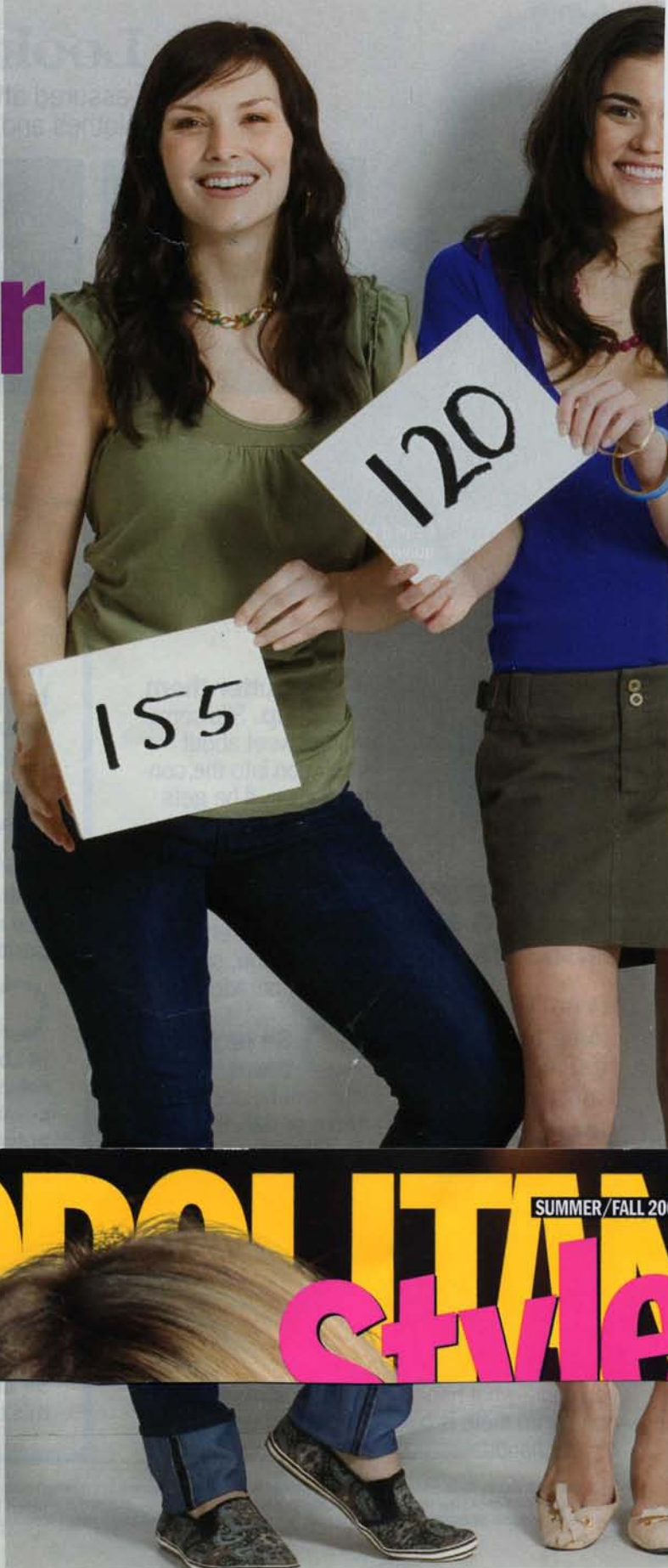


Do You Know Your Happy Weight?

Go ahead and chuck your scale, because your crazy days of dieting are officially O.V.E.R. Cosmo's going to help you find—and love—the size body you were born to have.

By Morgan Lord

You know it's insane, but you still do it—lament not having a body like Gisele's. And though you know her proportions



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RD, author of *Thin for Life*.

To get on board with this concept, you first need to figure out what your happy weight is, and then learn how to truly love it. Start right here.



PART 1

Find Your Happy Weight

Forget about using some magic formula. To determine what size you're supposed to be, listen to your body.

Pretty comes in different-size packages.

Weigh Your History

Between the bikini-season juice diets and the holiday-time binges, your weight probably goes up and down. But somewhere in the middle is a set point, a small range that your body usually settles into when you're just living your life. "Your genes, hormones, and brain actually dictate what your natural size should be by signaling to your body when it's hungry and when it's full,"

says David L. Katz, MD, director of the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center. "It's the reason why after a short period of overeating or undereating, you may still find that your body bounces back to a certain size." That's your happy weight.

Weigh Your Energy Level

Thinner doesn't automatically equal healthier. Dieting can drain you both mentally and physically. "Eating too few calories can sap your energy, make you moody, and weaken your immune system," says Lisa R. Young, PhD, RD, author of *The Portion Teller Plan*. That's why you can turn into a megabitch when you start cutting back on carbs or fat. It's not your fault—you're freakin' hungry and tired, and your body is telling you so!

Your body will also let you know when it's at its best, so pay attention. "At your healthiest, you have more energy and better concentration. You feel happier and more productive, and you'll notice fewer aches and pains," says Dr. Katz. "Plus, you'll sleep better and have a higher sex drive."

Weigh Your Health

Before you embrace your self-determined happy weight, check in with your doctor just to make sure it's in a safe range. "From a medical perspective, what matters is how your weight is affecting your overall health," Dr. Katz says. "Some people who carry so-called extra weight still work out and eat right, so their glucose levels, cholesterol, and blood pressure will be healthy. Others may have a positive body image but have high cholesterol, breathing problems, or exhibit signs of malnutrition from being too heavy or too thin." →

Stay focused on feeling good.



PART 2

Embrace Your Happy Weight

To get off the diet-focused roller coaster for good, you have to truly be cool with your bod. These tricks will help you get there.

Ditch the Scale

For most people, fluctuating numbers just cause stress. "Water retention from consuming too much salt and PMS can alter your weight by a few pounds from one day to the next," warns Young. "Plus, muscle weighs more than fat, so if you've been working out, you may be shrinking while the scale stays the same or even creeps up a little."

So experts suggest skipping the weigh-in and using your favorite jeans as your guide. If they're fitting more snugly, pick healthful foods more consciously and amp up your workout. If they're about the same, you have nothing to stress about.

Get Physical

Working out isn't just a means to an end—you'll actually feel better about yourself in the now, not just once you drop a size. According to the Mayo Clinic, physical exercise increases self-confidence, lowers symptoms of mild depression and anxiety, and reduces stress. "Regular exercise can make you feel better about your body," says Fletcher. "You won't be so consumed with your weight if your body is fit and active."

Stop Dieting for Good

"When you're drastically cutting back on calories, your metabolic rate lowers, so your body ends up burning fewer calories each day," says Young. When you start eating normally again, it's with a slower metabolism. In addition to that frustrating little fact, diets can mess with your head. "Your self-esteem takes a hit as you deal with the sense of failure that comes with gaining weight," adds Young.

The solution: Stop dieting for good, and resolve to live healthfully. "When you're sitting down to dine, be conscious about including foods like vegetables, fruit, and lean protein," says Dr. Katz. "It's about taking care of yourself, and that includes partaking in the occasional indulgence." Once operating this way becomes second nature, you'll find it frees you up to spend time doing things that are way more pleasurable than criticizing the size of your behind. ■

Dress for Your Shape

Cop a self-confident vibe by dressing for your body type—trust us, it'll change your life. Some expert tips:

APPLE SHAPE De-emphasize a wider middle in an empire top with a V-neck that will pull the eye upward to the thinnest part of your torso. Got great legs? Show them off in a short, flared skirt or extralong pants with a high heel.

PEAR SHAPE Flatter a larger lower bod by pairing dark bottoms with a light top. Pants that are cut full in the leg will help conceal bulk. To draw attention to a slim upper half, wear a top with structured shoulders or a tailored jacket.

RULER SHAPE To give your straight physique some curves, cinch a dark belt around your waist or sport a ruched top to add a little sumthin-sumthin to your bust. You can also layer a shrunken jacket over a longer top to create dimension.

HOURLASS SHAPE Emphasize a slim waist in a fitted top. An A-line wrap dress will bring attention to your narrow middle but just skim your hips and bust without accentuating them.

—LAUREN BOHN

SOURCE: FASHION DESIGNER BRADLEY BAYOU, AUTHOR OF THE SCIENCE OF SEXY; EMILY NEILL, AUTHOR OF CLOSET SMARTS

