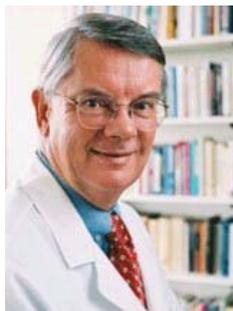


## FORWARD



*I first met Dr. Robert Pretlow in May of 2008 at a conference, where I spoke. At the end of my presentation he came up and told me about his unique website, where overweight kids have spontaneously posted over 130,000 messages over the last 9 years. After talking with Dr. Pretlow for only 5 minutes, I responded, “You should write a book!” He promised to send further information once he returned home.*

*Dr. Pretlow also shared his observation that these kids appear to be psychologically hooked on food, almost like an addiction. He expressed his frustration that healthcare professionals seem unwilling to consider this idea. I likewise have been perplexed by the rigidity of many healthcare professionals in this regard.*

*On returning home, Dr. Pretlow emailed me hundreds of posts from kids depicting their striking struggles to lose weight and many more describing using food to cope with stress, depression, and boredom. I wrote back: “I think that you have an enormous amount of information that would be lifesaving to many children and parents, and eye-opening to health care professionals. Your article on comfort eating is excellent and could serve as an outline for your book, focusing on what you know to be true, i.e., psychological food dependence is a major cause of childhood obesity, and how to break the dependence. The book, filled with examples from the posts demonstrating food dependence, followed by success stories to support your thesis, would make a significant contribution to the field.”*

*Dr. Pretlow’s book presents the heart wrenching stories of overweight kids, in their own words. These kids use food to cope with life. Unfortunately, they become hooked on this ‘comfort eating’ behavior and become overweight or obese because of it, which wrecks their lives. They hate being fat, yet they struggle to resist cravings for food, in spite of full awareness of the dreadful effects that further weight gain will have. Many state that their eating is ‘out of control.’ This is suggestive of an addictive quality or psychological food dependence. Displacement activity appears to be another factor in the kids’ dependence on eating.*

*Dr. Pretlow shared a letter with me that he wrote to the editor of the journal, *Pediatrics*, in early 2008. In that letter he suggested that overweight and obesity in childhood be treated similarly to forms of substance abuse. Initially, his letter was rejected for publication, because none of the childhood obesity authorities would write a reply, and only letters with replies are published. Nevertheless, Dr. Pretlow persevered; his letter finally received a reply and was published in August 2008. The reply to his letter contended that a substance abuse approach would not work for childhood obesity, because “food is necessary for life*

*and kids cannot simply abstain from food.” But, as Dr. Pretlow notes in this book, ‘junk food,’ which overweight kids say they have great difficulty resisting, is not necessary for life. The ideas of Dr. Pretlow’s book are quite controversial, given our strong cultural dependence on food and belief by many that weight loss is only a matter of will power.*

*I applaud Dr. Pretlow for his unwavering efforts, in the face of considerable opposition from mainstream medicine. As I once told him, “It’s the pioneers that get the arrows.” This book deserves a wide audience. It’s a great book for the general public and for health care professionals and will make a significant contribution to the childhood obesity crisis in this country.*

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