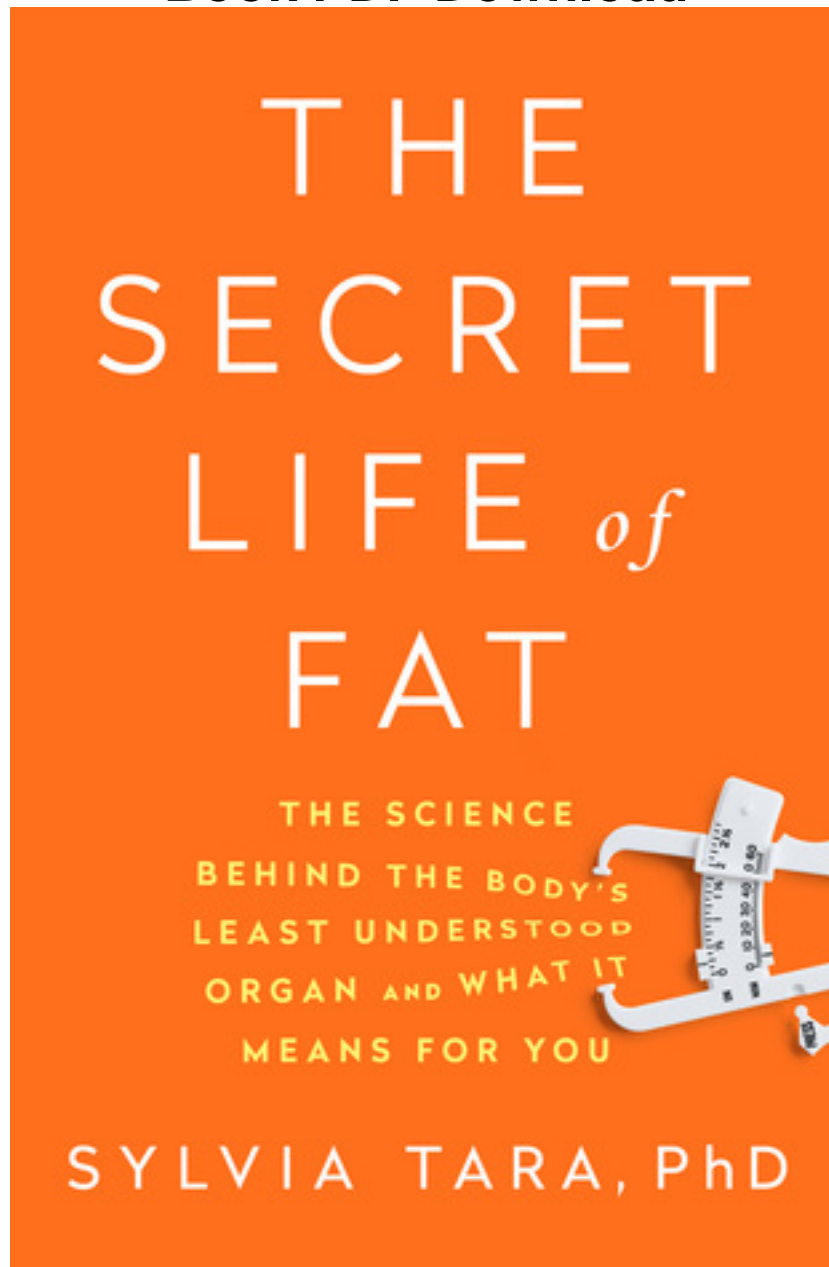


The Secret Life of Fat: The Science Behind the Body's Least Understood Organ and What It Means for You

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By:
Sylvia Tara

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Sylvia Tara, PhD. Dec. 14 W.W. Norton and Co.

In a world which bombards us with its "the right way" in what to eat, how to eat, how much to weigh, how to measure Body Mass Index, the newest and best theory of being our best skinny

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The Secret Life of Fat told a highly readable story complete with case studies and fascinating research, about a subject which is really in its beginning stages of discovery. A virus might make you fat; some bacteria might do so too. Fat allows for proper brain development in babies; the maintenance of myelin in the brains of everyone, keeping neural pathways intact, requires fat. Fat is found in stem cells. It can safeguard your health in many ways, including being overweight if you have the right genes.

But weight issues have plagued us in modern times, and Sylvia Tara approaches those with the latest research and common sense. I loved her personal story, which led to this book: Why did she gain weight and carry fat while eating so much less food than her peers? I am inspired to utilize my new knowledge, trash the latest fads and develop a unique plan which will be "my right way" to lose my kind of fat!

The Pfaeffle Journal

In Sylvia Tara's book the

, she discusses what some researchers have discovered about fat, she does an excellent job of describing in layperson terms how fat interacts with the body. By the end of the book, I understood that fat was very complex and it was able to effect our lives in many ways because of how it affects are bodies.

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What disappointed me about the book was the way it ended, as a diet book. The author tells how she lost the 30 pounds she gained about having her third child. I think I would have enjoyed the book more if she had stuck to the science side as she did an excellent job of explaining how fat affects our bodies. I still think the book is worth reading, and recommend it because you do learn about fat and I found that fascinating.

Douglas Lord

Secret? My own fat is pretty public. This book is freaking transformative as it makes the case for a changed view of fat. First-time author and biochemistry PhD Tara clearly illustrates something that a lot of people don't yet know—fat is an organ of your body, exactly like the liver, the lungs, and

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. It has functions and does important stuff such as acting as a reserve of energy, managing energy stores, enabling transmission of brain signals, and facilitating labor. Fat operates differently for every blessed person and thankfully so. In short: 1) fat is not merely blubber, and 2) without it, you'd die. While this isn't as readable as

(e.g., *Bonk*, *Stiff*), it's a helluva lot less clinical than a textbook, walking that fine line between readable and scientific mostly by relying on anecdotes and reportage of stories of those with problems, e.g., the girl who couldn't metabolize fat and nearly starved to death, or the Turkish dude with mutated leptin genes who received injections and was able to begin puberty at age 22. There's also discussion of a virus (Ad-36) that correlates to humans accumulating more fat. This is not a get-me-thin book; indeed it helps to debunk that cultural stereotype and inject science into the frustration and despair that many people feel about weight, appetite, appearance, and health. VERDICT A challenging, fascinating, sometimes disturbing primer on fat that succeeds on the scientific and the cultural front. Bravo.

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Bree Taylor

Sylvia Tara takes us on a fascinating journey to look at the genetics and history of fat. She explains thoroughly and clearly the history of how fat went from just blobs on the body to a dynamic organ

that is responsible for many different processes along the way. She also tackles the reasons why different bodies respond differently to fat loss techniques -- and the different factors that go into it, such as age, gender, and previous attempts at weight loss.

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For the vast majority of this book, I raved about it. I loved Tara's take on the history of fat and what little control we have over how our bodies react to different attempts to change our predisposition. By the time I had finished the second section of the book, I was recommending it to others and had come to a great epiphany about why calorie counting didn't matter and we how we should just eat healthy foods in moderation and exercise daily. I was excited to see what Tara would recommend in the last section for how to work around your genetics and what options she suggested.

Mostly, she suggests that people watch their calories and exercise. Exercise has shown to be the biggest predictor of long term success. This was pretty much what I was expecting. But, then Tara goes to to explain how she finally lost her last 10 pounds.

To my VAST disappointment, after preaching the ENTIRE book about how there's little we can do to outpace our genetics and how unhealthy our habits can become in the pursuit of fat loss, Tara's weight loss techniques are nothing less than drastic. She describes how she had to use intermittent fasting (with a 7 hour feeding window), exercised 2-3 hours daily, and dropped her calories to under 1000 daily. After explaining earlier in the book about dropping calories under 1400 leaves our organs with little to work with, this seemed to go against everything she had written about in the book. In fact, if I needed a primer on how to exacerbate or create an eating disorder, her chapter on herself would be excellent.

So, all in all, the first 2/3 of the book gets 5 stars and the terrible advice and story at the end get 1. If you want to read the book, I recommend stopping short of the final section of the book.

Eve

This doesn't have the same depth of analysis as Kolata's

, but it is an interesting updated look at the science of fat and weight loss. The author, while noting that ideal weight is skewed by media-created body images, nonetheless unabashedly provides advice and instruction on fighting fat, and describes her own battle with weight.