


F o r e w o r d

by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. and Helen LaKelly Hunt, M.A., M. L. A.

Dr. Harville Hendrix and his partner and wife, Helen LaKelly Hunt, have written many books on relationships, including the bestselling Getting The Love You Want, A Guide for Couples. Their pioneering work combines pastoral psychotherapy, spirituality, life experience, and the practice of empathy in a profoundly effective approach to wholeness called Imago Relationship Therapy. A television and media-workshop series, “Getting The Love You Want,” based on their work was produced and co-written by Norris Chumley, and introduced by Oprah Winfrey.

 When we were asked to write a foreword to this book, we were initially puzzled, because we are not experts in the field. Our area of expertise is relationships, specifically the relationship between committed partners and between parents and children. At first, we could not see how we could comment on a book outside our field of competence. On second thought, however, it occurred to us that everyone has a relationship to food, and that relationship includes some of the same unconscious dynamics that influence our selection of an intimate partner. We have learned, for instance, that our selection of a partner is influenced by our relationship with our parents, although we do not consciously know that. When we meet someone who is similar in significant ways to our parents, we unconsciously select them as a love partner. It is called falling in love, and has addictive qualities, like our love of food. We engage in a power struggle with our partner to establish our identity and role and, if we are lucky, we finally become conscious and co-create a loving and durable relationship. If we do not become conscious, we continue in the struggle for a lifetime or change partners.

Our relationship to food follows the same sequence. We tend to love the foods we had in childhood, but often do not know that. Food takes on a symbolic meaning and we engage in eating rituals. We wonder how anyone could love other kinds of foods, especially our partner. We struggle with food, sometimes feeling it is in charge of us. Or we try to change our relationship to food, often succeeding, but most often failing. If we become conscious of our food identity and our food addiction, we learn how and what to eat for our best welfare. If we do not, food becomes our friend when we are down or our enemy when we are overweight. Unlike our intimate partner, whom we

may choose to keep or divorce, we have a life-long relationship to food. Becoming conscious of our food addiction is as important as becoming conscious in personal relationships.

Our second concern is that we do not have a weight problem, although Harville has been concerned a bit about his middle age spread, and Helen had some weight concerns in her early years. Because of that, occasionally we look at diet books to see what new ways are being devised to lose weight. Essentially, our observation is that most of them are distinguished by whether they focus on protein or carbohydrates. These two issues are surrounded by what can be called esoteric suggestions such as starting the day with fruit, eliminating refined sugar, and how to alternate eating certain foods to aid digestion. Some diet programs have philosophies about how we should follow evolutionary eating habits while others take a biological and chemical approach to the body; some take a psychological approach to the meaning of food and its function in our lives while others relate weight-gain to stress and life style. What is common to them all is that any diet must be accompanied by various amounts of exercise, calorie reduction, drinking eight glasses of water daily, and stress reduction. What is interesting about this is omitting these four items renders any diet ineffective.

From an analytical point of view, most diet books tend to treat weight gain as a symptom and tend not to deal with causes. Therefore, the message is to eliminate the symptom of weight gain by engaging in a weight loss program. This book is the first one we have seen that offers a different perspective. Norris Chumley is a veteran of weight loss. As you will learn from his personal sharing in the following pages, he has lost a significant amount of weight and kept it off. He has learned a secret that he boldly shares with the reader. From his perspective, weight gain is a spiritual problem. For him, food becomes a substitute for one's relationship to God. Over-eating is an attempt to fill the void created by unfulfilled and unconscious spiritual yearning. Chumley's research indicates that the chronic pattern of gaining and losing weight, which happens with all diet plans, can be overcome only when one comes to terms with the Divine Reality that enfolds us all. When our relationship to God is resolved, our relationship with food will be transformed and the problem of weight will disappear as a concern. And we will be the weight we are supposed to be.

While weight has not been a major symptom in our lives, there are other ways in which we have, at times, slipped out of balance. We now see this, as Chumley does, as a wake up call for realignment. The same is true for couples with whom we work. We

have also learned what the author has identified: that most of our significant struggles, with food or with our partner, constitute a spiritual process. To become rightly aligned with our partner and with food requires us to reconnect with the Divine Source.

This is a truly remarkable and revolutionary point of view for a diet book, and anyone who has struggled with weight loss will find this a rewarding and fulfilling path. The symptom will disappear when the cause is addressed.