The message of the “clean plate club” emerged during World War I to encourage people to conserve food due to a limited supply. “But the concept is outdated now because many portions, especially those served at restaurants, are so excessive,” says nutritionist Melanie Polk of the American Institute for Cancer Research, a non-profit group that funds research on the relationship between diet and cancer.

A poll of 1,011 adults, released by the group this summer, revealed:

- 69% of people say they finish restaurant entrées all or most of the time.

- Among those who regularly finish their entrées, 60% say the portions are just right; 30% would have been satisfied with less; and 10% would have eaten more.

- Among those who usually leave some of their entrées, 67% say portions are too big.

- 40% say they ordered an appetizer as an entrée over a month of eating out; 33% split an entrée between two people; and 12% ordered half-portions.

After the poll results came in, Polk and colleagues studied the clean-plate tradition. They found that it continued after World War II when President Truman called on Americans to conserve food. That led to the formation of Clean Plate Clubs in many elementary schools, Polk says.

But the latter message has been lost over the years. Several studies have shown that portions in the USA are bigger than ever and that when Americans are given bigger servings, they eat more.

Change the “E” word from Exercise to Enjoyment

For some people, being physically active in the past may not have been enjoyable. In some cases, exercise was initiated at the same time as a diet. If you increase physical activity at the same time you start dieting, it is likely your energy level will be low. When you do not have enough energy, physical activity is not invigorating. It becomes a chore and is not much fun at all. It is increasingly difficult to be physically active when you are underfed, especially if carbohydrate intake is too low.

So remember:

1. Change the “E” word from Exercise to Enjoyment.
2. Start slow and celebrate your successes.
3. Choose activities that are safe and comfortable for your body.
4. Fuel your body.

“Given what we know about the health benefits of physical activity, it should be mandatory to get a doctor’s permission NOT to exercise.”

-Dr. P.O. Astrand

“Once you get with a regular walking program, your body becomes a kind of self-improvement machine…”

-Suz Redfearn, The Washington Post, October 1, 2002

Time for a Little Stretching

Cross your feet.
Gently bend at waist.
Stretch head toward floor.
Hold 5 seconds.
Repeat.
The Truth about Barbie™

The Barbie™ Fantasy

For decades the Barbie™ doll has been idolized as the American standard of beauty. An aspiring computer technician student scanned a Barbie™ silhouette into a computer. Here is what the student discovered.

If Barbie™ was a real person, she would be 6 feet 9 inches tall, and she would have a 41 inch bust and a 20-inch waist!

Proportions were based on head-to-body ratios and other body proportions. It should be no surprise that most people are dissatisfied with their bodies when the standard we compare ourselves to is so unrealistic.

Some related statistics and thoughts:

- The average adult American female is 5 feet 4 inches tall, weighs about 152 pounds and wears a size 14 dress. One third of all adult American women now wear a size 16 or larger. Compare this to the typical female model. The average American model is 5 feet 10 inches tall, weighs about 114 pounds and is a size 6/8.

- The obsession with thinness is so pervasive in the United States several studies have found that young girls are more afraid of becoming fat than they are of nuclear war, cancer, or losing their parents.

- It is time for a new approach. We must begin to teach our children and ourselves that wonderful, caring, and talented human beings come in all sizes. We must focus on total well being — including a positive self-image about our bodies — and not body size and weight.


One of the advantages of the Internet is that communication counts and appearance is irrelevant.

-Women Afraid to Eat: Breaking Free of Today’s Weight-Obsessed World, Frances Berg