be? What sacrifices would there be? Are you prepared to make those sacrifices? Is the end goal worth it?

The opening study reminded us that no one wants to go back to being obese, having experienced weight loss. Real food/managed carb intake gives us the way to never go back to obesity again, but what about being overweight - even just that last half stone?

Understanding *your* motivation; *your* pain; *your* gain; *your* focus; *your* priorities; the sacrifices that *you* are prepared to make and so on is vital. This article aims to provoke thought, provide tips and to help show a way forward. But the biggest progress will come from you taking the advice that most works for you and making it your own.

Ref 1: Colleen S.W. Rand and Alex M. C. Macgregor, "Successful weight loss following obesity surgery and the perceived liability of morbid obesity", International Journal of Obesity, (1991).



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Out of Time

Have best before dates passed their sell-by date?

Clare Hargreaves asks whether it's time to start using our eyes and noses again.

You may have recently heard the radio 4 programme in which listeners outdid each other in admitting to criminal acts committed in their larders.

Their common crime was to have kept foods not only months or years past their Best Before date but decades. There was a tin of peaches in one man's cupboard, I remember, that dated to just after the war. Its owner was totally unfazed about eating them too. It left me itching to write a song entitled Still Tasty after All These Years (sorry Paul Simon).

Do such tales horrify you? Or do they inspire a shiver of rebellious glee that these individuals were cocking a snook at the food safety police? Do you, like me, have packets of lentils and pots of honey that have made themselves comfortably at home at the back of kitchen cupboards for years? Go on, admit it.

That trivial radio item got me thinking. I became aware of the abundance of dates adorning the packaging on the food we buy. There's Display Until or Sell By. Then Use By, and finally Best Before. Talk about overload! How many of us know, or have the time to think about, the difference between these markings? I certainly didn't until I looked into it.

What I found as I probed was that these dates, apart from contributing to obscene food waste, are as much for supermarkets' convenience and back-covering as for our protection. They're also worryingly arbitrary.

Display Until and Sell By dates are for a shop's stocktaking purposes, not to help us. So there have been numerous calls for them to be eliminated as they can easily be confused with Use By dates that help us know if a food is safe to eat.

Best Betimes are another marking that can often be happily ignored. They supposedly indicate when a

product is at its best, but this can be a subjective thing – take Brie cheese, some like it chalky firm, others runaway gooey. The desire to get us going back to the shop to replace it is an equally strong driving force. Some products which in Britain have Best Before dates of a couple of years, like salt, dates or barley, actually take decades or centuries to deteriorate. Which is why throughout history such foods were often chosen to accompany people to the grave – to be discovered unspoilt millennia later.

That leaves Use By. This is definitely the most useful marking for us, as it is used on foods that can be potentially dangerous if consumed after the recommended date.

But even here, food industry insiders tell me that these dates are extremely conservative, to avoid possible litigation. So, sadly, a lot of good food gets chucked away "just to be on the safe side," without our eyes, nostrils (or brains) getting a look in.

No-one's denying that a Use By date is a handy safety guide for those leading hectic lives, particularly on foods like chicken. But much more useful, in my opinion, would be a date that indicated when a product was picked, caught, baked or laid (eggs). This would tell us how fresh a food was, which to those of us who care about flavour and nutrition as much as safety, is paramount. We can then make our own decision as to when it'll taste best. When I eat an apple, for instance, I want to know whether it's been kept in a carbon dioxide filler chamber for up to a year, or whether it was picked last week. If I buy mackerel, I'd like reassurance it was caught no longer than one day before, not stored on

ice for a week or more (sadly often the case in supermarkets).

Of course the best food doesn't come in packages with dates stamped on them. It's the food we buy fresh from a producer, or grow ourselves. Once we've got the

chicken, cod or carrots home, it's up to us to decide how long each remains good to eat. Knowing just how long that should be is a vital life skill – and one we're sadly in danger of losing. Our mums, for instance, knew that fish that's off becomes whiffy and its eyes misty. I, for one, would rather take responsibility for my own food, than rely on the food industry and supermarkets with their other

agendas. By all

means keep Use By as a guide, but let's just scrap the rest and return to common sense. Let's rediscover our eyes and noses.

Food and farming writer **Clare Hargreaves** is the author of four books and writes for the national press, including BBC Good Food magazine and The Independent.



Feast with a Chef

Drawing on her contacts with many of the country's top chefs, Clare's most recent venture is running Feast with a Chef, offering fine dining in village halls. She calls it 'Fine dining without the starch.' To find out more about Clare, her writing, and Feast with a Chef visit www.clarehargreaves.co.uk or www.feastwithachef.co.uk

What's The Point In Exercise?

Sam Feltham



As someone who sells exercise classes it was very difficult to accept that exercise isn't particularly good for fat loss. However, after having read a lot of the research that's out there on exercise and fat loss there is no doubt in my mind that it has little effect. The only times that it has been shown to have a scientifically significant effect is when people do 7 hours or more of moderately intense exercise a week![1] Which is highly unrealistic for most, myself included, and probably not good for your overall health.

Even the Department of Health's report Start Active, Stay Active back in 2011 doesn't have much to write home about when it comes to exercise and fat loss [2]. On page 11 and 12 of the report there is a great table of the relationship between physical activity and health outcomes. The table includes everything from cancer risk to mental health, and all of the health outcomes have an effect of 20% or more lowering risk with physical activity except one, the elusive energy balance. I didn't realise that energy balance was a health outcome but there you go. According to the report *"Physical activity alone has no effect on achieving 5% weight loss, except for exceptionally large volumes of physical activity"* which to me means it has little to no effect. For some reason though on page 44 under the section named Physical Activity, Overweight & Obese the authors state *"As a key component of daily energy expenditure, physical activity has an important role to play in maintenance of a healthy weight"*.

This cognitive dissonance of saying exercise is vital in any weight loss programme from report authors and guideline setters seems to be a consistent effect in itself. It's almost as though they are afraid to say it, similar to saying Lord Voldemort out loud if you were in the Harry Potter universe. Even at the end of this section the authors reference a 1 year randomised control trial in the New England Journal of Medicine which showed that participants that were in a diet only group had better fat loss (17%) than those in the diet and exercise group (16%), and those in the exercise only group changed by 5%[3]. Not particularly compelling evidence that exercise alone makes a difference to your fat loss efforts especially as the people in this study were doing four and a half hours of exercise a week.

Despite report authors and guideline setters still being afraid of saying exercise has little to no effect on fat loss, I am not because exercise is great for a myriad of other health outcomes. Namely in the previously mentioned report Start Active, Stay Active it mentions that:

"There is a 20% to 35% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke."

"There is a 30% to 40% lower risk of metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes in at least moderately active people compared with those who are sedentary."

"Risk reduction of hip fracture is 36% to 68% at the highest level of physical activity."

"Older adults who participate in regular physical activity have an approximately 30% lower risk of falls."

"There is an approximately 30% lower risk of colon cancer and approximately 20% lower risk of breast cancer for adults participating in daily physical activity."

"There is an approximately 20% to 30% lower risk for depression, dementia and distress, for adults participating in daily physical activity."

Some pretty great benefits if you ask me and certainly something to start writing home about. One of the biggest benefits for me though is how exercise can improve the structure and function of the brain. In a year long randomised control trial those who engaged in regular walking had an increase in volume of the hippocampus, the part of the brain involved with memory, compared to the control group who saw a small reduction in volume. The exercising group also saw higher levels of brain derived neurotrophic factor, a substance that stimulates new brain cells to develop and brain cell communication [4].

In Summary, I do encourage everyone to exercise for the benefits shown above but if you are going to participate in an exercise regime don't do it purely for fat loss because more than likely it won't have any effect. Exercise is great for lots of other aspects of being healthy and that's what life is all about for me, being healthy. Health isn't just about losing body fat and looking your best, it's about having a strong mind, strong joints, strong muscles, strong heart and a strong body, and exercise will certainly help you out with all these. My recommendations for you, if you haven't exercised much, is to start with walking once a week, especially in nature which could just be your local woods. Then, if you feel the urge, move on to some strength training whether that be at the gym with dumbbells or at home with just your own bodyweight.

My personal fitness regime consists of about 2 hours cycling a week, which is simply my commute, 3 x 4 minute strength interval sessions a week mainly using my own bodyweight and a long walk on the weekends. This keeps me fresh and it's not that time consuming, especially the 4 minute strength interval sessions. To see some of my 4 minute strength interval sessions you can go to our YouTube channel @ www.YouTube.com/SmashTheFat and search for the Weekday Wakeup Workouts playlist

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Less appy, more 'appy

Chris Packe

Oh iPhone, for years you've been
used as a crutch
But the truth is I don't think I need you
so much
When you sit in my pocket you speed
my life up
And the scientists say there's a
chance that you're nuking my nuts



Just as Google's bewitching site
visitor stats
Are digital crack
That bring out in bloggers a panic
attack
I felt such release when I chose to
step back
So it's time that a piece of my
spellbinding app stash got scrapped

It's no good deriving a sense of
achievement
Relying on Map My Run's
measurement features
To pace me at 5 minutes per kilo-
metre
As if running slower might leave me
beleaguered
Creating the utterly pointless distress
That my exercise session is less than
an outright success

It's fun to draw oversized GPS flowers
But I realise when I'm back in the
shower
That my sweet mobile temptress has
forced me to hustle
And not hear the rustle of soft new
spring leaves
Or hear all the robins and ravens and
blue tits and blackbirds who sang to
me as I sped past them perched high
in their trees



Don't matter if I managed 8.1k
Or just 5 today
What counts is I actually got on my
way
And I didn't avoid it
And bounced round the Common with
a carefree and unfettered mind
It's nice to run blind, my phone left
behind
And to find that when it's more simple,
I simply enjoyed it

And Facebook connection is not
where it's at
'Cos I honestly doubt there is anyone
out there
Who's mildly discerning
Bombarded by updates and news
feeds and meetings and unfulfilled
yearnings
Who might even give the most flying
of hecks or the slightest of craps
When it tweets automatically that I've
completed a lap



Electronic hooker and cortisol pusher
Get out of my face
You make my pulse race

You stiffen my hairs
You make my entire system think I'm
being chased by a murderous pack of
wild bears



My smartphone connects me
Streamlined with Beirut and New York
and Beijing
And meanwhile the beauty of ordin'ry
things
Quite escapes me
It mis-shapes me
It slips me rohypnol, sometimes it's
like my phone date rapes me

So I'm freeing up space in my phone
and my head
Return to the source from whence I
got misled
It's not a divorce, it's reunion instead
Less apps to addict, hypnotise and
distract
My three year old son can no longer
run off with my phone and punch
virtual cats

See more of Chris's work at 'Chris
Packe's Freedom Blog'
www.chrispacke.com



Chef's corner

With Ryan Turner

We're delighted to have Ryan continue to create healthy low carb dishes for us. His introductory recipes in our first issue were delicious and we're pretty sure that this selection of recipes will become firm favourites with our readers too.

Ingredients

250g Butternut Squash
500ml Vegetable stock
3 Tbsp double cream
100ml balsamic vinegar
1tbsp Maple syrup
Olive oil for cooking
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350F.
2. Peel the butternut squash and remove the seeds, then cut the butternut squash into rough 2cm by 2cm cubes.
3. Put the butternut squash into a roasting pan and drizzle with olive oil and season. Roast for approximately 20 minutes until golden brown.
4. Transfer to a large heavy bottomed pan and cover with the hot vegetable stock.
5. Cook on a low heat for about 10 minutes, add the cream, maple syrup and whiz with a hand blender until smooth and creamy then season to taste
6. To make the balsamic glaze place the balsamic vinegar into a heavy bottomed pan and simmer on a low heat for approximately 15 minutes until $\frac{3}{4}$ of liquid has evaporated and the vinegar is a syrup like consistency, allow to cool before using.
7. To serve, pour into 4 bowls and decorate with the balsamic glaze and chopped parsley.

Creamy Butternut squash soup with a balsamic glaze



Chef 's tips

Garnish the soup with a spoon of crème fraiche instead of the balsamic reduction if you want to save time

Try pan frying a handful of wild mushrooms in butter and sprinkling over the soup for a luxurious garnish.

Serves 4

Tip: Harcombe followers can always drop the maple syrup - sacrificing taste for compliance as desired

Seared Filet of beef with a vibrant spicy tomato salsa

Ingredients

4, 8oz Filet steaks
Salt and Pepper to season
Olive oil for cooking

For the salsa

4 ripe beef tomatoes
1 red onion
2 red peppers
1 bunch fresh coriander
1 smoked chipotle chilli
2 cloves garlic
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp red wine vinegar
Sea salt and fresh ground pepper to season

Method

1. Pre heat the oven to 200°c/ 400F
2. to make the salsa finely dice all vegetables and place into a mixing bowl
3. Soak the chipotle chilli in water for 5 minutes, remove the seeds and finely chop, add to the vegetables.
4. Add the garlic and chopped coriander and season well.
5. Add the olive oil and red wine vinegar and mix all ingredients well.
6. Heat a non stick frying pan with a little olive oil.
7. Season the steaks well just before cooking
8. Sear the steaks for a minute or so on each side so that they are evenly browned and then place on a hot baking tray and continue to cook in the oven for about 8 minutes for medium rare or slightly less or longer depending on how you like your steak.
9. To test for doneness, press the steak gently with the tip of your finger. Rare should be soft and supple, well done firm, and medium in between.
10. Serve the steaks with the spicy tomato salsa and a dressed rocket salad.



Chef's tips

If you want to add a bit more flavour to this dish, rub each steak with wholegrain mustard before cooking.

Serves 4

Parma ham and sage wrapped chicken breast with grilled Mediterranean vegetables



Ingredients

4 large chicken breasts
4 Parma ham slices
16 sage leaves
2 red peppers
2 yellow peppers
2 courgettes/zucchini
1 aubergine/eggplant
4 Bunches cherry tomatoes on the vine
2 red onions
Bunch of basil
2 tbsp Balsamic vinegar
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 sprig fresh thyme
Sea salt and fresh ground black pepper to season

Method

1. Pre heat the oven to 180°C/350F
2. Prepare the vegetables and cut into similar sized pieces approximately 2cm by 2cm. Leave the cherry tomatoes whole.
3. Place all of the vegetables, apart from the cherry tomatoes, into a deep roasting tin and add the crushed

garlic, chopped thyme, balsamic vinegar and seasoning, drizzle with a little olive oil.

4. Place into the oven to roast for approximately 25 minutes
5. Meanwhile prepare the chicken breasts. Season well, then place 4 sage leaves onto each chicken breast and wrap with the Parma ham.
6. Pan fry the chicken breasts for approximately 6 minutes until the Parma ham is golden brown and crispy.
7. After the vegetables have had 15 minutes in the oven, take them out and give them a good stir, place the cherry tomatoes and seared chicken breasts onto the tray and return to the oven to cook for an additional 10 minutes
8. Once everything is cooked, remove from the oven and stir a bunch of chopped basil into the vegetables.
9. To serve, divide the vegetables between four plates and top with the cherry tomatoes on the vine and the chicken breast sliced in two. Garnish with chopped parsley.

Chef tip

You could also substitute the chicken with monkfish or cod for this dish if you prefer.

Serves 4



Roasted figs with blue cheese and crispy pancetta

Ingredients

12 fresh figs
12 pancetta slices
150g Roquefort cheese
200g mixed salad leaves

For the dressing
50g fresh raspberries
50ml olive oil
25ml red wine vinegar
1 tsp wholegrain mustard
Sea salt and fresh ground pepper

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350F.
2. To make the dressing, combine all ingredients in a food processor and pass through a sieve to remove the raspberry seeds. Set to one side.
3. Cut each fig into quarters without cutting all of the way to the base, to keep it whole.
4. Divide the Roquefort between the 12 figs, by placing the cheese in between the fig quarters.
5. Take one slice of pancetta and wrap around the side of each fig.
6. Place onto a baking tray lined with greaseproof paper and bake for approximately 10 minutes until the pancetta has crisped up and the Roquefort has fully melted.
7. Remove from the oven and allow to rest for a few minutes
8. To serve place three cooked figs onto a bed of mixed salad leaves and drizzle with the dressing which has been slightly warmed in a saucepan.

Chef's tips

To make a honey mustard dressing use exactly the same method and swop out the raspberries for 2 tbsp of honey
For a vegetarian alternative to this recipe simply leave out the pancetta for an equally delicious starter.



Jimmy Moore

5 Health Markers That Matter More Than Total Cholesterol And LDL-C

If you go to virtually any doctor's office these days, and have your cholesterol panel run, then undoubtedly most physicians would immediately zero in their focus on two specific numbers to determine your state of heart health risk and treatment—total cholesterol and LDL-C.

I remember after losing 180 pounds on the Atkins diet in 2004, I went for a checkup with my family doctor to see how my cholesterol numbers were. When the results came back, I was thrilled to see my HDL cholesterol was 72 mg/dl (1.86 mmol/l) and my triglycerides were 43 mg/dl (1.11 mmol/l). We'll get back to those markers in a moment. We'll also drop all those mgs and mmols and call them US numbers and UK numbers!

The enthusiasm I had about my cholesterol test results was quickly tempered by the look of sombreness and distress on the face of my traditionally trained medical doctor. He took a quick look at my total cholesterol and LDL-C—285 US (7.37 UK) and 185 (4.78), respectively—and urged me to go on a cholesterol-lowering statin medication, like Lipitor or Crestor, as soon as possible. When I weighed over 400 pounds he had already put me on both of these drugs, and I had experienced severe joint and muscle pain that forced me to quit taking them. Naturally, I was not very thrilled with the prospect of going back on those again simply because a number or two on a piece of paper told my doctor I was supposedly unhealthy. I questioned him further about some of the other numbers that were on that piece of paper.

"What about my HDL being so high? Isn't that a good sign of spectacular heart health?" I asked him.

My doctor replied, "Yes, that's an amazing HDL level — take a statin!"

"But what about my triglycerides being so low? Have you ever seen a patient with numbers like that before?" I inquired.

He responded, "That's the lowest triglycerides I've ever seen — take a statin."

At this point I realized there wasn't much I was going to be able to say to him to convince my doctor that the other numbers on my cholesterol test mattered beyond his narrow focus on total cholesterol and LDL-C. This made me wonder why they even run all those other numbers if all physicians are going to do is base their treatment decision exclusively

on these two numbers. This was the genesis for what would become my 2013 book release *Cholesterol Clarity: What The HDL Is Wrong With My Numbers?* with Dr. Eric Westman, MD. I knew there had to be more to this story than what we've been told. And there is — a LOT more!

So if it's not total cholesterol and LDL-C that matter the most on your cholesterol panel, then what does matter? Here are the 5 key health markers everyone who is concerned about their heart health should pay attention to — these matter more than total cholesterol and LDL-C:

1. Triglycerides

This is one of two numbers that I describe in my book as the "forgotten and ignored" part of your cholesterol panel. This is critically important to not just your cardiovascular health, but your overall health as well. Although my own doctor quickly dismissed my low triglycerides as a positive sign of my state of health, virtually every single one of the 29 experts I interviewed and featured in *Cholesterol Clarity* agreed that lower triglycerides are a much more relevant marker than total cholesterol and LDL-C. The goal to shoot for with your triglycerides is under 100 US (2.58 UK) (mainstream medicine says it should be 150 (3.87) or below, but you can show signs of metabolic health issues at this level), and optimally under 70 (1.81). The best way to do that is to reduce the amount of carbohydrates you are consuming to suit your own personal tolerance level. I have to personally stay around 30g total carbohydrates daily in my diet or I'll see my triglycerides go back up again. You'll need to tinker and tweak your intake to see what level is best for you. Your triglyceride number will precipitously rise above 100 (2.58) if you're consuming too many carbs, so use this marker to your advantage.

2. HDL-C: High-Density Lipoprotein

The second leg in that "forgotten and ignored" part of your standard cholesterol panel is your HDL-C. Sometimes referred to as the "good" cholesterol, it's definitely a healthy thing to have this number above 50 (1.29) at the very least, and optimally above 70 (1.81). There are many ways to get your HDL cholesterol higher, but the best way is to eat more fat in your diet, especially saturated fat. While things like butter, coconut oil, full-fat meats and cheeses, and other delicious fat-rich foods have been vilified as being "artery-clogging" in our culture for decades, the reality is these are the very foods that can help you become heart-healthy by raising your HDL-C. When you reduce your triglycerides by cutting the carbohydrates in your diet, while consuming more

fat to increase your HDL, it's a fantastic one-two punch that gives you a distinct advantage in your pursuit of optimal health. Higher HDL and lower triglycerides are much more indicative of robust heart health than whatever your total and LDL cholesterol numbers are.

3. LDL-P: LDL Particle number

You might be wondering what in the world this is since you won't find it on a standard cholesterol panel. That's true, you won't. But it is important to know your LDL-P number. This can be obtained by asking your doctor to run what's called an NMR Lipoprofile test. Many people erroneously believe LDL is just one number because all they've ever seen on their cholesterol test results is LDL-C. But the reality is there are many subfractions of LDL particles that can be measured directly through the use of some pretty sophisticated technology, like the nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) testing. Getting this run by your doctor (who may push back at you when you request it claiming it is unnecessary) will begin to give you a much clearer picture about what is actually going on inside your body. The more LDL particles you have floating around in your blood, the greater the risk of those particles penetrating the arterial wall. There's still some debate amongst the cholesterol experts about whether it is the total number of particles or the size of the particles that matters most. Since the science isn't settled on this, we present both sides of that argument in Cholesterol Clarity and let the reader decide for themselves which side they choose to believe.

4. Small LDL-P: Small LDL Particle number

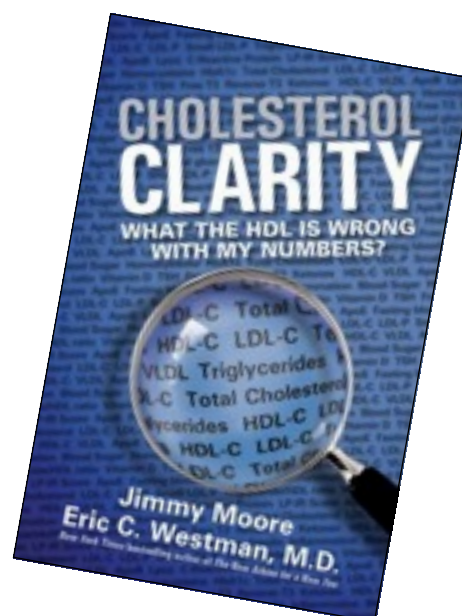
As I just shared, when you get an NMR Lipoprofile test run by your doctor, it will let you see exactly how many LDL particles there are in your blood (this comprises your LDL-P number). But it also will show you the size difference between those LDL particle subfractions. This is an important marker that you really need to know about, especially if you have a high LDL-C number that your doctor wants to lower by use of statins. When you have mostly the small, dense, and dangerous LDL particles in your blood, that's what is known as Pattern B. Conversely, when the majority of your LDL particles are the large, fluffy, and buoyant kind, that's referred to as Pattern A. The Small LDL-P begins to become much more problematic when this number comprises more than 20 percent of your total LDL particles. For example, if your LDL-P is 1000, then your Small LDL-P needs to be 200 or less. Not to sound like a broken record, but if you consume less carbohydrate to your own personal tolerance level, and eat more healthy saturated and monounsaturated fats in your diet, then your Small LDL-P will go down. Incidentally, that statin drug your doctor is trying to push on you will indeed lower your LDL cholesterol, but it will do so by eliminating the large, fluffy kind first, leaving you with a higher percentage of small LDL particles that put you at a greater risk for having a heart attack. It's something to consider the next time your physician pulls out his prescription pad because of your "high cholesterol."

5. hsCRP: high sensitivity C-Reactive Protein

Technically, this blood test is not a part of your "cholesterol

panel." But it is perhaps the most indicative test you could have run to see if actual heart disease is beginning to manifest itself in your body. The high sensitivity C-Reactive Protein (hsCRP) is the marker that shows you the level of systemic chronic inflammation in your body. Without inflammation, there is no risk for heart disease. Period, end of story. So wouldn't you want to test to see what your level of inflammation actually is? Absolutely. That's why everyone needs to know what their hsCRP is, sometimes referred to simply as CRP. I've seen ranges of CRP between 0-10 being touted as healthy, but the ideal number should be below 1.0. Mine is currently at 0.55 which means I have minimal inflammation in my body and a very low risk for heart disease despite having a total cholesterol level of 306 (7.91). Eliminating stress, cutting carbohydrates, and ditching those so-called "healthy" vegetable oils are all pro-active ways to greatly reduce your inflammation and make yourself healthier than you ever thought possible.

As you can see, there are many other health markers that are more important in determining your current state of cardiovascular and overall health than total cholesterol and LDL-C. We need to shift the focus away from such a blinded view on cholesterol, as it relates to health, to more of an overall, inclusive examination of what is really happening. We attempted to lay the foundation for this in Cholesterol Clarity and to arm patients with solid scientific advice that is written in easy-to-understand language so they can make an informed decision about their health. Individual responsibility is the future and it's time to take back control of your own health by becoming educated about what really matters the most.



Jimmy Moore, author of "**Cholesterol Clarity: What The HDL Is Wrong With My Numbers?**" (Victory Belt Publishing - 2013).

Follow Jimmy at www.livinlavidalowcarb.com

Running – The Road to Greater Health or Shortcut to the Grave?



Olly Selway

It never ceases to amaze me how the world can hold such seemingly contradictory opinions about such simple questions. A basic one, like 'is running good for you?' is enough to split experts and lay people alike into opposing camps, ready to stand their ground and fight to the death in the defence of their position.

On the one hand we are told by our doctors that exercise (usually 'any exercise') is beneficial to our health. Every month more evidence that a sedentary lifestyle is the biggest danger that most of us face in the modern world continues to pile up in scientific journals. (As if any more were needed!)

On the other hand, a veritable truck-load of experts are now warning us of the dangers of taking more than a passing interest in reaching for the Nikes and pounding the streets. The naysayers warn of the dangers of injury (the rates of which appear to be growing every year) and, rather more seriously, of the risk of serious damage to the heart and hormonal system from over stressing the body in this way.

Indeed since the great populariser of jogging, Jim Fixx (the author of seminal running book, 'The Complete Book of Running') died aged 52, running has had something of a mixed press. Critics point out that Fixx advocated 'mind over matter' and was committed to his constitutional 10 mile-a-day run, whether he felt like it or not.

More recently studies are appearing detailing the damage sustained by the heart during prolonged exercise such as that required to complete the ever-popular challenge of running a marathon. [1]

So how do we reconcile these two seemingly incompatible truths? Instead of drawing up a false dichotomy and then struggling to

choose between them, let's remember the benefits of nuanced thinking and use of shades of colour subtler than black or white.

Like so many things, perhaps it's not what you do, but the way that you do it that matters. If we were to ask, 'is climbing dangerous' the answer would be more obvious: 'It all depends'. With sturdy ropes and good instruction, 'No'; with poor equipment and poor instruction – 'good luck to yer....'

So what could it be that might make running dangerous? (At this point I should be clear I am not referring to the jogger whom I almost hit accidentally with my car yesterday following his choice to go jogging on a busy B road in rush hour, on the foggiest day of the year, in a gray tracksuit. Well done you, sir!)

Could it possibly be as simple as the idea that *some* running is good for you *but too much* is bad for you?

Now normally I get very cross when somebody suggests that too much of something is bad for you. "Of course it is!" I scream. "That precisely what *too much* means – that quantity which is bad for you. That's an example of a tautology, you blithering idiot". (Some days I'm very quick to judge...)

But there's still a point worth making here, and it's this. It's possible that running *is* healthful in essence, but that many or most people are doing it incorrectly. Perhaps they push themselves harder than they should, they run further than they should and they do it more often than they should.

Jim Fixx ran 10 miles everyday, at the same speed, come rain or shine. He did this regardless of how he was feeling, regardless of what his body was telling him, regardless of what the smarter part of his mind (the part he probably called 'lazy') was telling him. He didn't vary his programme, he didn't have time off for a full recovery, and he didn't vary his programme through the year as many elite athletes in every sport now do.

If, as I am always keen to do, we look at how our ancient ancestors behaved, we find clues to the sort of physical challenges that our bodies evolved to cope with. As hunter-gatherers we didn't have a regular

marathon running schedule; however we were still active for between 4-10 hours a day. During that time we were hunting and foraging for food, building shelter, playing and exploring. In some tribes there may have been considerable emphasis on walking and trotting when tracking prey – and occasionally the odd sprint.

However there was a notable lack of a certain sort of exertion that is all too common today and is found *in extremis* in the pursuit of excellence in running. There was almost a complete absence of the sort of extended periods of exercise characterised by heavy breathing, growing lactate acid thresholds (which gives you that heavy limb feeling you'll recall from annual school cross-country competitions), gritted teeth and a do-or-die mentality.

All of the above correlates exactly with the symptoms of high stress and it's hardly surprising that scientists are finding destructive levels of hormones like cortisol coursing through the bodies of athletes who are pushing their bodies to the limits day-in day-out.

The other point to be made in our comparison with our ancient cousins is that they were generally a lazy lot, only exerting themselves when necessary. (The idea of running until they hit 'the wall' would have seemed ridiculous and dangerous in their environment.) They certainly wouldn't have followed any crazy coaching schedule dreamt up by a coach or Runners Monthly.

If the weather looked a bit scratchy, they were tired from the day before, or they simply had food left over from the previous day, they wouldn't think twice about spending their day around the camp snoozing or doing easy tasks. They took themselves lightly and didn't punish themselves hard in the pursuit of the holy grail of medals, record times or the perfect body.

And perhaps this is where we go wrong. When we set out with the wrong attitude to exercise, with our furrows firmly knitted, our stop watch in hand and our brains overflowing with grim determination, we totally fail to pay attention to the feedback our body is giving us.

If Jim Fixx had listened to his, maybe he would have given himself a few weeks off, felt a lot better and enjoyed the portion of his life that he never got to experience.

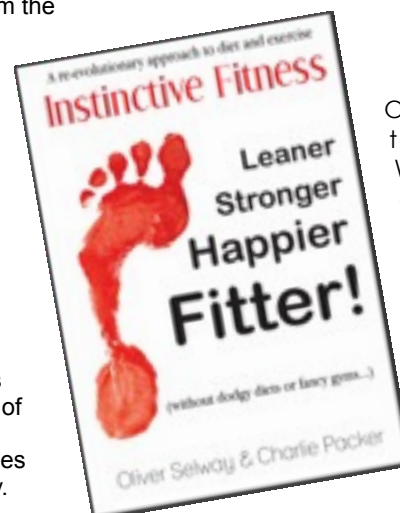
So what's the takeaway on this?

If you want to run, *run*. But don't do it because you think you *ought* to. There are lots of other great choices for exercise.

And if you do run, do it *lightly*. Run lightly with the right technique to avoid all that pounding. Run with a lighter schedule (or better still do without one and let your body's feed back lead the way.) And run with a lighter attitude – maybe slow down, steady your breathing and enjoy the process. See if you can find your zone where your feeling on comfort leads into a level of connection between mind and body that those chronic heavy puffers will never experience.

Be playful with exercise and have fun with it. Be in touch with the amazing machine that is the human body. If you respect it and treat it right it will always love you back.

Ref 1: <http://eurheartj.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/12/05/eurheartj.ehr397.abstract>



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John's Piece

John Nicholson

**If you're reading this
you're probably
already interested in
the relationship between
food, lifestyle and health.** As

such you are exactly the sort of person that newspapers love. You are exactly the sort of person that they so routinely run diet and health articles for. And let's be honest, they can be worrying.

Rarely does a day go by without a new 'report' coming out to tell us that one thing or another is good or bad for us in varying degrees. This has been going on for so long now that the most common response to all of them is 'oh do shut up.'

It doesn't matter which side of the fence you sit on when it comes to what you consider is the best diet and lifestyle, there is always some sort of study to back up your choice. Somewhere out there is probably some sort of report that says smoking crack lowers your cholesterol, or that butter makes you grow an extra head.

The standard of reporting of this endless slurry of information is often very low. Many articles are little more than reiterated publicity material. The funding behind the study is rarely, if ever, mentioned, the vested interests not identified and often the science, such as it is, is misinterpreted.

The public are entirely right to ignore most of them. Throwing your hands up and shouting a plague on all your houses is the only sane response when one week you're told something is artery clogging (clogging is a word reserved entirely for arteries) and the next that it will extend your life.

While Zoë does a fine job in refuting many of the high-profile studies that make headlines for 24 hours before getting eaten up in the news churn, nonetheless, while we like to think we are dismissive of them, they do have an effect.

A generation of headlines about how bad fat is for you has worked. And yet even now, almost no-one knows how or why fat is bad for you, nor do they know if any are worse than others, they just know it's bad. If something is said often enough for long enough it becomes truth even though it is anything but the truth.

It's not understood by the general public that 'research' is paid for by many different industries, especially the food processing industry, as part of an arm of their marketing budget. This is how something as unpalatable as soya went from being a by-product of the motor oil industry to being an upmarket, socially aspirational lifestyle choice. If you push something as healthy for long enough, eventually people will believe, almost by cultural osmosis, that

it is true. An industry will look to promote their products via apparently objective science and if they can't find objective science – and they usually can't – then they'll make sure someone is funded well enough to produce some for them.

It's also not often appreciated the degree to which multinational corporations have different fingers in different pies. A pharmaceutical company maybe also have a processed food arm in the same corporation. What better way to get profitable synergy in your business for one side to provide sales for the other?

The situation we have reached with this blizzard of so-called studies is that everyone who is interested tends to believe the ones which support their pre-existing world-view and disparages the one that doesn't. It has long since ceased to inform or educate us properly and instead is little better than half-remembered gossip over the garden fence.

To negotiate your life through this onslaught you need a basic principle to stick to or you'll go insane. This is mine: I don't eat processed food. If it's been made in an industrial unit by someone wearing a hair net, I don't eat it. Not difficult really but a surprisingly radical thing to do in the modern age where the vast majority of your supermarket is full of nothing but processed food – I include bread in this. I have other basic rules to follow – not eating high-load carbs, eating plenty of grass fed butter, meat and wild fish but it's the not eating of processed food that is the fundamental guiding principle.

As soon as you do this you'll be amazed at how many of those worrying studies become irrelevant to you. All those about food labelling with traffic lights, all those about added sugar, smoothies, fruit juices and highly processed carbs don't apply. The only ones you have to worry about are the ones that go on and on and on about fat killing you. But all those studies are always conducted on people who have high carb diets. So you can ignore them too. And with one bound you are free from all that worry.

In this way you achieve a peaceful state of mind and all you've done is stop eating rubbish food. But there's not much money to be made by anyone out of that, so don't expect it to be pushed by any newspaper article any time soon. By contrast there are great profits to be made from keeping the population paranoid and ill. That is the real sickness.

John Nicholson.

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Loving Movement

Tara Wood



I am feeling emotional at the moment.

Emotional in the sense that I am close to tears or throwing a tantrum throughout the day. And my body hurts all over. Why? Because I am training really hard at the moment, and I am truly fatigued. 2- 3 hours a day of strength training, breath holding and skills work. But here is the bit that only the initiated understand. I love it. I love feeling tired to my bones. I love the ache all over. I love feeling my body respond and I even love the pain during the actual training itself.

It has made me realise that I am truly, madly, deeply in love with movement. I love it even with the cruel gruel.

Maybe some of you know what I mean? If you do understand this then you don't need motivation or reason to train, your body craves it. But if you are reading this and thinking: 'Are you out of your mind - It hurts and it's boring' - carry on and read as here are the steps to become movement possessed:



1. Make movement relevant.

It is well known that movement is the best possible way to live longer, be disease free, and feel and look your best. However, moving because you are afraid of disease or fat, is a motivation that doesn't work. So my first suggestion is to find a reason to move that is really exciting for you. Tap into something that is a natural or immediate urge.

The evolve need: Becoming more skillful and masterful is a great passion in me and the opportunities to develop through movement are deep and wide. From getting faster

at running or learning to do a handstand, to the more mental and philosophical learnings of martial arts and free diving.

The nature need: Seeing the horizon, feeling the wind in my hair, being underwater, seeing green; all give me restoration and calm. Moving outside gives me a particularly intimate encounter with nature.

The recombobulate need: Movement is a powerful mood changer. If I am stressed or angry, intense movement helps. If I am tired or confused or needing inspiration, gentle movement helps.

The self-expression need: I love to dance. Not because it is good for my health, but because it expresses a part of me that otherwise doesn't see the light.

There are so many other needs that movement can meet. The need for play and fun, the need for connection to other people, the need to explore, the need to experience beauty, the need to challenge yourself, the need for recognition (do something amazing), the need for contribution (do something useful and physical).

2. Practice pleasure.

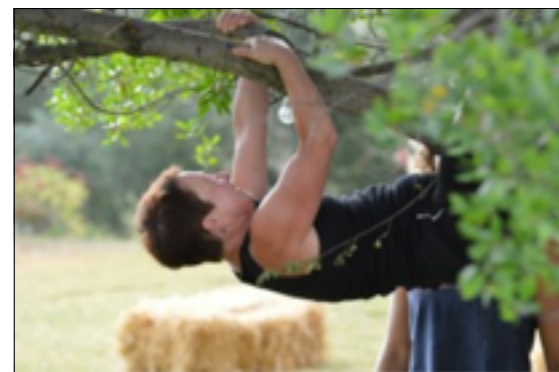
There is a difference between pain and suffering. Pain can be enjoyed. But suffering is miserable and kills any chance of a love affair with movement, let alone the effects being miserable has on your physiology. The more you discipline yourself to do movement you enjoy and do it when you are up for it, the more pain you can take and still love it!



3. Natural movement.

To complete the positive feedback loop you also want the movement

you choose to synchronise with your body. And there is no better guide than nature. What movements and quality of movements are natural to the body?



a) Some variety (different intensities and different body movements will bring strength to different parts of your physiology and psychology and biomechanics).

b) Choose a movement / sport that makes sense evolutionarily. Running, swimming, jumping, lifting, climbing and wielding your body weight in all ways. Something that our body understands. This both animates your body with an immediate natural purpose but also natural movement is the best way to be bullet proof to injury and in many cases, heal injury.

c) Have the intention for your movement to be skilful – graceful and efficient, like any animal would move. This is not only a great feeling but it is the way your body is naturally inclined. Use all your powers of delayed gratification to get through the first phase where movement may be painful. It is worth it! It is the most natural thing your body will do and it will soon love it. You will be amazed and delighted at what your body can do.

Tara Wood grew up in Kenya and, after studying Biological sciences at Oxford, she founded Wildfitness in 2000. www.wildfitness.com



The terroir of British clothes

Kate Jones

"Anyone can get dressed up and glamorous, but it is how people dress in their days off that is the most intriguing."

Alexander Wang (Fashion Designer)

On this month's *Toast Travels* Blog there's a great entry by Michael Smith entitled "*Why men love clothes: the terroir of British clothes*". No, that isn't a typo; I did mean to write "terroir" not "terror". He's talking about the French commitment to the importance of origins and context. While it might be true that the idea of shopping seems to strike terror into the hearts of most British men, I think Smith is right about the importance of clothes that respect the "terroir" of their origins; in other words clothes that are authentic, appropriate for our rainy British weather, appropriate for men who care as much (more?) about comfort than fashion. It got me thinking about the difference between men and women's attitudes to clothes and, from there, to the difference that we often see in attitudes to body image.

It's really not hard for men to dress stylishly rather than fashionably. Who expects any man, straight or gay, over, say 25, to care about fashion? Style, on the other hand, is different. Formal wear for men is a no brainer - a well cut suit, once you've worked out the shape that flatters your body, is unbelievably forgiving to an extra stone or so. A pair of jeans - again well-cut and that suits your shape - teamed with a crisp white shirt or soft blue cotton flatters just about anyone. Team it with a jacket and the whole ensemble looks put together and appropriate for most weekend activities in town. In the country? Change your loafers for chunky boots; add a wool sweater (cashmere even better!); tweed or waxed jacket and you're good to go. Accessories are similarly straightforward: a great watch - invest in it as it will last forever; cuff links for formal wear and for those who love colour and texture, go to town on beautiful ties and scarves.

Women's clothing? Not so much. For a start there is so much choice. Men's jackets might change lapel size or shoulder shapes but who, outside the fashion industry, really notices if it's "on trend" or not? Those tweed jackets, cashmere jumpers and leather boots just look better with age, maybe that's why we think men themselves age better than women; their clothes are just so much more forgiving to the ageing process. Perhaps it's time women took a leaf out of the male sartorial book.

I don't mean by that the old style cliché about classics like the trench coat, the white shirt blah blah blah. A classic Burberry trench coat looks fabulous on a twenty five year old but it can make women over forty disappear. So what's the answer? Do we have to be slaves to fashion? No, I don't think so. I think we should borrow the concept of "terroir" in the sense of being true to the context of your life. I, and many women I know, own clothes that belong in

someone else's life. I'm not a female executive in an ad agency so why the LK Bennett dresses? Women, be honest, if you try something on and it looks amazing, the question of when you will wear it is easily silenced - "I look like Kristin Scott Thomas (insert style icon of choice) damn it!"

Or, you don't buy new clothes because you don't look like Kristen Scott Thomas, damn it! I know a lot of women who are unhappy with their bodies and so keep on wearing drab shapeless clothes because they think that's what they deserve. While this might be true for very overweight men too, I'm talking about women carrying an extra ten pounds who have this attitude. The thing is that women are still judged by more exacting standards than men: you mustn't be mutton dressed as lamb but you can't look mumsy etc. etc. But trying to keep up with fashion trends designed by gay men for anorexic twenty somethings is really on a hiding to nothing. So, back to "terroir". When we buy clothes, we should think about the context of our lives. What do we do? How do we actually spend our days? What about the weekend? What's worth investing in? What fabrics give us pleasure to touch? What colours make our hearts sing and flatter our skin tone? What will look good on a typical rainy day?

I have no idea because I'm not you. It's your particular terroir you have to think about. So, you're ten pounds overweight? Don't wait until you're not, because that day may never come. Take the time to try on clothes that flatter you now, not the clothes that flattered when you were ten years younger and/or ten pounds lighter. If you're bigger than you would like then a shift dress with a fabulous scarf or a great necklace has the same effect on women as a suit does on men. Find the colours that suit you. Buy a fantastic leather handbag in a classic shape that will get better with age.

One of the most stylish women I know is, I think, about a size 18. I don't know because, interestingly, I've never heard her talk about what size she is. It helps that she's tall but I think what really makes a difference is that (I'm told) she's always been big, so she dresses for who she is right now because, in her fifties, her shape hasn't changed much with age. She's a headmistress of a public school but she doesn't wear formal tailored suits because they wouldn't suit her. Instead, she wears beautifully cut dresses in wonderful flattering fabrics; gorgeous shoes and amazing, eye-catching jewellery, always on the large scale to balance her clothes and shape perfectly. She is impeccably groomed and, maybe most important of all, she exudes joie de vivre and is, as the French would also say, bien dans sa peau (happy in her own skin - you have to admit the French are on to something...) In fact, she dresses perfectly for her "terroir". You could say that, the dresses notwithstanding, she dresses like a man.

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