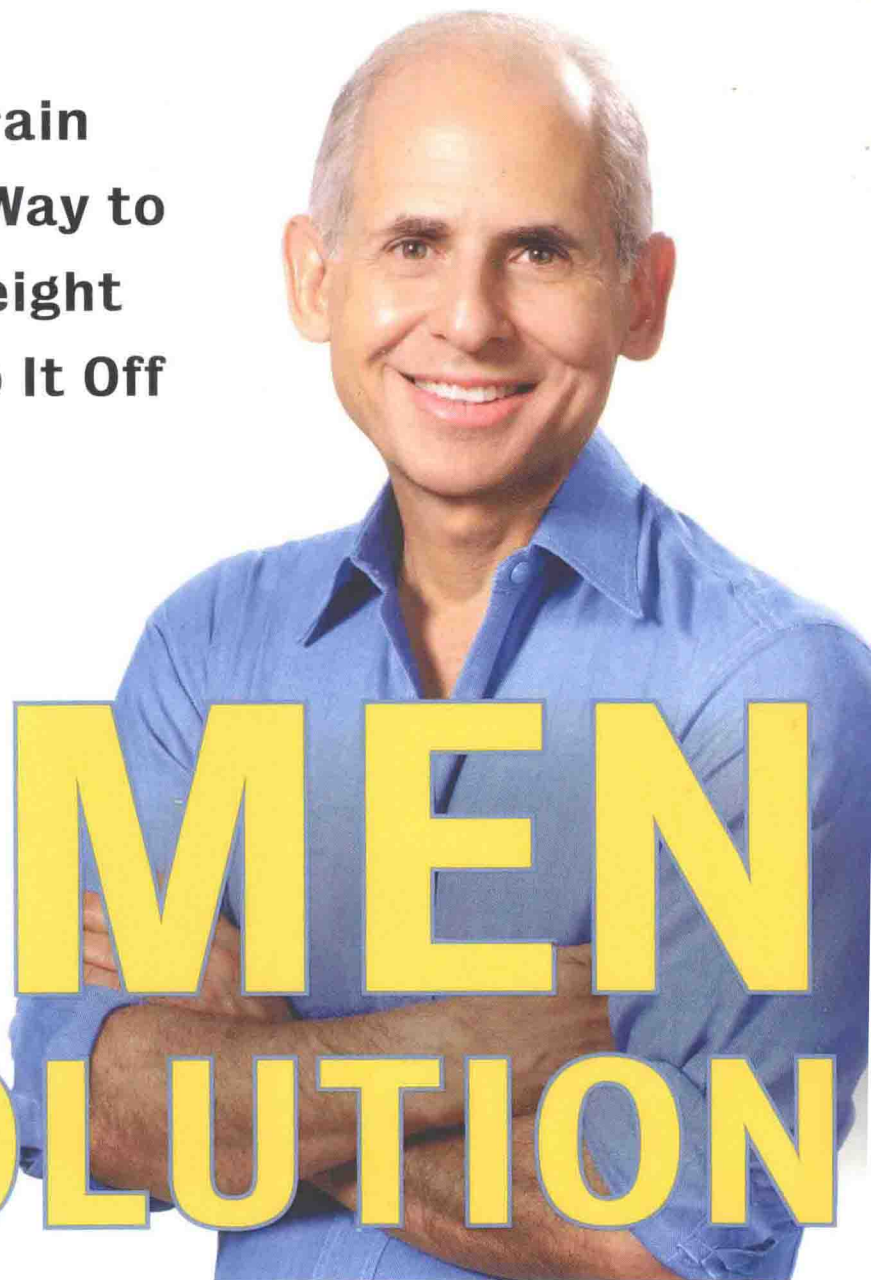


**The Brain
Healthy Way to
Lose Weight
and Keep It Off**



THE AMEN SOLUTION

THE SECRET TO BEING THINNER, SMARTER, HAPPIER

**DANIEL G.
AMEN, M.D.**

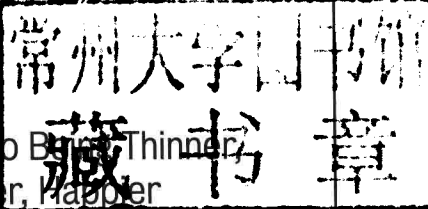
**NEW YORK
TIMES
BESTSELLING
AUTHOR**

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Lose Weight and Keep It Off

DANIEL G. AMEN, M.D.

The Secret to Being Thinner,
Smarter, Happier



CROWN
ARCHETYPE
NEW YORK

MEDICAL DISCLAIMER

The information presented in this book is the result of years of practice experience and clinical research by the author. The information in this book, by necessity, is of a general nature and not a substitute for an evaluation or treatment by a competent medical specialist. If you believe you are in need of medical interventions, please see a medical practitioner as soon as possible. The stories in this book are true. The names and circumstances of the stories have been changed to protect the anonymity of patients.

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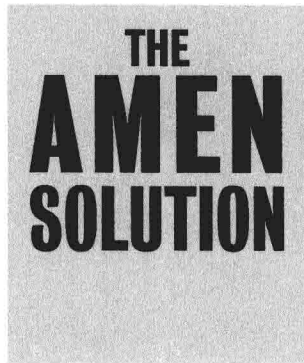
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First Edition

Praise for



“A masterful analysis of the factors that influence weight gain and permanent, sustainable weight loss, written in easy-to-understand language, leaving the reader with only one thought: ‘I can do this!’”

—Dr. David Ajibade, cofounder and
president of Building Strength, LLC

“I’ve witnessed the positive results of *The Amen Solution* both personally and with my patients. This is a book you will want to get for yourself, your friends, family, and the health care professionals in your life! Help change the world and join the brain health revolution.”

—Earl R. Henslin, Psy.D., author of *This Is Your Brain on Joy*

“A great book, filled with good, solid, simple advice for eating healthy and losing weight, with many original strategies for interrupting negative behaviors and enhancing motivation—key elements for achieving success.”

—Andrew Newberg, M.D., and Mark Robert Waldman,
authors of *How God Changes Your Brain*

ALSO BY DR. DANIEL G. AMEN

- Unchain Your Brain* (MindWorks Press, 2010)
- Wired for Success* (MindWorks Press, 2010)
- Change Your Brain, Change Your Body* (Harmony Books, 2010,
New York Times Bestseller)
- Magnificent Mind at Any Age* (Harmony Books, 2009,
New York Times Bestseller)
- Sex on the Brain* (Harmony Books, 2007)
- Making a Good Brain Great* (Harmony Books, 2005,
Amazon Book of the Year)
- Preventing Alzheimer's* (written with neurologist William R. Shackle, Putnam, 2004)
- Healing Anxiety and Depression* (written with Lisa Routh, M.D., Putnam, 2003)
- New Skills for Frazzled Parents* (MindWorks Press, 2003)
- Healing the Hardware of the Soul* (Free Press, 2002)
- Images of Human Behavior: A Brain SPECT Atlas* (MindWorks Press, 2003)
- Healing ADD* (Putnam, 2001)
- How to Get out of Your Own Way* (MindWorks Press, 2000)
- Change Your Brain, Change Your Life* (Three Rivers Press, 1999,
New York Times Bestseller)
- ADD in Intimate Relationships* (MindWorks Press, 1997)
- Would You Give 2 Minutes a Day for a Lifetime of Love?* (St. Martin's Press, 1996)
- A Child's Guide to ADD* (MindWorks Press, 1996)
- A Teenager's Guide to ADD* (written with Antony Amen and Sharon Johnson,
MindWorks Press, 1995)
- Mindcoach: Teaching Kids to Think Positive and Feel Good* (MindWorks Press, 1994)
- The Most Important Thing in Life I Learned from a Penguin* (MindWorks Press, 1994)
- Ten Steps to Building Values Within Children* (MindWorks Press, 1994)
- The Secrets of Successful Students* (MindWorks Press, 1994)
- Healing the Chaos Within* (MindWorks Press, 1993)

To Matt, I am rooting for you

**THE
AMEN
SOLUTION**

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INTRODUCTION

In my book *Change Your Brain, Change Your Body*, I wrote about how you can use your brain to improve the health of your heart, skin, energy, focus, memory, sexual function, and weight. In it, I revealed that based on our brain imaging work at the Amen Clinics with tens of thousands of patients from eighty different countries over the last twenty years, we have discovered two of the major secrets why most diets don't work. And contrary to what you might think, they have nothing to do with your lack of desire to lose weight or your willpower. In fact, for some people the harder they try to lose weight, the worse it gets.

The first secret is that most weight problems occur between your ears. So stapling your stomach may, in fact, be working on the wrong organ. Not to mention that ten years after gastric banding surgery, the success rate is a disappointing 31 percent. It is your brain that pushes you away from the table telling you that you've had enough, and it is your brain that gives you permission to have that second bowl of ice cream, making you look and feel like a blob. *If you want a better body, the first place to always start is by having a better brain.*

The second secret, based on our brain imaging work, is that there is not just *one* brain pattern associated with being overweight; there are at least five different patterns. Giving everyone the same diet plan will make some people better and a lot of people worse. Knowing about your own specific brain will make losing weight and keeping it off a whole lot easier.

The response to these revelations has been amazing, and the book vaulted onto the *New York Times* bestseller list and stayed there for months. I knew people would respond to the message that their brain and weight are intricately connected and that if you boost your brain you can have a better body. What I wasn't prepared for, though, was the deluge of desperate requests from readers asking for more specific help on how to use their brains to lose their bellies.

Ever since *Change Your Brain, Change Your Body* hit cyberspace and store shelves, people have been calling and e-mailing our clinics; posting comments on my blog; and talking to me at book signings, speaking engagements, and other events. What the overwhelming majority of them were begging for was a simple step-by-step brain-based program for weight loss.

The Amen Solution: The Brain Healthy Way to Lose Weight and Keep It Off is that program.

I like to call it weight loss for thoughtful people. This is definitely not weight loss for dummies. As you know, there are a lot of dumb ways to try to lose weight. You may have even tried some of them. You know the kinds of methods I am talking about—the cookie diet, mustard diet, eat anything you want for an hour a day diet, cabbage soup diet, part-time diet (one day on, one day off), grapefruit diet, baby food diet, liquid diet, juice detox diet, coconut oil diet, ice cube diet, ice cream diet, grape diet, eat only one kind of food per meal diet, caveman diet, red wine diet, pizza diet, one-day diet, three-day diet, seven-day diet, peanut butter diet, and even the tapeworm diet (yes, some people are actually willing to swallow a tapeworm to try to lose weight). These types of gimmicky diets promise fast results—“Lose 10 pounds in seven days!”—but are more likely to set you up for failure in the long run.

My favorite story about dumb ways to lose weight came from one of my public television appearances. When I got to one of the stations for a live on-air appearance, a colleague I will call Jim, with whom I had worked before, looked thinner. I asked Jim what he was doing. He told me he was on the hCG diet. Human chorionic gonadotropin is a pregnancy hormone that, in conjunction with a 500-calorie-a-day diet (*yikes!*), has been reported

to help people with rapid weight loss. The placebo-controlled studies with hCG have been less than impressive. Nonetheless, my friend did very well on the diet, losing 20 pounds. It is a diet you can only do for twenty-six days at a time because people seem to become immune to its effects. On the last day of the diet, as a way to celebrate his weight loss, Jim told me he called his favorite deep-dish pizza restaurant in Chicago and ordered two large deep-dish pizzas that he planned to gorge on over the weekend.

When he told me this story, I looked at him like he was the dumbest person on the planet. “You’re kidding me, right?” I asked as I looked into his eyes.

“No, why?” he replied defensively.

“You are acting like an alcoholic who just got out of rehab, and as a way to celebrate, you are going to get drunk!” Not exactly a sign of intelligent life.

When I saw him several months later, he had put back on all the weight he had lost.

The Amen Solution for Anxiety and Depression Also Helps Your Weight

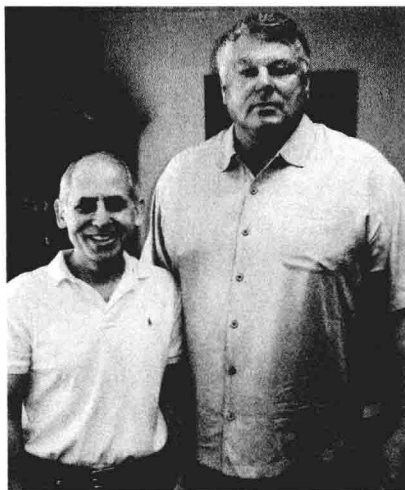
The seeds for this book came from two projects at the Amen Clinics. First, a few years ago I wrote a twelve-week home study course for conquering anxiety and depression, using principles I had been teaching for years at the Amen Clinics. There is good scientific evidence that many people can improve their mood and decrease their level of anxiety by implementing specific strategies at home.

When I was on the follow-up calls with our ninety participants, the majority of people told me they felt less anxious and less depressed, which I had expected, but what I didn’t expect was that some people told me that they had also lost 10, 20, and even 30 pounds in the twelve weeks and found that their memory and focus were better as well. In listening to those calls I had an “aha” moment and realized that with a better brain you also get a better body and a better mind.

Science backs up this discovery. Research presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Ingestive Behavior in 2009 found that depressed patients who followed a six-month behavioral weight-loss program not only lost weight but also reported a significant drop in their symptoms of depression. Lose weight, get happier.

Amen Clinic NFL Brain Imaging / Rehabilitation Program Helps Players Lose Weight and Get Smarter

The second project that's helped seed this book is my work in performing the world's largest brain imaging / brain rehabilitation study on active and retired professional football players. We have evaluated and treated more than one hundred players. For many years, the NFL has said that it didn't know if playing professional football caused long-term brain damage. After a number of players came to see me with dementia, depression, and obesity, I decided to study their brains and answer once and for all the question "Does playing football damage the brain?" The answer, which did not surprise anyone except perhaps some in the NFL, was *of course playing professional football causes long-term brain damage*. You cannot get hit by guys like Minnesota Viking Ron Yary (6'5" and 255 pounds) thirty to fifty times a game and not expect to have some trouble.



Dr. Amen and Ron Yary

But the exciting news is that when we put our players on our brain healthy program, many of them not only lost weight (one of our players lost over 100 pounds), they also got smarter and happier at the same time. Plus, their cognitive scores improved, sometimes by 200, 300, or even 400 percent.

Here is an example: Big Ed White, age sixty-two, a four-time Pro Bowl offensive guard for the Minnesota Vikings and later for the San Diego Chargers, played seventeen seasons in the National Football League. When I first met Ed he weighed 365 pounds and scored very poorly on his cogni-



Dr. Amen and Big Ed White

tive testing profile. All of our players take a test called the Microcog, which measures intellectual functioning in nine different areas, including overall general cognitive functioning, information processing speed, attention, reasoning, and memory. He scored very poorly. After six months on our brain healthy / weight-loss program, he had lost 40 pounds, and his test scores increased dramatically (see below).

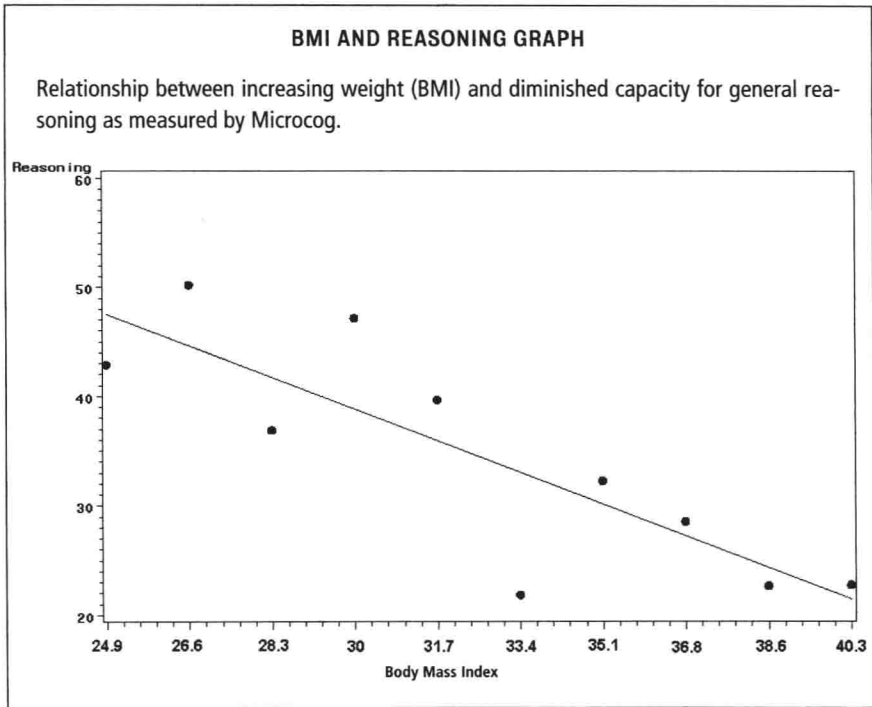
ED WHITE'S MICROCOG RESULTS			
	Before	After	% Change
General cognitive functioning	21	39	90%+
Information processing	25	58	> 100%+
Reasoning	3	13	> 400%+
Memory	14	66	> 470%+

The numbers are Ed's percentile rankings, comparing him with other people his age and education level. For example, a ranking of 21 percent means 79 percent of people his age and education scored better than Ed.

Our research with the NFL players also demonstrated what other researchers had found: *As your weight goes up, your brainpower goes down.* Below is a graph of what happens to our players' reasoning scores as their weight—measured by body mass index (BMI)—goes up. It should make anyone be concerned about their weight.

Research has clearly shown that obesity increases your risk for Alzheimer's

disease and other forms of dementia. Plus, Cyrus Raji’s group at the University of Pittsburgh found that the brains of overweight people—people with a BMI between 25 and 30—had 4 percent less volume than the brains of people with lower BMIs, and their brains looked eight years older than healthy people’s. People who were obese—people with a BMI over 30 (Ed White’s BMI when he first came to see us was 45) had 8 percent less brain volume, and their brains looked sixteen years older than healthy people’s.



THE PROMISE AND THE PROGRAM

In this book I will give you the basic steps to boost your brain to become thinner, smarter, and happier at the same time. I will give you a ten-week program to get started. This is the same program we use at the Amen Clinics, and the same program we use with our NFL players. Take note that we started our weight-loss pilot program on December 1, and everybody told us we were crazy to conduct a weight-loss study over the holidays when most people tend to gain weight. But we wanted to make sure our program could stand up to real-life challenges, like holiday feasts and treats. It did. Our group actually lost on average 2.8 pounds during the week of Christmas! On

average, our participants lose 10 pounds in ten weeks. (Note that individual results may vary.) Many of our participants have lost much, much more.

- **Eileen**, fifty-five, lost 15 pounds in ten weeks, but after three ten-week cycles she lost 39 pounds, and she reported that she felt happier and smarter. “It made a big change in my whole life.”
- **Dan** lost 39 pounds in ten weeks, 50 pounds after his second ten-week cycle, and a total of 69 pounds after his third ten-week program and reports he is happier and in much more control of his whole life. He told us, “This diet was so much easier than the ones in the past because the cravings were actually gone.”
- **John** lost 35 pounds in ten weeks and says he is a happier, more fun person to be around.
- **Amy** lost four pant sizes and said it was much easier than she suspected it would be. She tells her friends that healthy food is medicine.
- **Betty** lost 16 pounds and says when she goes out to eat with her husband they get one plate and split it, and when she walks out of the restaurant she no longer feels stuffed and stupid.
- **Rhona** was already at a healthy weight to start and took the course just to support a friend, but she ended up losing 5½ pounds after ten weeks and then another 4 pounds after the following ten-week program. She said, “This has changed my life. I thought when I took the course I might learn something and lose a pound or two, but I never thought it would change my life. And personally for me, when I am shopping, I now think, does this feed my brain? That was something I had never thought of before.”

Throughout the pages of this book, you will learn much more about these and many other participants in our weight-loss program, including several of our NFL players. In “The Amen Solution All-Stars” profiles, these real-life people will share their personal journeys to a slimmer shape, greater happiness, and improved brain function. I hope their stories will inspire and motivate you.

You will also find “Get Smart to Get Thinner” boxes with thoughtful tips, strategies, insights, and success stories from the everyday people who have been successfully losing weight with this program. These quotes come from

our weight-loss program participants as well as people who have posted comments on my blog or posted online reviews of my book *Change Your Brain, Change Your Body*. I have changed their names to protect their privacy and have edited some of the quotes for space and clarity.

Why ten weeks to start? You need at least seventy days to change bad habits and to start solidifying good ones. However, this is not a ten-week program. This is a program to get control of your brain and your body for *the rest of your life*. Ten weeks is just a start. If you act like hCG, Chicago deep-dish pizza Jim in the story relayed earlier, you will never get it right. Here is a summary of the program.

STEP 1: THE AMEN SOLUTION OVERVIEW—DO THESE TEN THINGS FIRST!

Immediately, I will give you the basic steps of the program, so you can get started immediately, including what important numbers you need to know and start improving right away, plus how to keep a daily journal to help your brain develop new neuronal networks to help direct your behavior in a positive way.

STEP 2: KNOW YOUR MOTIVATION TO GET HEALTHY

To lose weight and keep it off, you must be able to maintain a high level of motivation. In this step I will focus and enhance your desire to be healthier, happier, and smarter.

STEP 3: EAT RIGHT TO THINK RIGHT AND KEEP TRACK OF WHAT YOU EAT

Food is medicine and can help you be trim, vibrant, happy, and focused, or it can make you plump, sluggish, sad, and stupid. In this step I will give you the Amen Clinics Seven Rules for Brain Healthy Eating. Journaling is a critical part of the program to be successful, so you keep a record of what you put into your body to avoid calorie amnesia.

STEP 4: KNOW YOUR BRAIN TYPE

By now, you have learned our basic steps to lose weight and be happier and smarter, but not everyone is the same. In this section I will explore the five different types of overeaters, the interventions for each type, and what to do if you have more than one type.