

Countless times, we've thought that there must be a cure for our burgeoning hips, signed up to another diet and hoped for the best. But a new life coaching weight loss programme is proving that dieting is not the best philosophy.

Sue Thomason is a woman with a mission. She's been there with the rest of us, signing up for weeks of ritual humiliation at slimming classes, following the plan, eating the low fat version of everything, getting fed up with the whole shebang then sliding straight back into post-work fridge raiding and 'starting again on Monday'

That's why, in her own words, the Food Philosophy was developed. "The Food Philosophy means you can lose weight and be happy at the same time."

A journalist for leading women's magazines, Sue was disillusioned with the constant drip feed of weight loss articles and criticism of women's bodies.

"As a journalist, looking at the thin ideal and seeing anyone with an inch of cellulite having it circled in red and insulting words written about it, and reading about celebrities eating habits has been a part of my daily work life. Seeing celebrities celebrated and congratulated for starving themselves into a near anorexic state and being told "THIS is how you should look," was amplified because I had to read it for more than eight hours a day, most days".

Sue channelled her anger into something positive, and began researching weight loss and health – her research took her through 700 self-help books, thousands of medical trial reports, psychological papers, scientific test results and more. Nagging away as a constant theme was the fact that all the advice on weight control was the same, yet more and more people were being dragged into the overeating trap. Women (and men) simply couldn't control what they were eating.

It became obvious that the myriad of diet information we're constantly subjected to - from well meaning doctor's advice to government health warnings and slimming club rule books is inherently wrong. We're told we must restrict our food intake in order to lose weight. This very mind set is what's causing our bodies to rebel and 'stock up' on the tasty treats we promise ourselves after we lose a few pounds. The more we say 'no you can't have that' to ourselves the more our subconscious mind rebels, our survival mechanism kicks in and forces us to think constantly about whatever we're denying ourselves!

The Food Philosophy was developed to counteract the overwhelming deluge of diet advice that has turned so many people into over eaters.

Imagine you want to lose a few pounds, or even a few stone. You choose your diet – whether it's a commercial plan or just a calorie counting sensible eating plan. You pick a start date, and probably find that even if you were going to start tomorrow, you would spend the rest of the day stocking up on the things you intended to deny yourself.

The diet starts, and you feel strong. You hop on the scales after a virtuous first week and you've lost some weight. This is it, this is the diet that's going to turn you into the girl you always wanted to be. Things are going well, until you have a bad day at work. The diet goes out of the window, and you have a KitKat. You've blown the diet so decide to have the rest of the day off and start again tomorrow.

However – your enthusiasm has gone. You try and get back on the diet but all you can think of is food. It's like your subconscious has taken you over and is making you think of cake.

So you give up, a few false starts later and you've gained back the weight you lost, and usually more. Of course, it's all your own fault, you're weak-willed, lazy and greedy and you'll just have to go on another diet. So the cycle begins again...

Sue realised that this infernal cycle applies to the vast majority of dieters. The minute percentage of people that manage to keep their weight off permanently are people like Victoria Beckham, who are so terrified of weight gain that the pain of severe food restriction is actually less than the pain of being photographed with a smidge of cellulite and laughed about by Heat magazine.

Sue explains, "The advice we're given is the culprit. All of the 'healthy eating and diet advice' from every source is turning us into compulsive overeaters, destroying our self esteem, making us fat and creating the 'obesity epidemic' that's killing so many million people every year. It's destroying the quality of our lives, making us hate our bodies and our 'weakness' and 'greed'. Keeping us 'in our place' by keeping our minds filled with shame, humiliation and food issues, so we don't have time for anything else."

Word is spreading fast about the Food Philosophy, and there are many happier, healthier women who can attest to how different life is when they ditch the diet – many are losing weight into the bargain. Some of the comments from people who have followed the course;

"I can't even begin to put into words how much FP has changed my life. After 35 years of dieting, I am now happier, more content and more fun."

"I can actually say that I don't think I would be bothered if I never lost another pound. I am enjoying finding out who I am, what I like to wear, and just being me. Of course I have also gone down a dress size, even though I have had the most wonderful foods of late, no denial for me, and I only ever eat what I want, when I want and in the quantities that I want."

"What you are teaching us is fantastic and you do it in a brilliant way"

"It feels so great to genuinely enjoy food again. It's like my taste buds have been overruled for so long, and they are asserting themselves again, and I am able to choose what I like the taste of, rather than any old thing that I used to eat when in binge mode."

"I am consistently overwhelmed by all this – Sue is an absolute genius. When I read the stuff its so spot on its like my heart stops while I'm reading it!"

CASE STUDY – JAYNE

Jayne, 25, has been following the Food Philosophy for five weeks, but her life has already changed for the better.

“I am nearly 25 and have been with my husband since I was 19. During those six years, I have always been dieting. If I wasn't on a diet, I was 'fallen off the wagon', rather than choosing not to diet.

We argued a lot about nothing. We don't have children, money worries, stressful jobs and we both get on very well with our in-laws - we really don't have anything to argue about, so we argued about absolutely nothing. We both thought it was because “we just 'didn't get on” or “didn't enjoy time with each other” anymore.

Since joining this course everything has changed, and I have an awful feeling in the pit of my stomach that all the arguing was down to me and dieting.

I would always feel anxious at mealtimes. He does all the cooking and I would insist on healthy meals, so he wouldn't make a separate meal for himself. We ate food neither of us enjoyed because it was healthier, and even then I resented him for munching potatoes. He'd go to all this trouble to cook whatever my latest diet advocated - and then I'd binge eat chocolate after dinner when he wasn't watching. I'd feel disgusted with myself for having done it, and snap at him.

He'd offer to take me out for dinner and I'd accuse him of insensitivity - didn't he know I was on a diet? Didn't he want me to look nice? Didn't he know a three-course meal at our local Italian was three days worth of calories? All he was trying to do was be nice. He'd suggest seeing a film I'd been talking about, and I'd snap “ I don't have the luxury of being able to go to the cinema and stuff down popcorn without consequences” So we wouldn't go.

I was sabotaging more than myself, my health and my self esteem with dieting, I was also sabotaging my relationship with the thing I treasure most in the world - my husband.

The difference now I am following the Food Philosophy is huge. My weight hasn't changed much, and yet there's a big change in ME. I don't feel self-loathing all the time and take it out on him. He's happy because I am happy. He loves the difference - I don't avoid going out for meals or to the cinema because I am on a diet, or ask him to eat nice food out of sight.

I never realised what far-reaching implications in all areas of my life my obsession with dieting has had. I feel sorry for what it did to my husband, and how difficult I must have been to live with. But he's got the 'old me' back now. If someone said, 'Jayne, if you go on a diet, you can lose 10lbs guaranteed, but if you stay on the Food Philosophy you will stay the weight you are now, guaranteed', I would stay with Food Philosophy..

My day no longer needs to go from good to bad because I am half a pound heavier up on the scales. And more importantly, neither does My husbands.”

For more information about the Food Philosophy:

www.alivecoaching.co.uk