

## **The Gabriel Method** **by** **Jon Gabriel**

The best books are those where the author has gone through the journey that he writes about. Such is the case with Jon Gabriel and the aptly named The Gabriel Method. Jon introduces an entirely new approach to the topic of weight control - an approach that he used to drop 220 pounds. More importantly, Jon does NOT talk about some sort of magical diet, counting calories, or depriving yourself of food. Rather he makes a case that we are hard wired to respond to our environment by becoming either thinner or fatter. Therefore, the key to obtaining the body you desire is to understand how our body responds to the environment and then create those environmental factors that are consistent with the body we desire.

Gabriel starts with a basic premise: our body has been programmed to help us avoid starvation, freezing to death, and being eaten. While the majority of us are immune to these three risks in our lives today, he points out that through tens of thousands of years, these were the risks that we faced. Accordingly, our bodies have developed to deal with these risks.

Based on this, he introduces the concept of “the FAT programs” or “famine and temperature” programs. He argues that our bodies are programmed to turn our body in to a fat storage machine. Gabriel then uses a bit of mental jujitsu to turn these programs around to our advantage. He motivates his approach with a wonderful story:

- Gabriel had an overweight cat (Jessie) who enjoyed harassing the neighboring dog that was confined inside his house. One day Jessie made the mistake of tormenting the dog when the dog was able to get out. Two days later Jessie returned home limping from a not so recent encounter with Fido. Over the next several months, Gabriel watched Jessie turn in to a lean, well-conditioned cat – while NOT changing her diet. Jessie’s body had decided that avoiding being eaten was more important than starving or freezing to death.

Gabriel suggests that our bodies respond to the external AND internal stimuli that we face by triggering our FAT programs to varying degrees. Hence, he concludes, if we can control the stimuli – or at least how we perceive the stimuli – we will be able to control how our FAT programs behave. With that in mind, he suggests a three step process to obtain the body we desire:

- Stop dieting
- Nourish your body
- Eliminate the mental and emotional causes of obesity

Gabriel outlines a number of nonphysical stresses that activate your FAT programs. These include:

- The stress of daily life
- Spiritual starvation
- Self-limiting beliefs
- Mental and emotional abuse
- Physical and sexual abuse
- A desire to hide from / avoid the world
- A desire to be “big” (powerful)
- Self-punishment
- Rebellion
- Pushing loved ones away
- Becoming unlovable
- Grief
- Trauma

The key with all of these is to recognize that our internal mental images are affecting our physical well-being. We need to eliminate the negative mental images and replace them with positive. While this is obvious when he shares the insight, we don't often equate how we feel to why we are overweight.

To combat the mental challenges, Gabriel suggests we need to learn how to get in to a “Super Mental Awareness Re-education Training” or SMART mode. Essentially he outlines a method for us to gain control over our thoughts and use the power of our mind to control the FAT programs. Fundamentally if we are able to “out think” the stresses, we will be able to control the FAT programs. He highlights a number of visualization and meditation methods to accomplish this task.

He then turns his attention to the physical challenges we face. He starts by pointing out that the act of dieting is actually counter-productive. In particular if our FAT programs are set up to protect us from starvation and freezing, then limiting our caloric intake will do nothing but recalibrate the FAT programs to lower our metabolism. Then when we fall off the wagon of the diet, our weight shoots up dramatically. Sound familiar? The logical conclusion to this observation is that dieting is a waste of time.

Next he moves on to the quality of the food we consume. He points out that many of our modern farming and food production practices have resulted in foods that while calorically dense are nutrient shallow. By this he means that the food we are now consuming does not get interpreted by our body in the same manner as the food we ate tens of thousands of years ago. In essence, our body does not perceive it is getting the proper amount of nutrition; and, accordingly, our FAT programs kick in and encourage us to store more fat. He describes three key characteristics of the food we should consume:

- It should be natural / free of processing. He particularly emphasizes the need for omega-3 fats

- It should be full of “vitality”. Essentially here he is looking for food that is fresh and has not been stored / had time to lose its natural nutrients.

He boils down the decision evaluating your diet to three questions:

- Where’s the protein?
- Where’s the live food?
- Where are the omega-3’s?

What is nice about his approach is that it is easy to understand AND he does not preach about moderation. Rather, he suggests that to transform your body you need to (i) you get your mind focused on avoiding stress, (ii) have a picture of the person you want to be, and (iii) eat according to the above three questions. That’s it.

He does spend a little time talking about exercise; however, not in a “preachy” or fanatical manner. Rather he suggests that historically we were much more active as a species. Again, going back to our ancestral roots, he makes the case for including some sort of motion in our daily lives. However, he eschews long work outs in favor of shorter, high intensity activities. Here he points to the “survival” issue we faced in the past / reminds us of the story about Jessie. Our FAT programs can be taught that lean is better via short, high intensity physical activities – think of it as reminding our body that we need to be lean and fast to escape the predators that are out to get us.

He closes by sharing a number of case studies of individuals who have implemented his approach with great success.

While it would be easy to dismiss Gabriel’s method as too simplistic, it would be a large mistake. He’s made a very good case that (i) we are programmed to respond to our environment in a manner that ensures our survival, (ii) we are facing stresses that we are unaware of, (iii) we have the ability to control how we face these stresses, (iv) we need to pay more attention to the type of food we eat, and (v) we would be well served to get off our backside for some occasional high intensity exercise. When you combine these five steps together, you have a pretty solid approach to transform your body.