

Preview - Konvincing Kids that Kounting Kalories is Kooky with Tom Naughton

I went to school in the 1960s and 1970s and yes things were different then.

We had maybe one or two fat kids in each class.

And after I became one of them

I never once got together with the other fat kid in class and said

"Isn't it great? They were the only ones.

"For the sake of the nation, I'm so happy all of our classmates are skinny enough to make fun of us."

No, we never said that, because it's no fun being a fat kid. Period.

If you've been getting fat, I know you want to change that

and I'll bet at least a few people have already told you

why you're fat and what to do about it

like the classmates who explained it to me.

Now let's suppose these guys grow up and become doctors, or nutritionists, or personal trainers!

And they learn it's not polite to make fun of fat people.

They'll still give the same advice

only now that advice will sound almost like science.

It's all about the calories in and calories out.

There are 3500 calories in a pound of fat,
so if you decrease your intake by 500 calories per day,
you'll automatically lose one pound of fat per week.

Well it's strange if you think about it, because 50 years ago
very few Americans were overweight and nobody was counting calories.
In fact they couldn't because those nutrition labels you see on foods now
did not exist until the 1990s.

Nowadays though we have a lot more fat people
and it seems like everyone's talking about calories.

As in "Cut the calories, cut the calories, cut the calories!"

So what's a calorie?

Well to understand calories, let's forget about food for a second
and talk about something you probably don't eat.

Wood.

If I gave you a nice piece of wood, you could chop it up
and make something useful, like a chair.

Or you could store it for later.

Or you could toss it in the fireplace and burn it for heat.

How much heat?

There are different units for measuring heat,
but the common ones are BTUs, Joules and Calories.

So technically, a calorie is a unit of heat.

But heat is also a form of energy and in our world energy makes things happen.

200 years ago people were burning wood to boil water to make steam and the steam could turn an engine big enough to move an entire train.

So we could say the energy to move a train came from the calories in wood.

It's the same with food.

To determine the calories in food, scientists put it in a special piece of lab equipment, burn it and measure the heat.

And no, they are not trying to figure out how many pizzas you should burn to keep your house warm.

They want to know how much energy the food would provide if you burned it off for fuel.

But you don't, because some of what you eat is converted into building materials for the rest of your body and some of what to eat is converted to fat and stored in your fat cells.

That way your body can burn fat, when you're not eating.

If your body couldn't store calories as fat, you would have to spend almost all your waking hours eating.

Now because your body can store calories as fat, a lot of the so-called experts think your body works just like a bank account.

I called that The Piggy Bank Theory and it looks like this.