

"A woman can't be too rich or too thin."

- WALLIS WARFIELD SIMPSON, DUCHESS OF WINDSOR

2RICH 2THIN

Episode One



by Abby Lange

<http://www.2richt2thin.com>

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Introduction – Welcome to 2Rich2Thin!

I've spent years saying, "When I write my diet book...", and my hubby always responds, "When ARE you going to write your diet book?" The more seriously I thought about it, the more I realized that I didn't really have a book idea, so much as a collection of essays, tips, recipes, and a *lot* of opinions. Since my husband was already running a website in his own area of specialty, it was a short leap to the idea of writing one of my own.

As a premed major-turned-CPA, I've got a logical mind and 83 non-transferable units of science that I'm not using for anything except trying to figure out the dizzying world of diet advice. (Financial advice comes with the territory.) And since I come at the problem of fat the same way I come at the problem of debt, the quote "You can't be too rich or too thin" was a natural choice for a brand. You *can* be too rich—when you've got so much money that your kids can't play at their friend's house because you're afraid they'll be kidnapped, you're too rich. And you *can* be too thin—I lost a friend in High School from anorexia. But the 2Rich2Thin philosophy is to show up for your fabulous life and live it with a little style, a little serious thought, and a lot of laughter. There will always be something to laugh about, something to think about, something delicious to try, and an angle on the latest diet buzz.

If you like something, let me know (if you don't, please let me wallow in blissful ignorance). If there's a topic you'd like to see me tackle, or if you have an insight to share, please chime in. Nobody, and I mean **nobody** has all the answers. What works for me might not work for you, but what works for you might work for somebody else. More minds, more bodies, more solutions.

So get yourself a sip of champagne (or sparkling mineral water) in a beautiful glass, sit back, and read the first few essays I wrote for the website. And welcome to 2Rich2Thin!

Do I Really Want to Lose Weight?



I don't know, do you?

I am a healthy size 14, which apparently makes me the average American woman. I would like to be a healthy size 12. I was a size 10 before I had my son, but between the spreading of my ribs that he managed with his little baby knees plus developing actual breasts (Woo-hoo, real boobs! Where were you when I needed a date for prom?), I doubt that's in the cards. But you never know.

I have reached a point in my life where I've learned a lot of personal truths, and one of them is this— skinny just does NOT feel as good as chocolate tastes. I'm a fan of *The Biggest Loser* on TV and I love seeing people change their lives, but what I'd really love is to see the contestants sit down with doctors and trainers after the contest portion is over and develop a goal weight that will fit into their **real** lives while requiring no more than 2 workouts per week and permitting the occasional pizza. By the end of the season, the contestants are so focused on losing weight that they are living at the gym and eating half the calories their healthy bodily functions require. To no one's surprise, they put on a fair bit of weight immediately after the show, and some of them get so depressed about it that they gain it ALL back and then some. The contestants who manage to maintain their ultra-skinny weight are the ones who go professionally into training, motivational speaking, or spokespersonship, where they are in effect being paid to stay skinny.

If your major life goals include wanting to work in media or entertainment, you want to lose weight. Media is brutal. Unless you're Kathy Bates, you can't work in television and eat pie. On the other hand, you'll likely be well compensated in money and prestige. Is that what you want?

Do you want your significant other to be a smokin' hot hardbody? Then you'd better be the same, if for no other reason than that people who look like that spend a lot of time in the gym. If you're not there as well, you'll never see your honey, and other hardbodies will. Is that what you want?

Ask yourself if there is something you want to have or do that you can't, **solely** because of your weight. It's not about whether you love yourself. Self-esteem is incredibly complex, and whatever the weight-loss industry would like you to think, it's almost totally unrelated to your weight. I know skinny people who feel worthless, and fat people who think they are the greatest thing since sliced bread, both equally without objective basis. Changing the number on the scale will not change the voices in your head.

Everything in life is a trade-off. I love good food, good wine, and relaxation, and that means either I'm going to have to be brutal with the rest of my time and calories, or it means I'm going to carry a few extra pounds. So I do. My husband doesn't mind (and as long as his BMI exceeds mine, he'd better not). My blood chemistry is normal. I'm fit enough to walk where I want, run up and down stairs, and go swing dancing. I'm in no shape to run a marathon, but then, I don't **want** to run a marathon.

Unless your butt is too big for the airline seat, your weight is probably not what's keeping you from traveling. Unless you are so large that you are styling fashions by Omar the Tentmaker in an office where tailored suits are the standard dress, your weight is probably not keeping you from professional development. And it's definitely not keeping you from finding love. If you want to walk the runway, lose weight. If your knees hurt when you walk, lose weight. If your glucose numbers are off, lose weight. But know **why** you want to lose weight, and be realistic about how much you want to *lose* versus how you want to *live*.

Survival of the Fattest



From the time some long-ago humanlike ancestor decided it would be cool to walk upright, all the way up to today, the leading cause of death has been starvation. (Horribly, in some parts of the world, it still is.) Wars and pandemics can't begin to match starvation's body count. So what's a Mother Nature to do to protect her children? Easy. Teach them to eat it when they see it, and encourage them to like to eat things that will most efficiently pack on the pounds.

There is a reason we'd rather have a chocolate chip cookie than a carrot stick. We have 20,000 years of evolution behind us, in which people with a taste for high fat, high calorie foods survived the lean and hungry times better than the carrot-stick lovers, and managed to reproduce and bring offspring to maturity, insuring that their genes were passed on. We are hard-wired to eat this way.

As soon as we can get around under our own steam, we start putting things in our mouths, hoping for a good result. And our tastes are evident pretty early. Any mother of a young child will tell you that there were some foods that came back out of the mouth as soon as they were spooned in. For my son, every one was a vegetable (but not all vegetables— high sugar vegetables like sweet potatoes and yes, even that poor carrot were cheerfully accepted). But oh, the day when that first french fry or bite of pizza comes your way. Carrots don't stand a chance.

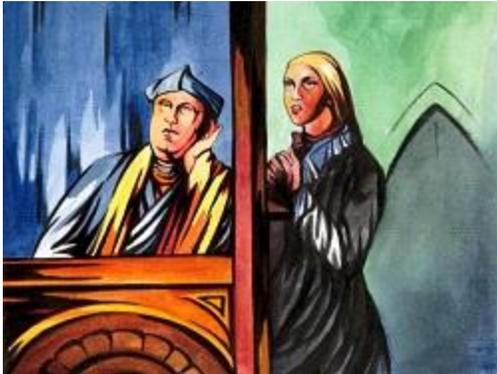
Food undeniably impacts our brain chemistry. Take a hard look at most people's idea of "comfort food" and it will be high fat, high carb, or both. Macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy (heck, *anything* and gravy), bacon

sandwiches... okay, I'm making myself hungry now. But we don't crave these foods just because we remember Mom making them for us, we crave them because our brains tell us that these foods make us happy, no matter how bad our day has been, and no matter the number on that nasty bathroom scale. It's not a character flaw; it's Mom Nature trying to put a winter coat on us that will see us through the frost.

Unfortunately, now that most of us in the developed world don't have to worry about getting through the winter, Mother Nature is out of options. The engine of evolution can't help us reset our tastes this time. Even though we are starting to see the first declines in life expectancy in recorded history, primarily due to obesity issues, people simply aren't dying early enough to effect a change in our ways. People who die from obesity-related health issues rarely die before they have had a chance to reproduce and pass on their fat-loving genes to their children.

The good news is, that same 20,000 years of evolution has given us an impressive higher brain function. It drives people to study what high-fat diets do to our long-term health, even if it won't kill us before we reproduce. Most importantly, it lets us control how much of that yummy almost-irresistible fatty stuff we take in. I said almost. We can resist, we just don't like to. And we don't have to, at least not all the time. Chocolate chip cookies aren't poison. If you have to drown your brussel sprouts in butter or Hollandaise sauce to find them palatable, you might as well have a chocolate chip cookie. Just remember you might want to take that winter coat off come the spring.

Mea Gulpa (or, forgive me for blowing my diet)



A few years back, when a certain psychologist (I'll call him "Dr. Bill") was hawking diet advice via the TV show of his good friend (let's call her "Opah"), I watched just long enough for the top of my head to blow off. I mean, in the first place, where does a 6-foot-4-inch, um, *portly* man, who is not even a medical doctor, get off telling an audience of mostly women how to control their weight? You might as well go to a Catholic priest for advice on feminine hygiene products. But here was Dr. Bill, taking audience questions and phone-ins about diet plans.

So a woman calls in asking for advice because, after a long, hard week of working, caring for her family, and sticking to her diet, she had broken down and had a hot fudge sundae. Does Dr. Bill tell her it's okay, it sounds like she deserved it? Does he ask if she enjoyed it? (Does he ask if it was regular or bittersweet?) No, he tells her to "forgive herself" for her terrible sin of sabotaging her diet, and to resolve to do better next week. Excuse me?

As I talked about in "[Survival of the Fattest](#)," we are hard-wired to want high-fat, high-calorie foods. It requires tremendous strength of will to *choose* a salad over a chili burger, or to actually bake that cookie dough into cookies for the bake sale rather than tucking into the bowl with a large spoon. Even Weight Watchers, that stalwart organization which has been fighting the fat for decades, has gone to a system where you have "free points" that you can save up and, if you want, HAVE that hot fudge sundae. There is ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to forgive.

Calories are like money— you can either save up and spend, or spend and owe. But the save up and spend option is the better one in every respect. If you limit your calories during the week, you CAN splurge on the weekend. You will have

earned it, and knowing you earned it will allow you to enjoy it guilt-free, which can never be said for the “spend and owe” plan. Besides, just like there’s interest on owing money, you’re going to pay interest on calorie debt, because the longer your body has those extra calories, the more able it is to squirrel them away into places where removing them is much more difficult. And the collection agencies? That would be the store clerks selling you the larger-sized jeans. It’s not a morality issue, it’s a perfectly objective business issue, and the more you can think of it that way, the better off you’ll be.

Happily, Dr. Bill got out of the diet business, though not before an FTC investigation and a class-action suit. But I think his big mistake was trying to treat dieting like an emotional problem. Oh sure, lots of people overeat for emotional reasons, but even solving the emotional problems and perhaps fixing the behavior isn’t going to repair the damage that has already been done. Dieting isn’t psychology or theology. It’s science. It’s math. Burn more calories than you take in, you’re going to lose weight. And vice versa. It’s not confessional thinking, but checkbook thinking that’s going to make a real change in your behavior. Good thing, too, because *this* mortgage is a *killer*.

Getting Your Genes into Your Jeans



Any number of people have remarked that one of the smartest things you can do to be healthy is to, “choose your parents wisely.” That’s doubly important when it comes to your weight. I feel very fortunate that I had normal-to-thin parents with no life-threatening inherited diseases (a few quirks here and there, but no cancer or diabetes, so I really mustn’t grumble). I know plenty of people who aren’t so lucky.

I have a friend who is one of four children born to a willowy, sylph-like mother and a stocky, heavily-built father. You’ve seen this couple a zillion times— it’s the classic “head cheerleader marries football team captain” story. Three of the kids, both boys and one of the girls, seem to have received their genetic material exclusively from Mom’s side of the family; the other girl, sadly, got Dad’s. She spent her formative years eating pretty much what her siblings ate, and maintaining roughly the same activity level as they did, yet her siblings were all model-thin and she was shopping at Lane Bryant. At best, that’s got to be terribly depressing; at worst, it can drive you to dangerous starvation diets just to try to achieve your family’s “normal.”

In absolute scientific terms, you get exactly 50% of your genes from each parent. That’s rarely how they are expressed, though. Why? No idea, and I started my college life as a Genetics major. If you can figure it out, they’ll probably give you a Nobel Prize. (I didn’t grow up planning to be an accountant. The day I started at my firm, nine of us started together; seven of us were former science majors and the other two switched from engineering. Nobody with a soul dreams of a future as an accountant, and I get to say that, because I AM one.) The older I get, the more I look like my mother. My brother is the spitting image

of my mother's father. My sister looks like my father's sister. You pull the lever on the genetic slot machine and hope that it comes up sevens and not lemons.

There are plenty of other factors that govern weight besides heredity, chief among them environment and lifestyle. I often see two very overweight parents walking with their normal-weight young children, and I want to take the kids and give them to somebody who does not eat double pepperoni with a 72 oz. Coke on a daily basis, because even though the parents are clearly not allowing their children the same overindulgences the parents enjoy, that behavior is what the kids are learning. Those kids are going to chow down as soon as they get the chance, because that's what they've seen their role models do. And they just might one day say to themselves, "Well, I guess my fat is in my genes— I mean, both my parents are fat." And it won't be true. They inherited a normal-weight destiny that was corrupted by Donut Depot and House of Hamburgers.

Ask your parents for pictures from when they were children and teens. If one or both of them has always been stocky, you may have inherited a predisposition for bulk. This doesn't mean that you can't still be svelte, but it does mean that you're going to have to work harder at it than the rest of us with thin parents. You'll probably need to see a nutritionist, but if it's what you want, you *can* do it. And to all you cheerleaders out there, please marry the quarterback or the running back; they tend to be long and lean. Leave the middle linebackers and offensive tackles for the larger girls. Otherwise, sure as the sunrise, you'll end up with a daughter who will starve herself into neurosis and malnutrition trying to fit into your old cheerleader outfit.

Naked Appreciation



I can remember, many years ago when it was age-appropriate, reading an article in *Seventeen* Magazine. It was memorable, I suppose, because it was the first time I recall feeling a sense of outrage at the less-than-subtle suggestion that I wasn't good enough because I didn't look like the model on the magazine cover. I had been through a doughy phase at around 13-14, but I was back to a normal weight by 16. But still, I was a 16-year-old girl.

The article directed, "Stand in front of a full-length mirror naked. Frankly assess any less-than-perfect parts." Excuse me? Did you just, actually, advise an entire class of the most obsessed-and-critical-of-their-bodies humans (teenage girls) to scrutinize every inch of those bodies, and judge them against a standard of *perfection*? Is this the article that launched a thousand eating disorders?

With a few well-meaning hiccups like the "Dove Campaign for Real Beauty" and Tyra Banks' complaint that even *her* thighs had been airbrushed smaller for an ad, the media has been presenting us with unrealistic "standard" images for decades. It is incredibly ironic that the web address campaignforrealbeauty.com has been abandoned by the Dove folks and purchased by, you guessed it, a weight loss program. Sigh.

I'm not the first to point out that equating skinny with beautiful is a 20th-century concept. The painting above, Rubens' *Venus at the Mirror* (1615), shows a vastly different standard of feminine perfection. Now I admit, Rubens was famous for liking some meat on his women, but art pretty much up to the 20th century depicted nude women as anything but skinny. The damsel in Millais' *Knight Errant* (1870), below, looks a lot like me. A LOT. In fact, only the sure

and certain knowledge that I was not alive in 1870 assures me that I didn't have one too many and pose for it in a weak moment.

Somewhere between about 1910, when women had chucked their corsets and bustles and remembered what their bodies actually looked like, and the deprivations of the First World War and the 1918 Flu pandemic, women just got skinnier. Then the fashion houses started designing for that shape, and the new Hollywood cultural machine made it *the* look. And we, unfortunately, have never looked back.



The thing I find oddest in today's world is the idea of implants. Butts and boobs are made almost entirely of fat, so women who starve themselves down to a size zero find that they no longer look like women. But instead of embracing the bean-pole look like our flapper forebears did, they have surgeons stick bags of fluid inside them to put back the lumps they dieted off. C'mon girls, eat a cookie and save yourself \$15,000 and the risks of general anesthesia. Sheesh.

So here's my anti-*Seventeen* suggestion. After a nice, relaxing hot bath or shower, towel off and look at yourself in a full-length mirror naked. Not bad, huh? A lot of us forget that the rolls we notice and get depressed about when we undress at night are created or at least enhanced by the elastic in our bras and panties and the waistbands in our clothes and pantyhose. (Don't get me started about those hideous sports bras and spandex cycle shorts *The Biggest Loser* has the women wear at weigh-ins.) The rope around the waist of the bound damsel is definitely accentuating her tummy pooch. (That's my story, and I'm sticking to it.) Give your body a chance to erase those "squish" lines and you may find that you don't look nearly as bad naked as you might have thought. Consult your significant other— it might lead to an interesting evening.

If you look in the mirror and your first thought is still “Michelin Man,” it’s time to talk to your doctor. Studies continue to support the idea that carrying weight around your waist is an indicator for serious health problems. I know I am fortunate that owing to a certain Latin heritage, I put most of my excess weight in my rear (where happily, I don’t have to look at it very often). If you wear yours like an inner tube, you need to “woman up” and address it. Your doctor is the place to start; you may end up with a diet and exercise program, but there may be thyroid or other endocrine issues in play. Healthy first, shapely second.

“Perfect” has always been, and always will be, an unattainable standard. Not only does it change with the fashion of the day, but with the advent of PhotoShop, Perfect is now more than ever something completely unreal. Until some Matrix-esque future time when we’re all just lumps in a tube and our body images are avatars programmed inside a computer, we can’t look however we imagine. So it’s time we approach our naked selves not from the “God, my thighs are huge” end of the ratings continuum, but from the “If I were a guy, I’d tap that” end. Men are remarkably uncritical when presented with a slightly damp naked woman, and it’s about time we were, too.

About 2Rich2Thin.com

The author is the only CPA she knows who has course hours in Genetics, Physiology, Bacteriology, Zoology, and more other “ologies” than she’d really like to think about. All that science, plus an upbringing by a dietitian mother, has given her a healthy skepticism about most fad diet plans. And trying to keep spendthrift clients solvent has given her a deep appreciation of how easy it is to enjoy today and promise faithfully to pay for it tomorrow, all the while hoping that tomorrow never comes.

Having lived on both coasts, several spots in between, and internationally, thanks to her husband’s military career, she is now settled in San Antonio, Texas, with her husband, her son, and her cat.