

## **Ending the Food Fight**

By: David Ludwig, M.D., PhD

Published: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007

Reviewed: Dec 2007

### **Pros**

This book, designed as a nine-week weight loss program for obese children and their families, is written by Dr. David Ludwig, founder of the Optimal Weight for Life (OWL) program at Children's Hospital Boston - one of the largest pediatric weight management centres in the US. Dr. Ludwig is also an Associate Professor in Pediatrics at the Harvard Medical School, and a highly respected researcher in the field of childhood obesity.

The book provides many practical and varied tips for caregivers and health professionals, including how to model good eating patterns, and even remembering to address the issue of jealousy among friends of the child who successfully loses weight. This book is well researched with an extensive reference list. Dr. Ludwig advises parents that they are "guiding their children" to a healthy weight and reminds them that it's not the child, but rather the child's behaviours which are good or bad. Dr. Ludwig's compassion for his patients comes through in the book

### **Cons**

The book suffers from a poor lay out with many text boxes inserted awkwardly which makes following the weekly program cumbersome. Clumsy page breaks also make recipe and program sections difficult to read. The hard cover format is not consistent with the workbook approach that he lays out. The result of all of this makes following the weekly program cumbersome and an awkward cover-to-cover read.

At times, the writing could have been more concise. For example, information that isn't a high priority for families dealing with obesity, such as different types of cookware, could be omitted. At other times, not enough detail is provided. For example, we felt that readers would have benefited from more practical instructions on several terms such as: "healthful proteins", "concentrated sweets", "natural granola" and "a balanced low GI diet". We found the tendency to demonize foods such as milk as a possible cancer promoter and "fake" foods/fast foods to be extreme.

### **The Bottom Line**

Although the OWL program may be successful when delivered in a clinical setting with the support of a professional team, we weren't convinced that the book alone could provide the results that are promised on the book jacket. The

sheer number and type of weekly eating, activity and lifestyle goals may be too aggressive or unrealistic for a child/teenager. If a family is using this book, they would be more likely to achieve the desired results working closely with a registered dietitian and psychologist experienced in behavioral eating disorders, and at the very least stretching the nine-week program out over three to six months.