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A Review

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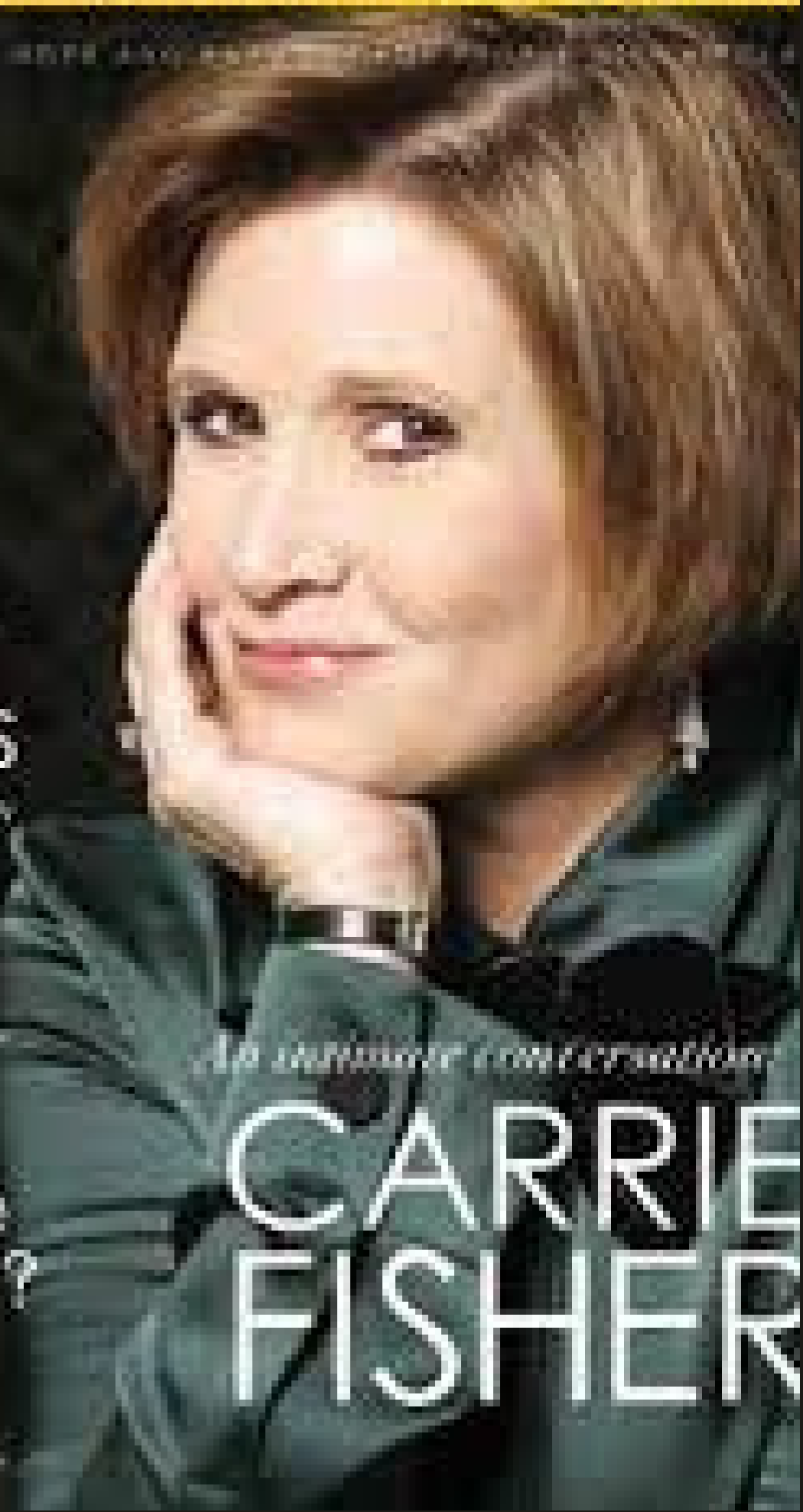
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AN UNUSUAL CONNECTION

CARRIE FISHER



3 SIZES OF CLOTHES

When my waistline fluctuates

HAVING TO PACK for a visit to my father made me face up to an out-of-control situation in my life: the emotional fallout when I don't fit in some of my outfits.

Because my waistline fluctuates, there are three sizes of clothes in that Bat Cave I call a closet: small, medium and large.

I know my moods and my medications play a role in my off-kilter metabolism, oversized cravings, and binge eating, but when I try on clothes and they don't fit—whether they are too small or too loose—I judge myself, not my clothes.

You know that one garment that tells you how to feel about yourself? Mine is a little black designer dress from a Filene's Basement "Going Out of Business" sale. It's the smallest, most binding garment I own.

When I'm so skinny I'm swimming in it, that's not necessarily a good thing.

Being thin has never made me happy. During anorexic phases, I never weighed less or hated myself more. I have been skinny and still stuck with metabolic syndrome (a cluster of warning signs for diabetes, heart disease and stroke).

I have more insulin circulating in my blood than I'm supposed to for optimum health, a condition known as hyperinsulinemia. This condition comes with sugar cravings and feeling really hungry, really often.

I'm constantly studying the subject. From what I've read and what doctors tell me, in the presence of a meal, my body sends my brain a primal text: "Eat up! Food is scarce!"

So now, I'm mindful when I eat. After a meal, I wait for the painful postprandial hunger phase (thanks, hyperinsulinemia) to pass. It takes about an hour.

I also worked with my primary care physician, starting a diabetes prevention treatment that has really helped with the blood sugar spikes, hunger, and weight swings.

One of the biggest things I've learned is this: I never get on the scale anymore. Even at the doctor's office I stand backwards and make them promise not to tell me my weight. I just don't need that trigger.

I still need help with the Debbie Downer self-speak that goes on when I'm faced with trying on my wardrobe of beautiful clothes. (Ironically, my closet is crammed because I stopped discarding too-big or too-small items as a form of self-acceptance.)

I found some advice on affirmations that works for me. Instead of looking in the mirror and saying, "You are a wonderful, worthy child of the universe"—which always makes me feel foolish—there's power in addressing yourself by name.

So now, when I get in a situation that makes me emotionally uncomfortable, here's how I roll: "Allison, no matter what, you rock!"

I just don't want the burden of self-judgment. That type of weight is heaviest of all. ●



Allison Strong

Allison Strong, a bphope blogger, is a longtime music journalist. She writes for publications in Florida, where she lives with her husband, Michael.

8 Take your time. Too often, we're shoveling down food on autopilot. Norkus embraces a "slow food" approach that starts with thoughtful meal preparation, like assembling a salad with different vegetables, lettuces, and creative ingredients such as edible flowers to increase the pleasure factor.

"When you eat a fast-food burger, you don't even feel like you know what you're eating," she says. "You can ... make [healthy] food beautiful, and it's not expensive."

Approaching what's on your plate with deliberation and appreciation—also known as mindful eating—makes you more likely to eat slowly and stop before you overeat.

You needn't be a gourmet to embrace this idea. You should, however, make sure all devices are put away and the TV or radio is silent. Starting with a simple green salad and a glass of water gives you a chance to ease into the meal while also sating your appetite a bit before the entrée.

9 Think about the bigger picture. A rigid or obsessive attitude toward what you see on the scale isn't likely to work in the long run, warns Lemond. Instead of a "diet mentality," she says, think in terms of a deeper reason to keep you inspired. Some examples: wanting to improve how you feel day-to-day, having more energy, or knowing that you are taking care of your health.

"It's not about a number on the scale," says Lemond. "It's about living the best life for as long as you have on this earth—about having vitality, energy, and functionality for as long as you can." ●

Kelly K. James, a health, fitness, and nutrition writer, lives outside Chicago. Her work has appeared in Fitness, Woman's Day, Runner's World, and other magazines.