

Your Diet Legacy and Your Daughter

By Debi Silber, MS, RD, WHC The Mojo Coach®

As moms, we often try to instill our beliefs, values, ethics, morals and standards of behavior onto our children. Often, our goal is to ensure that our children learn from the benefit of our knowledge and experience so that they can create enriching, rewarding lives for themselves. So why is it then that one of the most significant messages moms often pass on to their daughters is the legacy of dieting?

Every mom wants the best for her children; there is no question about that. But unfortunately, when a mom lives through the emotional and physical pain that her overweight body may cause, she unknowingly passes the “right to diet” on as though it were a “right of passage” into womanhood. Maybe the mom wants to prevent her daughter from suffering from a low self-esteem. Maybe the mom wants to ensure that her daughter is spared the harsh judgment from others as a result of excess weight. Finally, maybe the mom regrets not having the confidence to pursue a goal or dream and wants to make sure her daughter doesn’t pass up similar opportunities.

While these goals are driven by the desire to protect and fueled with the power of love, often the greatest message that comes across is that when the daughter is ready, she’ll learn to diet just like her mom. Of course it’s not intentional but this is the “diet legacy” a mom will often pass on to her daughter. So, if this isn’t our intention, how can we teach our daughters the benefits of health and wellness without teaching them how to “diet?”

The first thing we need to do is stop dieting ourselves. We need to recognize the example we’re setting and understand that if it’s not one that benefits our daughters or ourselves, it’s worth changing. By getting rid of our own “diet mentality” we’re taking the first step to setting a better example for our children.

We also need to understand that we are our children’s greatest role models. They watch, learn and emulate our behaviors and actions. If we’re berating ourselves for the way we look, we can only expect that our daughters will learn to do the same. If we fear certain foods because of the feeling of powerlessness we feel when we eat them, we’re teaching our daughters to feel that fear as well. Finally, if we’ve spent decades battling an unhealthy relationship with food, we can easily pass along this same relationship on to our children if we’re not careful.

True, lasting weight loss only occurs when changes are made slowly and gradually. The reason is because when changes are small enough, we’ve had a chance to slowly incorporate them into our routine and make them our own. As moms, we’re so overextended already. We’re often so overcommitted and overscheduled that the last thing we want to do is take on something else...especially something unpleasant. We have such a small window of “self care time” that it’s so easy to give up before we even begin. That’s what the “diet mentality” can cause. That “black or white” or “all or nothing” perspective that makes us feel that if we’re not completely overhauling our eating behaviors, it’s not worth trying at all.

It may be time to change this way of thinking in order to finally give up dieting in exchange for lasting lifestyle changes. As moms, we have so many wonderful ideas we want to pass along to our children. Dieting and the pain it causes doesn’t have to be one of them



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