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# German Spanish

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Let's say you have weak lungs, and your doctor orders you to move permanently to a warm, dry climate. You settle on Mexico. You can afford to move and live there, and the climate is agreeable. The problem is, you don't speak Spanish.

Therefore, you seek out the best and most convenient language teacher with whom you can study intensively for the next six weeks. At the end of the period, you'll be able to speak fluent German.

...Wait!

Why study German if you're going to live in Mexico?

The reason, you point out (with perfect logic), is that the Spanish teacher requires a year of study to learn the language properly; whereas the German teacher makes you work longer, harder hours so that you can make a year's progress in one-eighth of the time.

You want to get your foreign language "out of the way" before you move down there, so you can settle in right away instead of delaying your enjoyment of Mexico a whole year while you learn the language.

It makes perfect sense, right?

Obviously, if you follow this crazy logic, you'd be better off staying home!

The parable illustrates what happens when otherwise intelligent people decide that they're willing to lose weight if (and only if) they can lose it quickly. They figure that if they have to struggle with adhering to a diet, they might as well "get it out of the way" as fast as possible.

The truth is, these people are practicing German to live permanently in Mexico.

It won't work! Their plan, however logical it is, is doomed to fail because it's inappropriate.

If you want to move to Mexico, it behooves you to take as long as you need in order to learn the language. The best way to learn it is to move there and pick it up naturally. Furthermore, there are many more things to learn about Mexico in order to live more comfortably besides the language!

Likewise, when an overweight person decides to become a slim person, it's like moving to a foreign country (let's call it "the Republic of Thin"). The people in Thin tend to think a certain way, speak a certain way, eat certain indigenous foods at certain times of the day, and so on. It's not just their language that's different, it's everything. Therefore, if you want to move to Thin, you have to develop an entirely new set of habits.

The people in Thin don't starve themselves regularly to lose weight. They don't have to, because they're already thin! They maintain their thinness by eating regularly in a more controlled manner. Thus, they never get fat.

In order to live comfortably among the people of Thin, you need to learn their customs. As Mexicans don't normally speak German, the people of Thin don't normally stay on starvation diets.

Unfortunately, when most people try to lose weight, they pick a starvation diet (which is any diet that permits no more than 1,500 calories per day) from hundreds of diets that are available. Most people consider a diet "meaningful" only if someone can lose at least a pound or two a week by following it.

Many people enjoy going on these starvation diets—for a while. These people like challenges. When learning a new language, they enjoy the extra thrill of being able to travel in a foreign country and being able to read shop signs and converse more easily. Similarly, many people on starvation diets enjoy the camaraderie of support groups. They enjoy the moral victory of shedding 20 or 30 pounds.

However, like the American tourist who feels a special patriotic glee when coming home to American soil, there comes a time at the end of every diet when the challenge is over, the pounds are lost, and the "reward time" brings the erstwhile dieter back to the cakes, the pies, the second helpings, and the two martinis before dinner.

"I proved I can do it," means, "I can do it again and again, as needed."

Welcome to yo-yo diet-land!

If you want to lose weight permanently, don't learn German to go to Mexico! Don't go on a starvation diet that will inevitably lead to your gaining back the weight you lost! Develop a new way of life that will make you more conscious and healthier, not just thinner.