

[KTVU FOX channel 2, live studio interview in Oakland, CA. April 24, 2006]

Ross McGowan (RM): Well, imagine this. A diet where all you have to do is take a little olive oil or drink a little sugar water and then you can eat whatever you want. It's called the Shangri-La diet and a professor from Cal Berkeley has come up with it. He joins us next, right here on Mornings on 2.

[ad break]

[8:16 am] RM: The time now is 8:16. Professor of psychology at UC Berkeley Seth Roberts has spent years analyzing why most diets don't work. And during the process he discovered his own on a good way to lose weight. It's called the Shangri-La diet. And probably one of the most simple diets ever. Seth Roberts joins me this morning. Nice to have you here.

Seth Roberts (SR): Thank you for having me.

RM: You were kind of looking for a way to lose 40 pounds yourself, correct?

SR: I was . . . once I was 200 pounds. And I was looking for a way to get way down from that. Now I'm 160.

RM: You were 200 pounds?

SR: Yes, I was. Just for a while, but yeah.

RM: How many different diets did you try before you got down to 160?

SR: I didn't try any of the popular diets, but I tried about 10 different ways of losing weight. Then I found one way that worked incredibly well. And that's what the book is about.

RM: How did you stumble across what you now call the Shangri-La diet?

SR: Well, I had a theory and the theory guided me to do all sorts of things that most people wouldn't do. But I got lucky. I was in Paris and I totally lost my appetite and I was really mystified by that. And when I got back to Berkeley I tried to figure why I had, and I think my theory led me to the right answer. It was because I was drinking these sugar drinks, and they had an incredible effect on my appetite.

RM: But if that were true, wouldn't a lot of people who drink, you know, these diet colas, and all these sodas, wouldn't they lose weight?

SR: Yeah, that was what was so mysterious. I was drinking what everyone thinks is fattening and I was losing weight. The secret was that these drinks were new to

me. Because I was in Paris, I was drinking French soft drinks with sugar. It was the first time I had them. That's why they were causing the loss of appetite.

RM: So you're saying the sugar in France is different than the sugar we have.

SR: No, it's the new. It's the fact that they were new to me. The flavor was new. A food with a new flavor causes weight loss. Foods with no flavor, the flavor never becomes new. So they cause weight loss permanently.

RM: Let's start with what you call the set point. We all have a set point. What's a set point?

SR: Your body has a weight-control mechanism that's trying to keep you at a certain weight. The set point is the weight that system is trying to keep you at. And, um, when that weight goes down, that set point weight goes down, your weight will go down too, because you'll lose interest in food and you won't want to eat as much. And basically what my diet does is it lowers that weight, it lowers that set point, that weight the system is trying to get. It's like turning down the temperature on a thermostat. Um, you lose interest in food, and you get full easy, and that's why you lose weight.

RM: How do you know what our set point is? Or does our body at some point . . . I mean, do we subconsciously know what we should be at?

SR: Well, your set point is going to be very close to your weight. I mean, it's very very hard to get much different than your weight.

RM: Let's say you're 300 pounds.

SR: That means your set point is about 300 pounds. In order to get down to 200 pounds, you gotta lower your set point to 200 pounds.

RM: So you discover your set point and then, you say, you can drink sugar water or olive oil -- light . . .

SR: Extra-light olive oil.

RM: Extra-light olive oil. How does that work? What happens there?

SR: Well, you drink the sugar water or the extra-light olive oil between meals.

RM: Not both? You can pick one or the other?

SR: Or both. Yeah. And you'll find -- most people find very quickly that it causes a great loss of interest in food. All the foods you used to crave or think about. . . you'll stop thinking about them. They'll just sit there, they'll just sit in the refrigerator. You were thinking about food every 5 minutes, you'll just stop

thinking about it. You won't be thinking about it. So, anyway, that's what happens. So it becomes very easy to eat less. And you lose weight.

RM: I guess you know to a lot of people this sounds a little . . . wacky.

SR: Yeah, and my answer to that is: That's what science is. Science is counter-intuitive. Every now and then, scientists come up with something that's really different than what we expect. And I think, for me, a good example is a microwave oven. When the microwave oven came along, and I tried it for the first time, I said, "My god, this is incredible." It was just so different than what I was used to. Well, the microwave oven is so different than what we're used to because it was based on a lot of science. And that's why my diet is so different -- because it's based on a lot of science.

RM: Okay, so you lost 40 pounds? Anybody else?

SR: Yeah, other people have lost lots of weight.

RM: You don't have a blind study and all of this? You're kind of a self-experimentation kind of guy.

SR: No, you can't do blind studies on weight control. Nobody can be fooled that much.

RM: Really quickly, just so we'll know. If you . . . sugar water, first of all. Won't you get more cavities?

SR: You should drink it slowly and wash it out of your mouth if you're worried about it.

RM: How many times a day do you take this oil or the sugar water?

SR: I take it twice a day. That's a good amount. Between meals.

RM: Between meals. And you don't eat before or after for maybe a period of time.

SR: Yeah, yeah. Leave a half-hour or an hour before and after.

RM: And you're going to lose weight?

SR: I think so. Very likely.

RM: Okay. Why Shangri-La?

SR: The diet puts people at peace with food. Lots of people have a lot of worries and anxieties about food. Lots of people told me they went away when they started doing the diet.

RM: Wow. Shangri-La diet, there it is. It comes out tomorrow, right?

SR: Right.

RM: Nice to have you here.

SR: Thank you. Thank you so much

[8:21 am] RM: The time now is 8:21. Let's go back to the desk.

Anchor: Boy, what an interesting theory.