

**Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.
and Howie Jacobson, Ph.D.
About Fat Shaming**

For more information on how to
fix your food problem fast please visit
www.FixYourFoodProblem.com

Howie: Hello, Dr. Glenn.

Dr. Glenn: Hey, Dr. Howie, how are you?

Howie: Very well. So, I wanted to talk to you today about this video my daughter shared with me on Facebook, that I was loving until the end and then I started having some qualms about. When I expect those qualms, she looked at me like I'm a typical fat-shaming male chauvinist pig.

Dr. Glenn: How old is your daughter?

Howie: She's 21. And she's usually right with her criticisms of me. There's a whole younger generation who are just more sensitive and aware of things and then I recognize that. So, I don't dismiss her criticisms, but I'd love to discuss with you the video and what I took away at the end and get your thoughts.

Dr. Glenn: I would love to hear it.



Howie:

So, the video was a critique of women's fashion magazines. And specifically, they look at magazines like Cosmopolitan and Vogue. And first, they took the magazines from side view, so you could see the bulk of them, each of the pages. And then they went through a time-lapse video of ripping out all the pages that had no editorial content, it was just advertising. And one magazine was 65 percent lighter, the other was 90 percent lighter. And so the point was, okay, this is not journalism, this is advertising. This is all a product. And of course, you're the product because they're trying to market to you.

And then they looked at the headlines and the types of articles and it's typically, you're not thin enough, you're not beautiful enough. And then they look at a bunch of instances of taking very, very ordinary, fine-looking, ordinary women and turning them into supermodels using Photoshop. And so, basically saying, you have this epidemic of anorexia, bulimia, of disorder eating of all kinds. And these magazines are not your friends and they're playing through your insecurity, in your fears, and you should stop reading them, giving them your money and supporting the advertisers because it's all like, sign me up, baby. Yeah, that's part of the revolution.

And then at the end, it said, we're the only ones who decide if they're beautiful. However you look, that's beautiful, it's all in your attitude. And at that point, I was like, well, I don't know. I can't articulate it. And I think the more I articulate it, the more I sound like a male chauvinist pig, but then it's like, no, there are objective standards of beauty that are genetically related to our health. It's not just, yes, there are fads and yes, there are different cultures and sometimes, more curvy is in or more fit is in, but basically, at every culture, beauty has been related to the likelihood of being able to reproduce healthy offspring. To suddenly just pretend that doesn't exist and pretend to somebody who



is 400 pounds can simply say, "I'm beautiful the way I am," it bothers me.

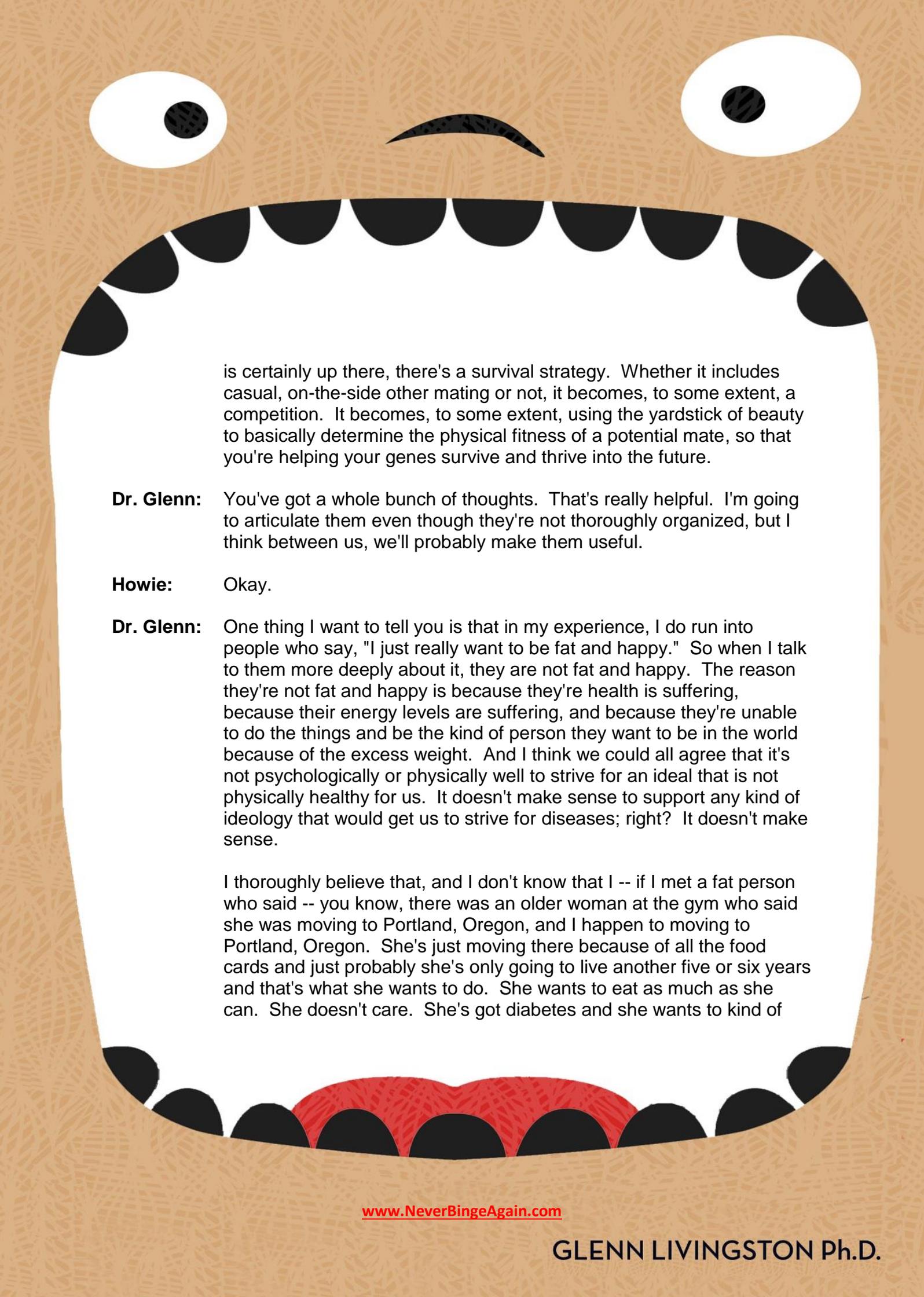
Dr. Glenn: Yeah.

Howie: And what my daughter took from that was, good, so you're going to fat-shame them into losing weight? But you'll know, like, I wouldn't say it to a person. It's not that I'm attacking the person and saying, "Well, if you're overweight, you obviously don't love yourself enough", or something like that. But I am confused and conflicted about how to think about and more specifically, talk about these kinds of issues. And I would love your guidance.

Dr. Glenn: Could you say a little more about your knowledge of the characteristics of beauty which are related to health?

Howie: One of them is symmetry. Symmetry tends to be more beautiful than asymmetry. Being of a weight that is most likely to survive -- so in certain societies, very overweight was seen as the most beautiful because food was scarce and famine was likely. Whereas in our society today, being overweight is indicative of various diseases. That may not prevent you from bearing children yourself, but certainly will prevent you from being a grandparent and providing that kind of benefits to future generations.

There's a lot of research with which I'm mostly unfamiliar around humans using pheromones to determine genetic fitness for partners. Beauty doesn't matter to the species where there is an alpha male who mates with all of the females of their pack; right? Like, the gorilla doesn't really care what his female gorillas look like. It's not relevant. But in our society in which monogamy, if not genetically programmed,



is certainly up there, there's a survival strategy. Whether it includes casual, on-the-side other mating or not, it becomes, to some extent, a competition. It becomes, to some extent, using the yardstick of beauty to basically determine the physical fitness of a potential mate, so that you're helping your genes survive and thrive into the future.

Dr. Glenn: You've got a whole bunch of thoughts. That's really helpful. I'm going to articulate them even though they're not thoroughly organized, but I think between us, we'll probably make them useful.

Howie: Okay.

Dr. Glenn: One thing I want to tell you is that in my experience, I do run into people who say, "I just really want to be fat and happy." So when I talk to them more deeply about it, they are not fat and happy. The reason they're not fat and happy is because their health is suffering, because their energy levels are suffering, and because they're unable to do the things and be the kind of person they want to be in the world because of the excess weight. And I think we could all agree that it's not psychologically or physically well to strive for an ideal that is not physically healthy for us. It doesn't make sense to support any kind of ideology that would get us to strive for diseases; right? It doesn't make sense.

I thoroughly believe that, and I don't know that I -- if I met a fat person who said -- you know, there was an older woman at the gym who said she was moving to Portland, Oregon, and I happen to moving to Portland, Oregon. She's just moving there because of all the food courts and just probably she's only going to live another five or six years and that's what she wants to do. She wants to eat as much as she can. She doesn't care. She's got diabetes and she wants to kind of



die happy. I asked her about her kids and if she wanted some more time with the grandkids and she said, "You know, it's just too hard. To do what I want to do."

And I think that in our culture, we fought wars for freedom, freedom of choice. And I think that if people want to live fast and die young, that they have the right to do that, I always wonder what was the psychological experience that they had that made them to see that there's more other options. And I don't feel like it's a good choice, but I would support someone in that choice if that's what they really want because they do support freedom. I don't want that person to feel ashamed, if that's what they want to do.

I also think that there are some things which Schopenhauer would call "the will of the species", which are not necessarily relevant to our contributions to society today and our ability to live for longer periods of time. What Schopenhauer means by the will of species is that when we're attracted to symmetry, we're really looking to perpetuate our genes. By following the will of the species, that's why everybody has children so quickly before they're ready, and living happily in today's society involves overwriting the will of the species to a certain extent. And I'm saying this as a 52-year-old divorced guy, right?

If you follow the will of the species and marry someone who is just absolutely gorgeous to you, because of their symmetry and physical attractiveness, then you haven't really, in today's society, set yourself up for a long and happy monogamous relationship or feeling settled and fulfilled in society and making the biggest contribution to society. And so I do believe that we need to look beyond the will of the species while we're thinking about our evaluation of what is the good, what is the beautiful. I think we need to be willing to look beyond that. Just



like in order to create a society where everybody has equal rights, we had to go beyond the principle that might makes right.

If all that matters were biological superiority, then we'll be living by the principle that the biggest, strongest alpha male should be the only ones that got to mate and everybody else would have to eat their cow. I think Donald Trump is moving us to that direction anyway. I think that it's a complex issue and I think that I wouldn't want to support the notion that we should only look at the most objective standard of beauty which supports reproductive health. But by the same token, I think there is pathology that causes people to say, "Well, why can't I just be fat and happy when there are a lot of solutions available?" And I think the pig is particularly alluring when it says, "Hey, can we just be fat and happy?"

I don't know very many fat and happy people. Most fat people that I've worked with are very unhappy about being fat, and it's not just because society changed them. It's because it's unpleasant to be fat. And I was fat, I know what it's like, so, what do you think?

Howie: I think that that's the crux of it. So, you talked about someone who says, "Here's I want to live. Here's how I want to die." I don't stop people from smoking. I don't make side comments to people who don't wear seatbelts even though they've raised my insurance rate. That's like freedom, is to me sacred. And I want to make it clear that I wasn't angry or upset at the people that video was talking about or to. What I didn't like was taking something that I think is a pathology, this counter desire to be unhealthy, and basically elevating it to a bold political statement.

Dr. Glenn: Right.



Howie: It's like a big middle finger to society as it is. So, you want me to be thin, you left me for the 23-year-old secretary, well, I'm going to embrace what I am. And I get that in terms of identity politics around things that are immutable, I guess that around sexual orientation, about taking the negative and making it a source of pride. I get that about race, about skin color. And the same thing, I think, has happened around obesity. And I think they're not seeing at all. So to me, it feels irresponsible, the pig. It's like, let's collude with the pig who just wants to binge in the moment. Yeah, that's unhelpful for me.

Dr. Glenn: Let's throw away the struggle to master our impulses, which really is the struggle of life; right? As we mature, we give up on learning to direct our impulses towards progressively healthier goals; in many ways, we're giving up on life. People have the right to make that choice if they want to, but I wouldn't support it as healthy.

Howie: Right. Just a different kind of will of the species; right? I want the world to be peopled by people that I want to create the world I want to live in.

Dr. Glenn: Yes. Did you ever see the movie *Idiocracy*?

Howie: No.

Dr. Glenn: There's a movie, *Idiocracy*, which says that the problem is that the people who are having more children are kind of like the less-educated people who have more trouble controlling their impulses, and so we are gradually devolving to idiots. And so there was a tidal wave of garbage -- it's one of the funniest movies I've ever seen, but it's also very bad.

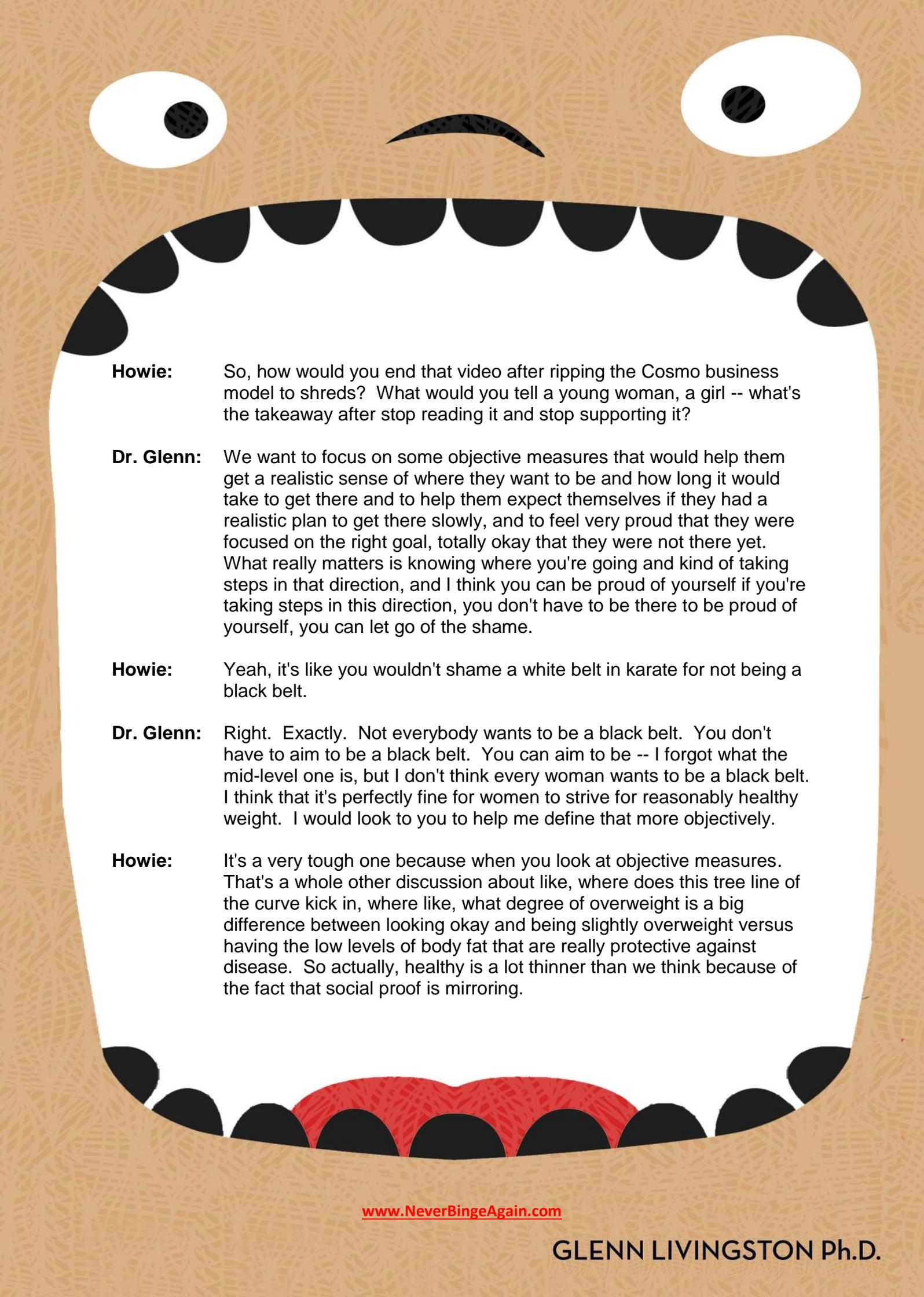


Howie: I don't know about that with humans, but I did see a story where we're basically ruining cats by having all these shelter cats that we're trying to place because basically, they're the offspring of the toms and the ones with the least sociability. I do get scared at the kind of going too far into a Darwinian evolutionary psychology paradigm because I think there's a fine line between that and children is growth science, that can excuse everything Donald Trumpian as the natural alpha male -- like that's way grosser than anything else we've got.

Dr. Glenn: No, no, no. And our society really does promote an unhealthy thin image, which is not achievable for most women; right? There's a reason that this video needed to be portrayed. It's just that, I think they went too far, if that's what you're saying.

Howie: Yeah. There's almost a sense of a woman who wants to become lean, is in some sense betraying her sisters. This is by like playing into patriarchy, whereas a man who wants to become an athlete, but you have to join a different tribe. Maybe it's true for men and women. The Facebook groups that we're on where people are really striving to make huge changes in their lives, they're really focused on self-improvement. One of the common themes is you either have to ignore a lot of what your existing friends and family say because they're going to try to pull you down; find new ones; cut yourself off. Someone who wants to get healthy and look good, to the extent that looking good even approaches our cultural norm is already a step in the wrong direction as opposed to both extremes are extreme and unhealthy.

Dr. Glenn: Yeah. There you go.



Howie: So, how would you end that video after ripping the Cosmo business model to shreds? What would you tell a young woman, a girl -- what's the takeaway after stop reading it and stop supporting it?

Dr. Glenn: We want to focus on some objective measures that would help them get a realistic sense of where they want to be and how long it would take to get there and to help them expect themselves if they had a realistic plan to get there slowly, and to feel very proud that they were focused on the right goal, totally okay that they were not there yet. What really matters is knowing where you're going and kind of taking steps in that direction, and I think you can be proud of yourself if you're taking steps in this direction, you don't have to be there to be proud of yourself, you can let go of the shame.

Howie: Yeah, it's like you wouldn't shame a white belt in karate for not being a black belt.

Dr. Glenn: Right. Exactly. Not everybody wants to be a black belt. You don't have to aim to be a black belt. You can aim to be -- I forgot what the mid-level one is, but I don't think every woman wants to be a black belt. I think that it's perfectly fine for women to strive for reasonably healthy weight. I would look to you to help me define that more objectively.

Howie: It's a very tough one because when you look at objective measures. That's a whole other discussion about like, where does this tree line of the curve kick in, where like, what degree of overweight is a big difference between looking okay and being slightly overweight versus having the low levels of body fat that are really protective against disease. So actually, healthy is a lot thinner than we think because of the fact that social proof is mirroring.



Dr. Glenn: There's a scientific fact that what the solid evidence suggests is that health really is a body fat level that is a lot lower than most of our society believes and is driving for. Nothing to do with the cultural norms of what's beauty or shame or anything like that, it's just that scientifically, that's what it is.

Howie: But, asterisk, that's true if you get there through good eating and vigorous exercise, not if you get there through OPTIFAST and fat sucking. Just like anything else, can have good cholesterol through natural means or you can have good cholesterol through taking pills. When it's manipulated, weight or anything else is a hood ornament, it's not a marker of excellent anymore.

Dr. Glenn: Here's the bottom line, I can imagine how it would be healthy to support an ideology that strives for disease. I can imagine how that could be psychologically healthy to help people feel okay about doing something that's killing them. How could that be okay?

Howie: That's exactly the bottom line. Thank you. That's exactly what was circling around very gingerly. And to some extent, the body shaming or the fat-shaming concept is kind of a straw man and that what we're talking about is exactly the opposite. We understand the shame is playing into the pig. You're looking at yourself in the mirror, you go, "Oh my God." That's the last time you consciously and intentionally feel negative about yourself.

Dr. Glenn: Right. That's the moment you can let it go. You saw the iceberg coming and you steered away. And now, you might have a long trip home, but you don't have to be obsessing about the iceberg anymore.



Howie: Right. The people I talked to have lost hundreds of pounds. The ones who are really successful will look back at their before pictures and have such respect for that person because that was the person who did the hardship.

Dr. Glenn: Interesting. Wow! Right. That's the person who made the decision to turn around.

Howie: Yeah. That's the person who got up at 4:00 in the morning and started jogging; going to the gym when everybody else is whipped. And this person is at 420 pounds. Like, hats off, man. That's more courage than I may ever need in my life.

Dr. Glenn: Right.

Howie: Well, thank you.

Dr. Glenn: Okay buddy. Is there anything else I could do for you?

Howie: No. Take care, Glenn.

Dr. Glenn: Bye-bye.

**For more information on how to
fix your food problem fast please visit
www.FixYourFoodProblem.com**

© Psy Tech Inc.
All Rights Reserved
www.NeverBingeAgain.com

www.NeverBingeAgain.com

GLENN LIVINGSTON Ph.D.