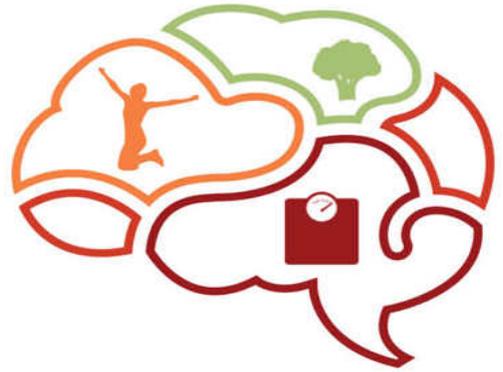


THE *SCIENCE* OF LIVING  
HAPPY, THIN,  
AND FREE



BRIGHT  
LINE  
Eating

SUSAN PEIRCE  
THOMPSON, PH.D.

Foreword by John Robbins

BRIGHT  
LINE  
Eating

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# BRIGHT LINE Eating

The Science of Living  
Happy, Thin,  
and Free

Susan Peirce  
Thompson, Ph.D.



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*For David*

*And for you*

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## FOREWORD

### BY JOHN ROBBINS

I've been advocating for healthy food choices for more than three decades. As a best-selling author and the President of the Food Revolution Network, I've had the great privilege of helping millions of people to improve their diets and, in many cases, turn their health and their lives around.

Over these years, I've seen many people become inspired to eat in a new way. Some of them succeeded and experienced health outcomes beyond their wildest dreams. But many others struggled to sustain food choices that they knew were in their own best interests. Despite having plenty of knowledge and willpower, they found themselves succumbing to addictive pulls. Despite their best intentions, they watched their health, and even their self-esteem, degrade in the process.

A question began to burn inside me. Why is it that, when it comes to food, so many people are unable to consistently act in their own best interests? Why is it that so many accomplished, caring, and intelligent people are eating their way to misery and premature death?

As a neuroscientist, Susan Peirce Thompson has spent decades studying this problem. Stunningly, incredibly, I believe she has actually cracked the code.

Susan also walks (and eats) her talk. She is among the less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the population that has gone from being obese to slender and kept that weight off for more than ten years.

She's an Adjunct Associate Professor of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at the University of Rochester, President of the Institute for Sustainable Weight Loss, and founder and CEO of Bright Line Eating Solutions. She's dedicated her life to helping people achieve the vibrant health and zest for life that can accompany permanent weight loss. The operative word being permanent. Because, shockingly, there is not a single peer-reviewed

scientific journal article that shows ANY weight loss program taking ANY cohort of overweight people and helping them to get down to a healthy weight and *stay there*.

But if you look at Bright Line Eating's data, you see that Susan has had a level of success that is nothing short of spectacular.

In 2015 and 2016 my 350,000-member-strong network collaborated with Susan in putting on a pair of eight-week courses. Between the two courses we had 5,600 participants, the vast majority of whom joined the program hoping to lose weight. In eight weeks, they combined to lose more than 90,000 pounds.

When I see these kinds of results, 90,000 pounds lost in eight weeks, I'm floored. And all the more so because I know that those numbers, as impressive as they are, do not include the substantial amount of additional weight participants continued to lose after the eight-week programs ended.

And these are not just numbers to me. I think, with gratitude, of the many cases of diabetes that have been averted. I think, with thankfulness, of the many heart attacks and cases of cancer that have been prevented. I think, with joy, of all the people who are now more present in their lives, because they feel more confident in their bodies, and who can show up more fully for the people they love.

Of course, most weight-loss programs promise the moon. But the only one I'm aware of that even begins to achieve this level of success is Susan's. In fact, the contrast with other weight-loss programs is not just striking. It's staggering.

Here's what the preliminary data show: it appears that people in Susan's programs lose two-and-a-half times more weight, and they do so seven times faster than people in the country's most popular weight-loss program.

And unlike that program, the Bright Line Eating business model is not based on recidivism. It's based on people reaching their goal weight and sustaining that weight—living "Happy, Thin, and Free."

Recently, I led a retreat at a hot springs healing resort in Oregon. Among the attendees were eight people who had taken Susan's course. I invited them to tell the group how much weight, if any, they had lost using her program. I did not know if they would choose to answer. Nor did I have any idea, if they did, what they would say.

All of them chose to answer. And this is exactly what they said:

"Forty-five pounds."

“Sixty pounds.”

“Seventy-five pounds.”

“Thirty-five pounds.”

“Fifty pounds.”

“Eighty pounds.”

“Sixty-five pounds.”

“Forty pounds.”

As these people spoke, they were smiling from ear to ear. Every one of them looked radiant, vibrant, and happy.

In the last few years, I’ve had the great pleasure of getting to know Susan Peirce Thompson as a colleague, and as a friend. Now, through this book, you will have the great good fortune of getting to know her and her amazing work.

Congratulations. You are about to meet one of the most brilliant and extraordinary people on this earth. And if you are someone who has struggled with weight issues, you may very well be about to meet the answer to your prayers.

**PREFACE:**

**THE OBESITY  
EPIDEMIC:  
NOT A PROBLEM,  
A MYSTERY IN  
PLAIN SIGHT**

Something is awry.

Over the past half century or so, there's been a shift in how our bodies and brains react to food. As a consequence, as a species we are getting fatter, and no amount of education or effort seems to be helping.

The statistics are as bad as you think. Roughly *2 billion* people worldwide are now overweight, and 600 million of them are obese.<sup>1</sup> In the United States alone, 108 million people are on a diet. That number comes from *The U.S. Weight Loss and Diet Control Market*,<sup>2</sup> which merely measures people actively spending money on diet-related products and services. It doesn't count all the people trying to eat less or get healthier on their own.

And it's not just an American issue. Obesity is now a bigger problem in developing nations than malnutrition.<sup>3</sup> The Middle East has some of the highest per capita rates of Type 2 diabetes in the world: 20 percent of the adult population.<sup>4</sup> The combination of a hot climate, prohibition on alcohol, and high disposable income results in people drinking bottled soft drinks—sometimes four or five sodas a day. *Boom*. Type 2 diabetes.<sup>5</sup>

The consequences of this problem couldn't be more dire: 63 percent of people die prematurely from diet-related diseases including heart disease,

cancer, diabetes, and stroke.<sup>6</sup> Over the next 20 years, the World Economic Forum estimates that developed nations will spend *\$47 trillion* on diseases caused by the global-industrial diet.<sup>7</sup> We are eating ourselves sick—and into the poorhouse.

But here's the statistic that I want to focus on: among the obese who try to lose weight, the failure rate is 99 percent. Literally. Ninety-nine percent do not succeed at getting slim.<sup>8</sup> And for that precious 1 percent who do succeed, the triumph is temporary. The vast majority regain the weight over the next few years. The average dieter spends a whole lot of money and makes *four or five new attempts* each year,<sup>9</sup> with almost no hope of success.

This is all truly bizarre. Maybe we're not seeing it because we've become inured to the hopelessness of the struggle. Let's consider if this happened in a different domain: If colleges and universities only graduated 1 percent of their students, and researchers found that the other 99 percent of students were dropping out and reenrolling four and five times each year while spending billions of dollars to do it, that would be front-page news. We would be outraged. We would say something smelled fishy, and we'd demand that it be fixed. We certainly wouldn't be thinking that the 99 percent were probably just lazy or weak-willed.

No, there's something strange going on here, and we're clearly missing important pieces of the puzzle. I think that we can all agree—and the research is very clear—that people are genuinely motivated to lose weight.<sup>10</sup> They're spending enormous sums of money to do it. Few things are more desirable in our Western culture than being slender. So why can't people succeed?

When I was overweight, I wanted to get thin with every fiber of my being. I was desperate to get that weight off. I remember the focus and intention I would put into each new attempt—I was always so sure that I would finally make it work. I would weigh myself, measure myself, write down my goals, stay up late reading about the food plan I was going to start, and then commence with fanfare and tons of enthusiasm. And it *would* work! I'd start to lose weight! Then . . . there would be some kind of *Twilight Zone* time warp and, a few months later, I would be even fatter than before and rallying the effort for yet another attempt.

What happened between point A and point B? And why was I not really online and aware of the unraveling of that attempt?

Let's go back to that fact about the 99 percent of people who fail to lose all their excess weight. First, it's strange that people are failing so badly. Second, *it's strange that we're not noticing that it's strange*. It's bizarre that this phenomenon is happening right under our noses and nobody is noticing. Why doesn't anybody seem to wonder why smart, capable, educated, successful, motivated people who really want to get slender just can't do it?

I really want us, as a society, to understand that we do not have an obesity *problem*. We have an obesity *mystery*. The problem itself doesn't make any sense. There's no other field of endeavor that I'm aware of where intelligence, determination, talent, and capability have so little bearing on the outcome.

When I was trying to lose weight, it totally baffled me that I couldn't do it—because I was capable in so many other areas. I had earned a Ph.D. in Brain and Cognitive Sciences. I had good friends, and I was happily married. I ran a marathon. I was fat when I ran that marathon, but I ran it nonetheless. I couldn't even jog to the mailbox when I first started, but I put my mind to it and, with some friends in graduate school, we trained hard and did it. We ran a 26.2-mile marathon without taking a single walking step. And I lost 10 pounds. I had 60 pounds to lose, but I merely lost 10 of them. Exercise is not the answer.

What is?

That's what I'm going to explain in this book. I'm going to present you with information on how the brain blocks weight loss, and what exactly you can do about it.

There *is* a solution. Thousands of people in my Bright Line Eating Boot Camps have used this method to lose weight—collectively over 300,000 pounds so far—and the number who have lost *all* their excess weight and are *keeping it off* continues to rise. I am talking about people who have lived their entire adult lives excessively overweight who are now thin—something they never imagined was ever going to be possible for them.

Bright Line Eating gave them hope again. It delivered on the promise.

It solved the mystery.

I wrote this book because I want everyone to have that solution. The information contained in these pages is vital to changing our cultural understanding of what being overweight is—*not* a willpower deficit and *not* a moral shortcoming—rather, the by-product of a brain hijacked by modern

food. And, more crucially, I want to show you what a solution that works actually looks like. It's not about six small meals a day, free days, or even lots of exercise. I will teach you about Bright Lines, automaticity, and support. Bright Lines are clear, unambiguous boundaries that you just don't cross, like a nonsmoker just doesn't smoke. They work because they align with how the brain works.

No one should have to suffer in a body that doesn't bring them joy. No one should spend a single additional minute feeling like a failure because conventional diets that don't work with our brain chemistry fail them.

If you've almost given up attempting to lose weight because you're exhausted from trying so hard and not succeeding, if your health has become an issue and you've got to make a change, or if you just have a few pounds to lose and really would like to shed them and *keep them off*, then I have good news. You can learn why your brain has been blocking you from losing weight and adopt a simple system that will permanently turn that around.

You no longer have to feel lost in a flood of confusing and contradictory information on how to eat. Or languish on the couch, overeating late into the evening, knowing you're choosing suicide on the installment plan. Or feel like your weight is holding you back from finally living your dreams and being the person you were meant to be.

Get ready to take back control of your brain and live your life as you never have before—*Happy, Thin, and Free*.