

The Breakthrough for Women

Part 1

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”

—Helen Keller

We met on a fine autumn day in 2001. Then 48, Margaret, a talented editor who sat anxiously in my waiting room, was in full-throttle perimenopause. I led her to my office, offered her a seat in the Victorian armchair across from my desk, and asked why she'd come.

I had a pretty good idea.

She looked at me and tried to smile. Instead, her eyes welled with tears.

“I'm 5 feet 5 inches and 236 pounds. I wear a size 22. I'm disgusted with my body—and scared that I'm going to die.”

Back then, studies had just begun to implicate excess inner abdominal fat—what I call Toxic Fat—as a risk factor for heart disease and diabetes, among other illnesses. Margaret was aware of these studies, and she had reason to worry. The workup I gave her that day said it all.

Fully 45 percent of her body was fat. Her fasting blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure were all above normal. Her mother had both heart disease and diabetes, and

Margaret was following in her footsteps. She wanted to be there for her three children. She was having nightmares about losing it all.

I told her that to save her life, she had to change it. Then, together, we customized a new method of living that would work for her—a new way to eat, move her body, and manage the stress that was undermining her physical and emotional well-being.

Several months into her program, she left me a voice mail. Her husband, Richard, was ill. She'd be back as soon as the crisis was resolved. I sighed—I was concerned that she'd abandon all the positive changes she'd made. Who could blame her?

But 5 months later, there she was. In my waiting room. I'd walked right past her. You see, she'd really changed. The sad, defeated Margaret I'd met months before had been transformed into a smiling, serene-looking, and very fit woman.

Margaret told me that Richard had developed a life-threatening intestinal blockage and had had to spend weeks in the intensive care unit of a major medical center 60 miles from her home. She'd spent 4 months by his bedside.

I thought: This woman had the perfect excuse to let herself go—a sick husband, a boatload of stress. She could have stopped working out, started eating badly again.

Instead, she brought her own healthy meals to her husband's hospital room and left his side long enough each day to walk briskly around the hospital campus. She'd even gotten a short-term membership at a local gym to get in her weight lifting.

Margaret had removed 45 pounds. Her body fat was down 7 points. She'd lost 4 inches off her waist, and her fasting blood sugar and cholesterol were within normal limits. Her blood pressure was down, too.

"Awesome. Absolutely awesome," I said, giving her a hug. "How'd you do it?"

Smiling, Margaret said, "When my husband got sick, I wanted to crawl in bed and pull the covers over my head. I knew I had to stay strong—for him, for my family—but I didn't know how I was going to pull it off.

"One day as I was stressing out, this image of myself popped into my head. I was a woman warrior. I had the sword, the breastplate, the whole deal, and I was fighting for my husband's life."

Sounds very Xena, right? But that image gave her focus. Purpose. Every time she walked, lifted weights, chose to fuel her body with good, healthy food, she was staying strong. For him, and for her children.

But somewhere along the line, Margaret started getting stronger not just for them but for herself.

“I felt powerful,” Margaret said. “My muscles were stronger. My mind was clearer. By the time my husband had recovered, I felt like I’d been reborn.”

Right then, I got it. This woman had cracked the code. She’d stayed with her program because she’d decided, consciously or not, to *fight for her own life as fiercely as she’d fought for her husband’s*.

And that, girlfriends, is the core of *Body-for-LIFE for Women*.

THE SEARCH FOR A WOMAN'S FORMULA

In my first book, *Fight Fat after Forty*, I helped introduce the world to the stress-fat connection with the aim of helping women prevent what I called Toxic Fat, the stubborn fat inside your belly that accumulates when stress is out of control and that has been linked to many deadly chronic diseases.

Since the publication of that book, we know more than ever before about women’s health. The bad news: Women’s health has gotten worse! Over 30 percent of women carry at least 50 pounds more than recommended for optimal health. And, frighteningly, their daughters are becoming so sedentary and overweight that they risk becoming the first generation not to live as long as their parents. These changes only further steeled my resolve to develop a solution that would help women live longer, healthier lives. I’d heard of the book *Body-for-LIFE*, of course—was there anyone left on the planet who hadn’t heard of this program for physical and mental transformation?—but when I hatched the plan for my second book, I hadn’t yet read it. One afternoon, I picked up *Body-for-LIFE*, sat down, and read it cover to cover.

And it got me thinking. I’d treated lots of women over the years. They had had babies, got PMS every month, were going through perimenopause, or were well past menopause. Normal woman things. And though many got very fit during our work together, many struggled with creating the time and the emotional space for themselves to change their bodies the way they wanted to.

I knew from my practice that the most successful plan for today’s women would factor in the realities of a woman’s whole life—the full-time job, the endless care-

giving, the stress that comes with trying to do it all. It would also recognize the importance of specific nutrients women need for optimal health, like calcium, iron, and folic acid. It would certainly need to accommodate the fluctuations in mood, energy, and appetite that happen around the time of a woman's period or during perimenopause. And, most clearly of all, it would address the issues of emotional eating and poor body image—issues with which many women struggle on a daily basis.

I liked the idea of achieving a fit, healthy body “for life,” and how the program revolved around a personal 12-week Challenge. I knew from my work with my patients that the very word *challenge* suggested hope, potential, empowerment. When you accept a challenge, you step up to the plate and give it your all. Roll up your sleeves, so to speak, and get to work. And when the challenge is met, you get to savor the rewards of your efforts. Just for fun, I began to play with the program—to modify it to a woman's unique physical and emotional makeup. And, as life would have it, I met Bill Phillips, the author of the original *Body-for-LIFE*, in Washington, D.C., on a snowy night in January 2004. We talked for hours, and it was clear that we both wanted to help people achieve their optimal mind and body, each from our own uniquely male and female points of view. That's when I resolved to bring the *Body-for-LIFE* program to a wider audience of women and give them the opportunity to achieve their own physical and mental transformation.

The result? This mind/body program of transformation for women, which synthesizes the newest science; my expertise in the fields of nutrition, stress, and metabolism; and my experience in helping thousands of women revitalize their health and their lives. *Body-for-LIFE for Women* is a refinement of the original *Body-for-LIFE* program, a holistic, integrated plan for healthier living that incorporates information about nutrition, exercise, and stress management specifically chosen to help women achieve their *Body-for-LIFE*.

VIVE LA DIFFÉRENCE!

The women I work with are of all ages, weights, and fitness levels. *Body-for-LIFE for Women* is working for them, and I believe it will work for you, too. This program factors in elements—such as age and hormonal levels—that have a significant im-

pact on a woman's body composition, weight, and fitness level. And there's a blueprint for using this program *for life*. Here's how the program will help you achieve optimal health.

It's based on scientific breakthroughs in two of the hottest fields of research. The first is gender-specific medicine, the science of how gender impacts the diagnosis and treatment of disease. This book focuses on the latest research in nutrition and fitness that has been conducted on women, rather than on men.

The second hot area of research is body composition (body comp for short), the proportions of fat, muscle, and bone that make up total body weight. By using this measure as its foundation, *Body-for-LIFE for Women* gives women a whole new paradigm for health and disease prevention. The scale weight is but one data byte. Now we focus on the quality of a woman's weight, not just the quantity. As my patient Marilyn once said, "Dr. Peeke, if I lost my keys, I'd want to find them. I haven't lost 63 pounds. I've *removed* them." So we no longer talk about weight "loss" but about *weight removal*.

It's holistic. With *Body-for-LIFE for Women*, the password is *fitness*—mental as well as physical. It's about having a sound mind in a sound body, and about achieving a balance between caring for the people you love and caring for yourself. In this paradigm, Mind always affects Body and vice versa, and it's the synergy between the two that creates health and fitness.

It redefines the healthy female body. With *Body-for-LIFE for Women*, the only standard you meet is based on you. If you're over 40, don't count on its helping you to squeeze into size zero jeans. But do expect a more lasting reward: a strong body that allows you to do the stuff you need—and want—to do without breaking down on you. It encourages you to embrace and optimize your mental and physical strengths by challenging you to be the very best you can be.

It's woman-proof. I've treated thousands of women, and not one of them was derailed by laziness or lack of willpower. No, they were done in by uniquely female traits.

The first: caregiving with no limits or boundaries. While women are busy making everyone else's life a little easier, their bodies and minds go to hell. As my patient Naomi once said, "I kept spending body dollars taking care of everyone else and forgetting about me!"

Birthdays Don't Count, Hormonal Milestones Do

The average woman born in 1900 lived to be 48. Unbelievable. Some of us are still changing Pampers at that age! Though we're living longer now, we've always outlived men. The average woman now lives 79.5 years; the average man, 74.

Women live longer than men for a multitude of reasons—biological, behavioral, social, psychological. But these days, chronological age is only a tiny piece of the story. Thanks to medical breakthroughs, better nutrition, more physical activity, and a decline in smoking, the rate of disabilities among older people has dropped dramatically. Many of my perimenopausal or menopausal patients are running marathons or climbing mountains at 50-plus.

Body-for-LIFE for Women takes the original *Body-for-LIFE* program one step deeper, to incorporate a groundbreaking view of female health. Instead of fixating on chronological age, we'll talk in terms of our Hormonal Milestones. In this book, you'll learn how to optimize your health and your body's physical fitness during each of your Hormonal Milestones:

- Milestone 1: Menstruation to First Pregnancy
- Milestone 2: The Reproductive Years
- Milestone 3: Perimenopause
- Milestone 4: Beyond Menopause

Each Milestone represents a significant shift in a woman's hormonal makeup, and each has dramatic implications for her health. For example, in the first Milestone, the surge of estrogen and other female hormones affects our hearts, our bones, our fat stores, and even our emotions. In many ways, Milestone 4 is the mirror image of Milestone 1; the decline of these hormones—whether sudden or gradual—reframes our approach to physical and emotional well-being.

In part 2, you'll learn more about your Hormonal Milestones and how each impacts your body. Whether you're in Milestone 1 or beyond, you'll learn tactics that will help you reach your optimal level of health and fitness for this time of your life, which will set the stage for good health in the next, and the next, and the next.

The second: rumination, or obsessing about something without doing anything about it. Women rarely “just do it.” For us, it’s usually “just obsess about it.” Well, that’s about to end. No more agonizing that you’re too fat to be seen in a gym. No more putting off your walks until you find a tracksuit that agrees with your skin tone. You already know what to do. *Body-for-LIFE* for Women shows you how to get it done.

It is truly for life. The core of *Body-for-LIFE* for Women centers on what happens during a specific 12-week Challenge. Each Challenge segment is part of an ongoing series of personal challenges—in which you’re either shedding or maintaining weight—that you cycle through for the rest of your life. Whether it’s pregnancy, illness, surgery, serious stress—or anything that causes you to regain the weight you’ve already removed—you’ll have the tools to regroup and stay mentally and physically fit. (And who knows? Maybe you’ll even be inspired to enter the EAS *Body-for-LIFE* Challenge contest (www.bodyforlife.com) and also have a chance at winning some cold, hard cash.)

So far, so good? Good. But there’s a lot more to this program. Let’s drill a little deeper.

THE WINNING FORMULA: MIND-MOUTH-MUSCLE

Body-for-LIFE for Women uses a unique and integrative template for fitness that I call the Mind-Mouth-Muscle Formula—MMM for short. It’s a woman’s blueprint for being and staying physically and mentally fit at every stage of her life, despite her endless caregiving and her unique stressors. Using MMM to guide your Challenge is the best way I’ve ever seen for women to achieve their fittest, healthiest body, regardless of their age, health, or physical condition.

The MMM Formula encompasses a woman’s . . .

- Attitude about balancing and managing the stresses of her life while caring for and honoring her mind and body (Mind)
- Way of nourishing herself to optimize her body composition and health (Mouth)
- Use of specific physical activity to attain and sustain her optimal body comp and performance (Muscle)