



READING GUIDE

Body of Truth: How Science, History, and Culture Drive Our Obsession with Weight—and What We Can Do About It

1. Do you believe weight is a major issue for women (and, increasingly, men) in this culture? Has weight been an issue in your life? In what ways?
2. What surprised you most in the book?
3. Do you agree with Brown that the real epidemic in America isn't obesity—it's our obsession with obesity?
4. Brown writes that one of our most deeply engrained assumptions is that fat is unhealthy (p. 9). What does she mean by this? Do you agree?
5. In the first chapter, Brown describes four "big fat lies" and explores the evidence that does or doesn't support each of them. Which of her arguments do you find convincing? Which do you disagree with?

6. BMI, or Body Mass Index, is widely used today to describe people's health based on which category they fall into. Given the history of the BMI (p. 10), do you think it's a reliable measure? Why or why not?

7. In Chapter Two, Brown suggests dieting to lose weight makes most people fatter and less healthy in the long run. Do your personal experiences support this? How about the experiences of friends and family members?

8. Some experts suggest fat-shaming is a good way to inspire people to lose weight and keep it off (pp. 52-54). Do you agree? What do you think of campaigns like Strong4Life, which are aimed at childhood obesity?



9. Brown describes a mother who brought a seven-month-old to a therapist because she moaned with pleasure whenever she ate (p. 75). Can you identify with that mom? Why or why not?

10. In Chapter Three, Brown describes a dichotomy we've created between "good food" and "bad food." Have you seen this in your own relationships with food? Are there foods you avoid because they're "bad"?

11. Weight loss is a \$60 billion industry, and the book explores the different stakeholders who have a vested interest in the business of weight loss. Does this change the way you think or feel about dieting personally? On a broader scale?

12. What do you think of the American Medical Association's decision to categorize obesity as a disease (p. 104)? How might this affect people who are obese?

13. Brown cites research showing that doctors and other medical professionals are strongly biased against fat and fat people (p. 115). Did this surprise you? How could such bias affect both fat people and those who are "normal" weight?

14. Children are strongly affected by our cultural attitudes around fat, thinness, beauty, and health. Brown lists a number of reasons we should be worried about how these attitudes affect children (p. 145 and elsewhere). Do you agree we should be worried? How do you think we might encourage health in children and teens without shaming or harming them?

15. Have you ever engaged in "fat talk" (p. 154)? How does it make you feel? Does doing more or less of it change your behaviors around food or weight?



16. The book makes a case for thinking of health in terms of behaviors rather than as a number on the scale. Do you see advantages in thinking about weight and health separately like this? Disadvantages?

17. Did the book shift the way you think about weight, health, and beauty? How so? Might you do anything differently in your own life after having read it?