



## *In sickness and in health* — **FAT, THIN, OR SLIM**

Getting fat just happens; marriage is not to blame. It is easier to play the blame game than it is to take responsibility. Maintaining a healthy weight is a challenge. It is essential to accept the need for change. This starts with unconditional self-acceptance. Marriage is a partnership but each partner must be responsible for their own wellbeing.

“Discussion about weight loss concerns and goals often leads people to reflect on the reasons for their weight problem. This helps define avenues for lifestyle changes and opens discussion about how we view ourselves and how relationships affect behaviour. Research suggests marriage makes people fat, the reasons are many and varied.”

### *Marriage and long term relationships often lead to weight gain, WeightLoss Solutions Australia psychologist Warren Artz explains why.*

#### **Security**

The security of finding a partner can reduce the motivation to maintain a healthy weight. Relationships often start with physical attraction, this provides the motivation to look good. Healthy lifestyle habits are often compromised by the security of a relationship. The effort required to stay in shape may lose value.

#### **Sharing and caring**

Partners tend to impress each other with their cooking skills. This may mean serving kilojoule laden gourmet dishes or extra large serves. Men who praise their wives for their cooking more than their other attributes may find they gain weight as their wives see food and overeating as a source of gratification and praise.

Men who enjoy cooking may see this as contribution to the partnership. Sharing and caring may mean serving female partners with man-sized portions. Women may increase the size of their portions to match that of their partner but women are generally smaller than men and don't need as much food. Women often put the needs of others ahead of their own and eat the foods the family enjoys rather than the healthy option.

#### **Pregnancy**

Pregnancy is a significant contributor to weight gain. Many women eat more than they need and become inactive during pregnancy. Cravings for sweets and other foods adds to the problem. Men can also gain weight while their partner is pregnant as indulging in sweets and treats becomes part of the family bonding syndrome. Women who stay home to care for their newborn may lead a more sedentary lifestyle than before.

#### **Problems**

People use food as an emotional regulator; they eat when sad or frustrated. Emotional eating (using food as a source of comfort) is a hard habit to break but there are other ways to find comfort. Unhappiness can't be eaten away, seek individual or couple counselling to help resolve issues and develop healthier attitudes.

#### **Economics**

The budget may play a part in weight gain by creating the idea that everything served must be eaten to avoid waste.

#### **Sabotage**

This may be self inflicted or inflicted by others. One partner may want to lose weight but the other partner makes sure it doesn't happen. This can be subconscious; a path of self-destruction is easier to follow when there is company and emotional support. Insecurities come to the fore through fear of loss. The relationship between two overweight people may seem more secure because there is less competition from anyone else.

Marriage brings many challenges, but the emotional stability of each partner often determines the overall health of a marriage. Poor coping skills and low self-esteem are barriers to weight loss. Most people want the best for their partners but this shouldn't include sacrificing physical or mental health.