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Opening Extract from...

The Dukan Diet 2

The 7 Steps

Written by Dr Pierre Dukan

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Dr Pierre Dukan

Dukan Diet 2
The 7 Steps


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Introduction

THIS IS A COMMITTED AND PROACTIVE
BOOK, FULL OF FIRE AND PASSION

This is also a book of war, because when it comes to weight problems we're facing an unforgiving enemy. And I know this enemy well; as a doctor and nutritionist, my work has been devoted to tracking it down. Its strength lies in the way it cleverly insinuates itself into our lives under the friendly guise of *bon viveur* and enjoyment of the good things life has to offer. But let's face the facts: for millions around the world this stealthy adversary is gaining the upper hand. In France alone, there are 27 million overweight people, of whom 7 million are obese, trapped and vulnerable. They're also vaguely aware, without taking it fully on board, that their lives will be nine years shorter than other people's.

Perhaps you know my method and the diet named after me. Its success turned my life upside down and radically changed my reasons for living. This all began for me at an age when most people are thinking about their

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retirement. Today, I realize that I'm getting involved in the midst of a battle – one that certainly fires you with enthusiasm, but one that is also terribly unequal. This is a battle between the individual and a disease of civilization, a pandemic, the first avoidable plague to beset the human race. Mindful of this power struggle, I feel compelled more than ever by the urgent need to strive to do better, to be inventive and innovative, so as to hone my weapons and retaliate with even greater strength.

And this is the reason why, given the current worldwide weight problem crisis, I'm opening up a second line of attack, a **second front**, on the battleground.

Although very different from the first front, the second adheres to its values and philosophy. It can therefore work alongside my original method to reach a wider audience, to bring on board and offer help to a different section of the population.

I know that the Dukan Diet is well known for being both extremely effective and strict. It is also very demanding, suiting the most determined dieters.

Over recent years, I've come to realize that there are also overweight people out there who are in less of a hurry to lose weight. They have moderate weight problems, a less compulsive appetite, a very busy and open social life and have less of a medical risk. They feel less inclined to go for a long time without enjoying a tasty treat, a glass of wine or a few squares of chocolate. In a nutshell, there are people whose motivation hasn't yet reached its peak but **who want to lose weight**

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nevertheless, well aware that their weight problems could well escalate.

I am myself well aware that some of these people got caught up in the general excitement of the previous decade, tried my diet but struggled with its rigorousness, and so didn't manage to continue right to the end.

It's for anyone who can't see themselves following my original method that I devised, practised and tested the Nutritional Staircase, my second front.

So from now on, there isn't just a single way of tackling weight problems with my help but two: the first one, which some people have described as 'the strong way', and the second, 'the gentle way'. This book explains how to use it and everything you need to know so that you can choose *your* path and *your* solution from these two strategies.

My work as a practitioner, with patients whom I treated in traditional personal consultations, convinced me that it was possible to fight weight problems and get results. I started my career very early on and, for well over 40 years, I've helped and supported a great number of patients. During the first 30 years, dissatisfied with what I'd learnt while specializing in nutrition, I took the liberty of breaking out of the mould to invent and patiently shape my own method. As time went by, I was so convinced by its results and effectiveness that I felt the need to reach a wider audience by promoting the method in a book for the general public. *Je ne sais*

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pas maigrir (the original French version of the Dukan Diet) was published in 2000, and was amazingly successful. It has been read in over 50 countries by almost 35 million people, including 16 million in France. The diet associated with it has had a massive following. I say this without wishing to sound boastful or flatter my own ego, but rather to show the extent to which the book and method inspired hope.

Recently, I was most impatient and eager to see the results of the ObEpi study published by a French institution which brings out a report every three years on how weight issues affect the French population. In 2013, the ObEpi study revealed – and for the first time since it has been collecting such data – that between 2009 and 2012, the period during which my influence and work as a nutritionist were at their height in France, there had been an extreme **decrease** in the phenomenon of weight problems and obesity.

Among the population spared the increase in weight problems were obese people, of whom one-third (i.e. about 500,000) were over 55 (according to the 2009 survey). They belonged to that section of the French population at greatest risk of morbidity and mortality. As a doctor, I know that a large section of this at-risk population adjusted the course of their lives and, probably without realizing it, escaped the cruel clutches of a tragic fate.

Furthermore, an obesity study, supervised by the Department of Nutrition at the Pitié-Salpêtrière

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Hospital in Paris, examined the effectiveness of the Dukan method's Stabilization phase. Here are the results: of 4,500 women who had lost weight, 36 per cent had not regained any two years later; and after five years, 20 per cent were deemed to be 'cured' of their weight problems. Compared with the 3 per cent who are cured worldwide when all diets are taken into account, this is a fantastic result. It's quite unheard of and amazingly encouraging – an extra 17 per cent!

So yes, I am indeed writing a book of war, and if I run the risk of appearing immodest, it's so that you understand that the issues at stake are of great importance to YOU and this is why I need to convince you.

The truth I've arrived at, which I've learnt through my career as a campaigning doctor and nutritionist, is that the war against weight problems, with all the death and suffering it causes, is a war that nobody wants to wage and even less one that anyone wants to win.

Given what appears in the media and the number of decision-makers we hear moaning and getting worked up about the extent of the threat, this may seem surprising to you. However, there is a very simple explanation. Our globalized world is governed by the market economy, of this you will be aware. So what does the logic of the market say? That if this war was properly waged and won, if a method could help all these individuals lose weight, then part of the food-processing industry, the part that promotes and supplies snack products, and part of

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the pharmaceutical industry, the part that treats repercussions from weight problems, would be damaged. We know full well that, in many countries, and certainly in France, both industries figure among the most powerful and profitable.

The market is pragmatic. It readily admits that if weight issues were controlled, the public health budget would stand to gain a great deal. But it also states just as clearly that the national economy would lose infinitely more were this to happen. This is the unfortunate truth. However, everyone has to choose between the need for their society's economic growth and what they need for their personal existence, their individual well-being, their quality of life, their image, their relationship with others and themselves, their self-esteem and, lastly, their health and even their life.

I'll say it again, it may seem like we're hitting against an insurmountable wall, UNLESS out of this conflict between society's economic health and the health of individuals a new force can be brought to life that fully benefits both. Coca-Cola, for example, has developed soft drinks, Diet Coke and Coke Zero, for people watching their weight. Rather than making money from a drink known to have played a major role in the explosion of American obesity, Coca-Cola has instead managed to invent an alternative, without any sugar or glucose syrup, which today earns the company enormous profits. Many other manufacturers are following suit, including those who make cereal-based products, and selling low-sugar,

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low-fat versions of their products without additives and colourings.

I am campaigning fervently for an economy to emerge that grows richer from the fight against weight issues rather than one that makes money out of contributing to weight problems.

I'll go much further: for years I've been campaigning for France to become the leading country in the struggle against weight problems, an international laboratory that would develop beneficial suggestions to help the one and a half billion people across the world who are overweight or obese.

Because France is without doubt the one country that has the greatest legitimacy to a say in this fight. France's culture of gastronomy has been added to UNESCO's Intangible World Heritage List; we also have many great international chefs and a whole range of wonderful local products. French women are famous for their slim figures and elegance. Our luxury goods, haute couture and tourism industries are world renowned. I have no doubt that French opinion would be listened to and widely followed across the planet.

The change from treating my patients directly and personally to treating them indirectly through my books made me realize just how useful this second front can be.

For a long time now, I've been convinced that weight problems in France and elsewhere are spreading at such

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a rate that the traditional solution of one-to-one medical consultations can no longer contain them.

There are, of course, still a few patients who can find a nutritionist to supervise their weight-loss programme, but there will never be enough health professionals to look after 27 million overweight people! Only a mass media can have any chance of success when it comes to tackling a disease of civilization on such a scale. That was why, back in 2000, I wrote my first book, without ever imagining that it would reach such a wide readership. When I saw this happen, I stopped my daily dozen or so patient consultations so that I could help the tens of millions of other people from all over the world.

Nonetheless, losing weight with a book as your only guide and support requires a certain determination and motivation, particular needs, and a character and psychological profile that not everyone possesses.

It was when I realized that my initial method might be too combative, too demanding and for some even too quick that I endeavoured to come up with an entirely new approach, so that these people wouldn't get lost en route. Over a long period, I tested this Nutritional Staircase to see how useful, effective and well-received it would be. Today, this new method is fully ready and has been honed down to the very last details. I intend to make use of it to stand up to the current 'down with diets' trend, an opportunist fad that has come over from the States and which reappears from time to time whenever diets are gaining ground and threatening the market.

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This trend is not only useless, it is actually dangerous, since it aims to de-motivate anyone reluctant to give up the comfort they get from eating, which helps them cope with stress and adversity.

In France, for example, obese men and women over 55 with diabetes or high blood pressure are dying prematurely on a daily basis. Some of them would still be alive today if they hadn't been put off losing weight through dieting.

Currently, dieting is the only way we know of to reduce surplus weight as well as diabetes, high blood pressure and the various risks connected with 'diabesity'.

Entirely dreamt up by American psychologists, the diet backlash is based on two fallacious arguments:

- **The first argument** is that modern man is incapable of making the effort to follow a diet. This effort would be so traumatic that after slimming down modern man would put the weight back on and could even end up suffering from eating disorders. French supporters of this American trend – which one might suspect is not unconnected to the chocolate, sugar and flour industry, given the extent to which its interests are served – sing the same chorus, that my method is too frustrating and too hard to follow.

It is not frustrating, first and foremost because the results are obvious and quick to appear, and moreover because anyone following this diet can eat 100 foods and eat as much of them as they want. As for all other

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foods, you are allowed to eat them in a selective, gradual and carefully planned way.

Many people who've lost weight with my method can testify to how easy it was for them to follow. So great and rewarding was the happiness of successfully dieting that the unavoidable changes that my programme suggests for shedding these annoying, even handicapping pounds, were accepted. My patients could enjoy looking at themselves in the mirror, be delighted at getting back their old figure and most importantly rediscovering their self-confidence and *joie de vivre*. Many of them use the same expression to unambiguously voice their satisfaction: 'It has changed my life!' I can recall one woman telling me: 'When I lose weight this way, I get more pleasure from slimming than from eating comfort food.' My original method is not difficult to follow; it is simple, strict and coherent.

- **The second argument** of the 'down with diets' brigade is that they're dangerous. My answer to this is that not only is it untrue, but when we consider just how extremely damaging obesity and weight problems are, what is actually dangerous is for an effective diet to be unavailable or refused. It's obvious that if a person has put on weight and a lot of it, food and excessive eating signal a vulnerability, and their comfort eating is a way of coping with their vulnerability. Who hasn't tried to assuage their anger or soothe their sorrow through eating? But for some people this is systematic, which is

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where the danger lies for their health. That said, I'm amazed that what is so glaringly obvious and common-sensical has to be proved. Losing weight and shifting your surplus pounds means you're getting rid of a handicap and an unnecessary burden; losing weight can only improve health; it reduces blood sugar levels; it lowers blood pressure, thus alleviating the direct threat posed to the brain and heart by hypertension. Losing weight lightens the load carried by the vertebral joints, the hips and knees, and it almost systematically puts a stop to sleep apnoeas, which spoil your life and can end up endangering it. Cutting down your weight is as life-saving as stopping smoking or giving up the bottle if you're an alcoholic. However, such is the economic weight of the food-processing lobbies, and their sphere of influence so great and so widespread, that the case for the health benefits of weight-loss dieting has to be made tirelessly in order for the idea to be accepted.

THIS BOOK IS THEREFORE ABOUT OPENING UP A SECOND FRONT IN THE WAR AGAINST WEIGHT PROBLEMS

Why this second front and what does it offer?

As I've already outlined, my first front is the method I devised between 1970 and 2000, a diet that people who used it named after me. For the first six years after *Je ne sais pas maigrir* was published, my method operated far

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from the spotlight. It was passed on simply by word of mouth and then mainly on the great communication hub of the internet. Those who had success with it said so in their own way, with their own words, and with a sincere desire to pass the message on. After these six years, the global bookstore Amazon sent out a press release stating that sales of my book had outstripped those of *Harry Potter*.

Totally unknown to the press and the media at the time, I remember the day when this was announced because no fewer than 17 journalists called me, wanting to know who I was. During the next six years, this book maintained its popularity and I went on to write other books which, like the first, travelled worldwide to spread the message that a – French – method was helping people lose weight and doing better than anything else that had gone before. I gradually came to realise that weight problems and obesity, which are now seen everywhere as a modern pandemic of mankind, were perhaps not an inescapable fact of life; it was possible to slow down the growth of weight problems and have the ambitious goal of driving them back and putting an end to them. One and a half billion overweight people, with a third of them obese, were not unavoidably condemned to stay this way.

The enormous wave of enthusiasm for my diet ruffled quite a few feathers. A great number of small and large vested interests felt threatened by my work and ganged up against it. This gave me lots to ponder, with humility

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and a constructive mind. What I had learnt from my patients over a fairly long period as a practitioner was how they can think and act without always being totally aware or fully in control. By drawing on my feelings and my empathy, I was finally able to immerse myself in their psychology. Whenever a man or woman puts on weight, it never happens because they intended it to happen.

Once the weight gain gets too much, it causes dissatisfaction then misery, but it still doesn't stop the underlying behaviour causing it. Why and how can a 5ft 5in woman, who weighed just over 10 stone after having her first child at 25, let herself put on another stone and a half by the time she's 30, while being alarmed about this – and then creep up to 13 or even 14 stone a few years later? I have seen this many times in my consultations.

If the man or woman who puts on weight is tolerating such agony then it's because they're coping with some other far more intense agony. Agony that is hidden or difficult to discern, which they try to cancel out with a natural pleasure that they use excessively or compulsively.

And then the time comes when this weight gain becomes overwhelming and more difficult to bear than the underlying misery that caused it. The cup is full and the decision to slim down becomes inevitable, just like a ripe fruit that comes away from the branch.

Given the emotional profile of people who've grown fat by using food as a crutch, the question now is: how are they going to manage without it and what could possibly replace it?

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The answer my method – the first front – gave was that the best reward lies in the very success of dieting: shedding those pounds and rediscovering your self-esteem. For this to happen from the word go, I tried to give my patients a weight-loss plan that above all worked very well, especially right at the beginning to boost motivation. For people who didn't think themselves capable, losing a lot of weight and quickly is a very powerful reason to feel proud and a sense of self-worth. The immediate joy of losing weight anaesthetizes the potential difficulty of doing it.

However, amid the biased, partisan attacks unleashed by the success of my method, I also heard touching messages from people who had given up partway because they were hypersensitive, vulnerable and, most especially, influenced by the prevailing 'down with diets' attitude. I was touched by their messages and **I asked myself whether the strictness that suited some so well might not put others off, leaving them by the wayside** and willing to give credence to the dream merchants advocating that we abandon dieting.

I also heard all those people who, having lost weight with my diet, had put it back on because they didn't follow the last two phases and were unsure if they'd be able to give it another try with as much enthusiasm and motivation as before.

Lastly, I heard those people who didn't feel ready or sufficiently overweight to get involved with such a head-on approach. People who weren't in a hurry or

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troubled by some worrying pathology, or who quite simply lacked the heroic fibre and felt the very human need to give in to temptation, unable to imagine a couple of months without a glass of wine or nibbling a few squares of chocolate, or enjoying a meal with friends in a restaurant at the weekend, but who nonetheless wanted to slim down.

According to my personal statistics, collected using a questionnaire inserted into my books, half of my readers managed to lose weight and half of those then managed to stabilize. **So I'm aiming this second front partly at anyone who failed to lose weight or was unable to stabilize or whose motivation wasn't quite at its peak.**

I've always been, and still am, very much in contact with the many people who get in touch with me. Some patients, who've failed with their attempt, ask me if they can go back to the initial method, the first front, and start again from scratch. They want to throw themselves back into the fray, ready to take up arms once more and return to the battlefield knowing where they went wrong, more determined than ever to succeed. And I know that they'll do it, because they're motivated and inspired by the challenge, the confrontation and success.

A diet doesn't always achieve its objective the first time round. Both experience and my statistics show that dieters who reprise the original method in this way do indeed succeed, like those smokers who often find that they manage to give up on their second attempt.

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However, it was the other dieters who spoke to me, those for whom the original version of my method was too ambitious or seemed too harsh because of where they were then at in their lives. A person may well no longer feel able today to follow the same diet they were quite happy trying yesterday.

And then I thought about those people who demand too much from comfort eating to be able to give it up entirely for several days, and those who have too little to lose to want to try such an effective diet or who are more epicurean than stoic.

So it's for them that I am now opening up this second front – so that I can win them over and, most importantly, not abandon them to the power of the lobbies and the supporters of such lobbies, whether intentional or not.

Finally, I'd like to thank Dr Atkins and Dr Montignac (who died in 2010), whom I managed to meet in New York and Paris respectively. Both talented nutritionists, they told me about their careers and their fight against obesity and weight problems. I learnt much from what they told me and from their difficulties in getting a different approach to dieting accepted. It's a shame that they didn't write about their own story and research, as I'm convinced that they've both made important contributions to innovating twentieth-century nutrition.