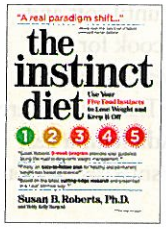
Study up on healthy eating and you'll lose weight

drop the weight for good!

YOU'VE TRIED EVERY DIET, from lowfat to low-carb to raw food—so why are you still struggling with those extra pounds? Maybe the problem is that you're focusing too much on *what* you eat rather than *how* you eat. The latest crop of diet books can help you decode your eating habits and attitudes—and show you how to make a change for the thinner. Stephanie Clarke, R.D., reviews the year's most popular plans and highlights the best advice from each one. Together these tips can help you reach your weight-loss goals easily.



The Instinct Diet

by Susan B. Roberts, Ph.D.

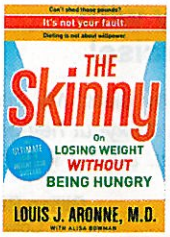
THE THEORY

Your food choices and eating patterns are nearly always influenced by five basic instincts: hunger, availability, variety, familiarity, and satiety (how full you feel after eating), according to Roberts, an obesity researcher at Tufts University. Being in tune with these factors ensured our ancestors got enough nutrients when food was available so they could survive when times were lean. Though we're in little danger of starving today, our bodies are still hardwired to react to these natural urges. Rather than fighting them, you need to learn how to respond to them in a healthy way.

THE EXPERT TAKE More than 200 published papers verify that Roberts' strategies work, so even if you don't eat according to her daily menus, making the behavioral changes she suggests can help you slim down. But her day-by-day eating plan gives you a clearer picture of how to put these changes into practice. For instance, because most of us tend to eat more when we're presented with a variety of foods, Roberts offers an assortment of fruits and veggies and limits calorie-dense options. Dessert is allowed, but in small portions—for example, a cup of chocolate-covered strawberries.

WEIGHT-LOSS TRICK Put high-cal foods out of reach. Stash treats on a high shelf or in the back of the freezer and keep healthy foods front and center so they'll be the things you reach for first. You can also up the difficulty factor of certain foods, which slows you

down and makes you more aware of how much you're eating. Try buying nuts in the shell so you have to crack them open in order to eat them.



The Skinny
by Louis J. Aronne, M.D.

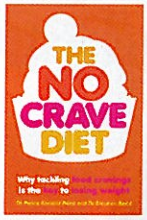
THE THEORY

Some overweight people have a tougher time slimming down because their internal weight-regulating system is "busted," causing them to have heartier appetites and stockpile fat, claims Aronne, director of the Comprehensive Weight Control Program at Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell University. You can override this faulty biology in three months, Aronne suggests, simply by altering the types of food you eat and the order in which you eat them.

The first steps: Have protein at every meal, slash nearly all saturated and trans fat and sugar, and limit starches to a single half-cup serving of whole grains, whole-grain pasta, beans, or rice with dinner. That way you prevent recurring spikes in blood sugar, which can exacerbate hunger and trigger hormonal changes that may increase fat storage. Next, eat lunch and dinner in a specific order. Have a salad or soup and a veggie side dish first, followed by protein, then healthy carbs. Vegetables and soup fill you up fast, Aronne says, sending a satiety signal to your brain so you eat less of the higher-calorie fare.

THE EXPERT TAKE **This plan is best suited for people who have at least 10 percent of their body weight to lose** and can't seem to control their hunger. While it's based on science—a recent study found that this eating style increases fat burning in overweight people—it's a strict approach. So you don't miss out on important nutrients or fall into a diet rut, take a multivitamin and calcium supplement and don't eat the same things every day. For snacks, make sure to have at least one piece of fruit and one lowfat dairy option daily.

WEIGHT-LOSS TRICK **Delay the bread basket.** Since banishing fun foods (like wine, bread, and fatty side dishes) from your diet can trigger bingeing, Aronne suggests having them *after* you've finished your meal. By that time, you may feel satisfied and find you don't really want that dinner roll or that you'll be happy with just a few sweet potato fries.



The No Crave Diet
by Penny Kendall-Reed and Stephen Reed

THE THEORY

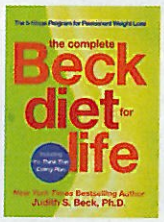
By controlling physical and emotional factors that trigger cravings—like hunger, stress, low blood sugar, and mood swings—you can dial them down, according to this husband and wife team (he's an orthopedic surgeon and she's a naturopath). On this diet, you'll have three small protein-rich meals (fish, egg whites, poultry, or tofu) per day spaced five to six hours apart with nothing in between. (The Reeds claim eating between meals intensifies cravings, reduces fat

Fiber-rich foods, like melon, fill you up for very few calories

burning, and prevents the release of leptin, a feel-full hormone.) Also on the plan: two pieces of fruit daily and as many vegetables (except potatoes, winter squash, peas, and corn) as you like. In the second phase of the diet, healthy carbs are slowly reintroduced, but protein always dominates.

THE EXPERT TAKE **It's tough to keep track of how many calories you're eating on this plan.** You choose from a list of dishes, but calorie counts aren't provided. We estimate they vary widely, so you could get 1,000 calories one day and 2,500 the next. The skipping snacks claim isn't backed up by science; in fact, there's more support for the idea that healthy snacking helps you stay satisfied. And while a multivitamin is a good idea, there's no proof that the other recommended supplements, like L-tyrosine, help with weight loss.

WEIGHT-LOSS TRICK **Keep meals simple.** Having a smorgasbord of flavors in one sitting can overload your senses and may make you more likely to overeat. Use two seasonings max, and when possible, select a "power spice"—one that provides additional benefits. For instance, chili pepper can help you stay satisfied after a meal.



The Complete Beck Diet for Life
by Judith S. Beck, Ph.D.

THE THEORY **The reason many of us struggle to control our weight is that we haven't learned (or don't consistently use) the healthy eating habits** employed by "naturally slim" people. That's why Beck, a weight-loss expert and director of the Beck Institute for Cognitive Therapy and Research in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania, has you do some prep work before you even *think* about cutting calories. First you make your lifestyle weight-loss-friendly by completing 10 tasks (such as setting a modest weight-loss goal and finding a diet buddy), then you master nine "think thin skills," such as motivating yourself daily and eating slowly. Next you calculate how many calories you need to maintain your current weight, then subtract just 200. There's no day-to-day diet; you build your own menus from a list of foods and recipes Beck provides.

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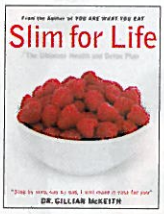
THE EXPERT TAKE **This plan prepares you to make the healthiest choices no matter what situation you find yourself in.** But the most refreshing thing about Beck's approach is that she doesn't recommend drastic calorie cutting: A 35-year-old woman who is 5-feet-4-inches and weighs 160 pounds (about 20 pounds overweight) can have 1,800 calories a day and still lose weight. The idea: If you don't feel deprived, you'll have a better chance of sticking with this (or *any*) plan.

WEIGHT-LOSS TRICK **Strengthen your "resistance" muscle.** When you're faced with a tough food choice, tell yourself: "If I eat this I'll get temporary pleasure, but I'll feel bad later. It's not worth it." The more often you make the right choice and resist the wrong one, the more willpower you'll develop.



Slim for Life
by Gillian McKeith

THE THEORY **Staying on top of what you eat with a food diary is good—but you can do even more to pinpoint your bad eating habits.** McKeith, a holistic nutritionist, recommends stashing the packaging from *every* food and beverage you consume for a week in a box so you see what you really eat. The diet is long on fruits, veggies, and beans; contains small amounts of fish, chicken, nuts, and healthy fats; and requires you to cook—using McKeith's recipes—at every meal. Wheat, refined sugar, caffeine, red meat, and cow's milk products are discouraged.

THE EXPERT TAKE **While the tone is supportive, McKeith comes across as a healthy eating drill sergeant:** "It's my way or the highway," she says. If you like rules and structure, though, her plan might work for you. One of best things about her book is the recipes—such as chickpea-vegetable stew and salmon and savoy cabbage lasagna—which show you how to use veggies in delicious and filling ways.

WEIGHT-LOSS TRICK **See your success.** Instead of simply writing down your intended action (such as making a healthy snack to take to work), draw a picture of yourself actually doing it. You don't need to be Rembrandt, says McKeith—use stick figures and place a caption underneath the image ("This is me, making my low-cal snack"). It may feel silly, but doing this will solidify your intention and help move you one step closer to action.

STEPHANIE CLARKE, R.D., is the co-owner of C&J Nutrition in New York City.