

Friendly Mirrors and Contented Closets

Gina Scarano-Osika, Ph.D.

“It’s Not Me...It’s You!” Publishing, Glens Falls, NY, \$24.99 USD, paperback (247p)

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Psychologist Gina Scarano-Osika’s clinical practice with patients suffering from eating disorders has allowed her to view the dangers of yo-yo dieting up close. In her sympathetic and practical book *Friendly Mirrors and Contented Closets: A guide to strengthen healthy eating attitudes, reduce compulsive overeating, and eliminate weight cycling*, Dr. Scarano-Osika presents the insights she has gleaned from her work with patients in a format that can assist anyone suffering from food issues.

Friendly Mirrors and Contented Closets is not a diet book. Instead, Scarano-Osika focuses on the deeper psychological and physiological issues that affect our relationship with food and weight. She begins by explaining in some detail how the body has adapted over time to protect itself from famine; when the body thinks it is facing starvation (as in a crash diet or sudden restriction of calories), the metabolism shuts down. With particular attention to the roles of cortisol and insulin in controlling metabolism, the author explains in clear terms why the body often fights dieters’ best attempts at losing weight.

From there, the author encourages readers to get in touch with their physiological cues, learning to feel when they are hungry and when they have had enough. She delves into the psychological pitfalls that often waylay dieters and examines in some detail the attitudes that underlie unhealthy relationships with food. A chapter devoted to “the politics of eating” examines eating disturbances in Western society and how our obsession with thinness has led to a generation dissatisfied with their bodies and prone to eating disorders.

Friendly Mirrors and Contented Closets is packed with useful information for anyone struggling with food. Scarano-Osika offers insight into root causes as well as practical coping mechanisms. Worksheets and checklists help the reader apply the lessons. As well, readers can take advantage of on-line conversations with the author and additional support at www.friendlymirrors.com.

While the author developed many of her ideas from her work with anorexic and bulimic patients, she has masterfully applied her knowledge to assist those suffering from obesity. Her information is well documented, including several contemporary studies. Occasionally her language becomes perhaps overly academic for a general audience, but in the main her tone is reassuring and practical. Her chapters on the psychological factors that govern relationships with food are particularly insightful. *Friendly Mirrors and Contented Closets* is well worth the time for anyone serious about developing a more sustainable relationship with food.

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