Can you really THINK yourself thin? Obese comfort eater loses 5 stone with 'placebo' diet that tricked her brain into not wanting junk food

- Nikki Malone, 41, has slimmed from size 22 to size ten with Placebo Diet
- 'Mind-programming' diet helped her conquer her emotional eating habits
- Nutritionist and life coach says we can 'reshape' our thoughts to shift fat
- Incorporates range of psychology to tackle mental barriers to slimming

By NILUFER ATIK FOR MAILONLINE
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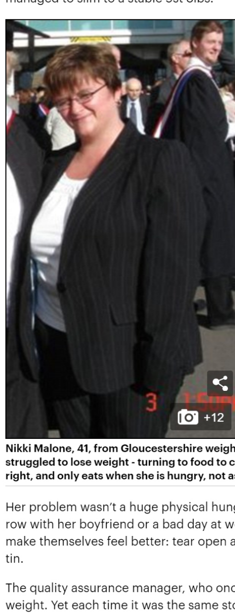
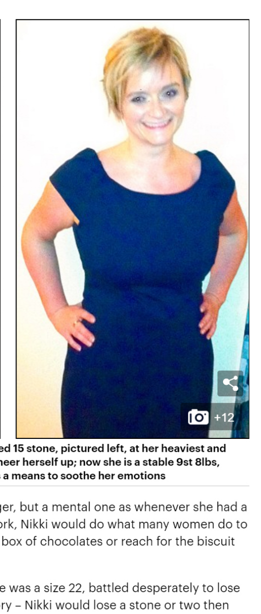
A yo-yo dieter who struggled with her weight for almost two decades has slimmed to a size ten with a placebo diet which changed her relationship with food.

Nikki Malone, 41, from Gloucestershire tipped the scales at 15 stone at her heaviest and tried every diet going - including slimming groups, low-carb plans and even eating nothing but eggs all day.

But it was only after she 'tricked' her brain into wanting healthy foods with a combination of meditation, hypnotherapy and visualisation exercises that she managed to slim to a stable 9st 8lbs.

Nikki Malone, 41, from Gloucestershire weighed 15 stone, pictured left, at her heaviest and struggled to lose weight - turning to food to cheer herself up; now she is a stable 9st 8lbs, right, and only eats when she is hungry, not as a means to soothe her emotions

Her problem wasn't a huge physical hunger, but a mental one as whenever she had a row with her boyfriend or a bad day at work, Nikki would do what many women do to make themselves feel better: tear open a box of chocolates or reach for the biscuit tin.

The quality assurance manager, who once was a size 22, battled desperately to lose weight. Yet each time it was the same story – Nikki would lose a stone or two then gain it all back weeks later.

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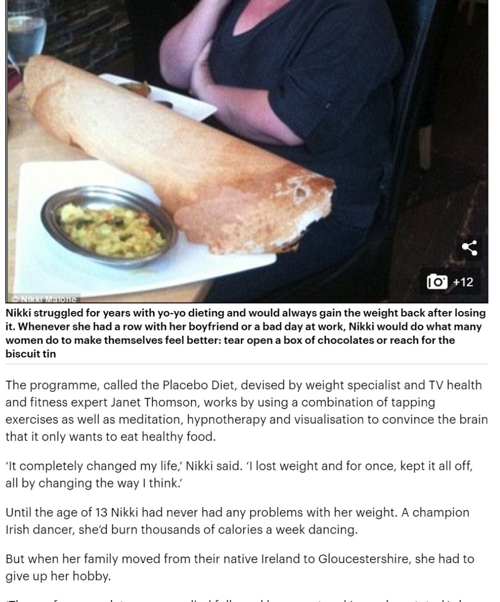
And every time she fell off the healthy eating wagon she'd find it even harder to get back on.

Nikki said: 'It was a vicious cycle. I used food to make me feel better but it would only end up making me feel worse, especially when the pounds started piling on.'

It wasn't until she tried a new 'mind-programming' diet that she finally managed to conquer her emotional eating habits.



Nikki struggled for years with yo-yo dieting and would always gain the weight back after losing it. Whenever she had a row with her boyfriend or a bad day at work, Nikki would do what many women do to make themselves feel better: tear open a box of chocolates or reach for the biscuit tin

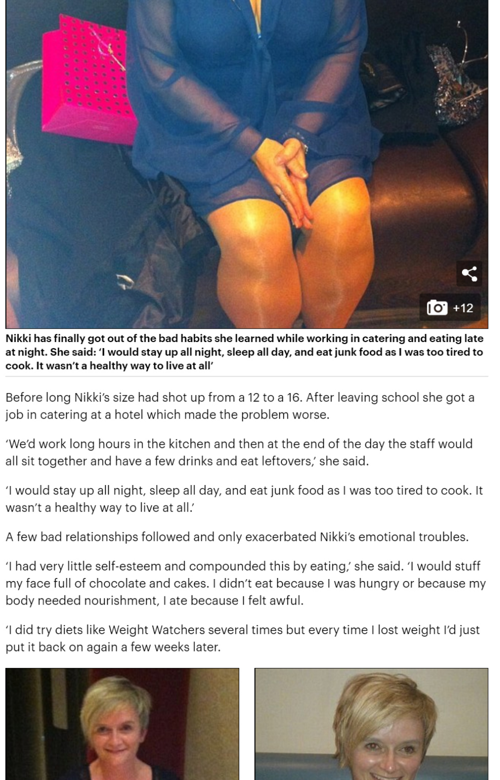
The programme, called the Placebo Diet, devised by weight specialist and TV health and fitness expert Janet Thomson, works by using a combination of tapping exercises as well as meditation, hypnotherapy and visualisation to convince the brain that it only wants to eat healthy food.

'It completely changed my life,' Nikki said. 'I lost weight and for once, kept it all off, all by changing the way I think.'

Until the age of 13 Nikki had never had any problems with her weight. A champion Irish dancer, she'd burn thousands of calories a week dancing.

But when her family moved from their native Ireland to Gloucestershire, she had to give up her hobby.

'Then, a few years later, my nan died followed by my cat and I was devastated,' she said. 'I started using food as a tool to cheer myself up. Whenever I felt down I'd binge on chocolates, crisps and pizza.'



Nikki has finally got out of the bad habits she learned while working in catering and eating late at night. She said: 'I would stay up all night, sleep all day, and eat junk food as I was too tired to cook. It wasn't a healthy way to live at all'

Before long Nikki's size had shot up from a 12 to a 16. After leaving school she got a job in catering at a hotel which made the problem worse.

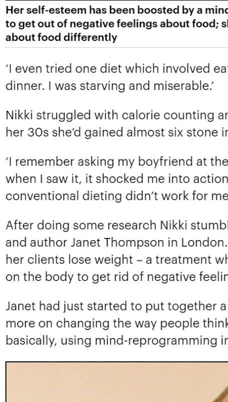
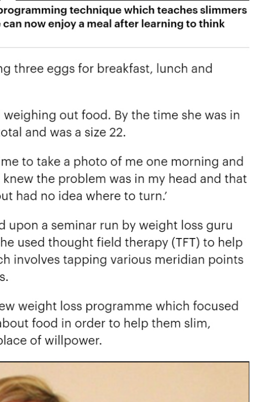
'We'd work long hours in the kitchen and then at the end of the day the staff would all sit together and have a few drinks and eat leftovers,' she said.

'I would stay up all night, sleep all day, and eat junk food as I was too tired to cook. It wasn't a healthy way to live at all.'

A few bad relationships followed and only exacerbated Nikki's emotional troubles.

'I had very little self-esteem and compounded this by eating,' she said. 'I would stuff my face full of chocolate and cakes. I didn't eat because I was hungry or because my body needed nourishment, I ate because I felt awful.

'I did try diets like Weight Watchers several times but every time I lost weight I'd just put it back on again a few weeks later.

Her self-esteem has been boosted by a mind-programming technique which teaches slimmers to get out of negative feelings about food; she can now enjoy a meal after learning to think about food differently

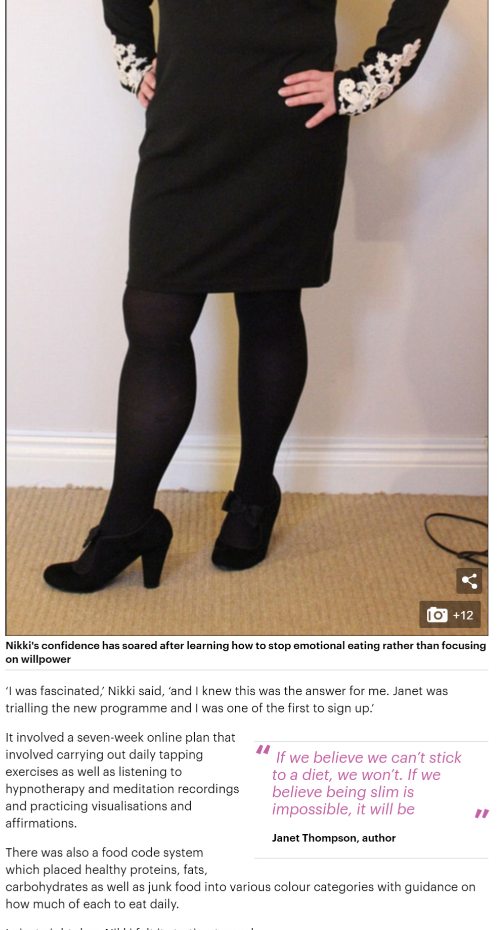
'I even tried one diet which involved eating three eggs for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I was starving and miserable.'

Nikki struggled with calorie counting and weighing out food. By the time she was in her 30s she'd gained almost six stone in total and was a size 22.

'I remember asking my boyfriend at the time to take a photo of me one morning and when I saw it, it shocked me into action. I knew the problem was in my head and that conventional dieting didn't work for me but had no idea where to turn.'

After doing some research Nikki stumbled upon a seminar run by weight loss guru and author Janet Thompson in London. She used thought field therapy (TFT) to help her clients lose weight – a treatment which involves tapping various meridian points on the body to get rid of negative feelings.

Janet had just started to put together a new weight loss programme which focused more on changing the way people think about food in order to help them slim, basically, using mind-reprogramming in place of willpower.



Nikki's confidence has soared after learning how to stop emotional eating rather than focusing on willpower

'I was fascinated,' Nikki said, 'and I knew this was the answer for me. Janet was trialling the new programme and I was one of the first to sign up.'

It involved a seven-week online plan that involved carrying out daily tapping exercises as well as listening to hypnotherapy and meditation recordings and practicing visualisations and affirmations.

> "If we believe we can't stick to a diet, we won't. If we believe being slim is impossible, it will be"
>
> Janet Thompson, author

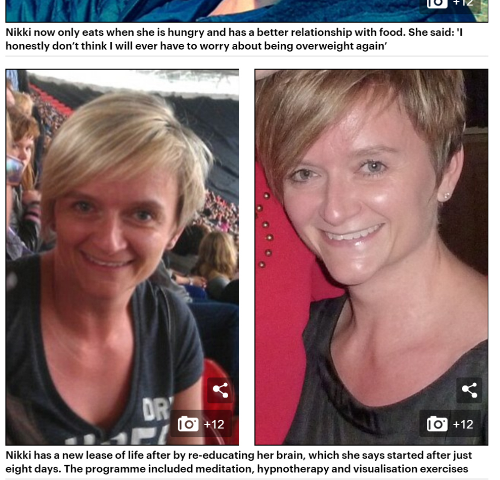
There was also a food code system which placed healthy proteins, fats, carbohydrates as well as junk food into various colour categories with guidance on how much of each to eat daily.

In just eight days Nikki felt it starting to work.

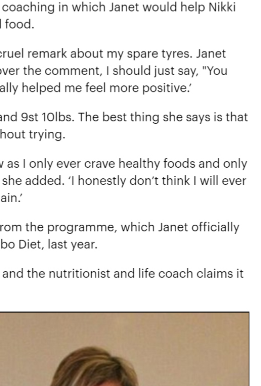
'There was no calorie counting, no strict eating plan, and it was really easy to follow,' she said.

'But it was really the mind techniques that did it for me. They helped change my mind set. It was easy following the food code because I wanted to eat the healthy foods and only eat when I was hungry and stop when I was full.

'The meditations and hypnotherapy recordings convinced my subconscious that I wanted to eat this way. Plus, whenever I felt down in the dumps, I would do the tapping sequences I'd learned instead of binge eating and would instantly feel better. It was basically a diet without the dieting.'



Nikki now only eats when she is hungry and has a better relationship with food. She said: 'I honestly don't think I will ever have to worry about being overweight again'



Nikki has a new lease of life after by re-educating her brain, which she says started after just eight days. The programme included meditation, hypnotherapy and visualisation exercises

The plan also included one-to-one Skype coaching in which Janet would help Nikki how to change negative thoughts around food.

'For example, one day someone made a cruel remark about my spare tyres. Janet suggested instead of beating myself up over the comment, I should just say, "You can't cuddle a rake," and laugh it off. It really helped me feel more positive.'

In 18 months Nikki dropped to a size ten and 9st 10lbs. The best thing she says is that she's managed to keep the weight off without trying.

'Eating well really does feel effortless now as I only ever crave healthy foods and only want to eat when I am genuinely hungry,' she added. 'I honestly don't think I will ever have to worry about being overweight again.'

And Nikki wasn't the only one to benefit from the programme, which Janet officially launched online under the title, the Placebo Diet, last year.

It is being released as a book next month and the nutritionist and life coach claims it will revolutionise the fitness industry.

Nikki can now fit into jeans after turning to therapist Janet Thompson who devised the Placebo Diet (pictured with her size 22 trousers). The weight loss guru believes the method will revolutionise the fitness industry

Janet said: 'Thoughts are the language of the brain and determine everything we do. This applies to losing weight too. If we believe we can't stick to a diet, we won't.

'If we believe being slim is impossible, it will be. But we can change our thoughts and, as a result, our habits, simply by using a range of practical techniques.'

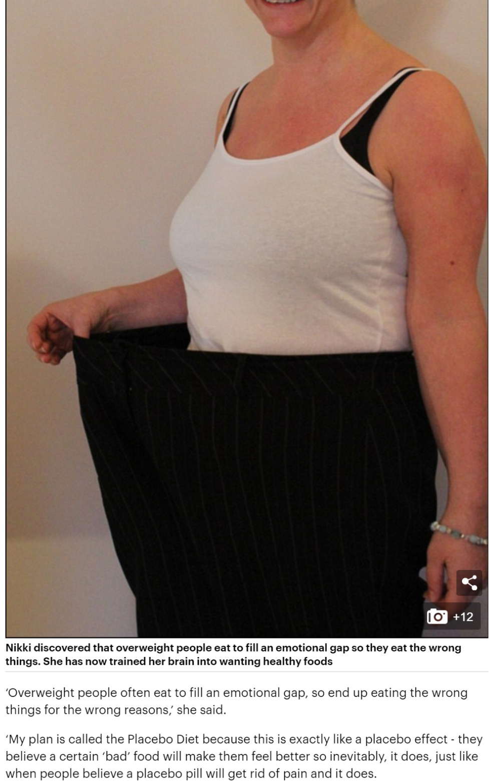
Mother-of-three Janet, from Leicestershire, was once the head of training for a national slimming chain before going on to set up her own group of health clubs.

She initially devised the Placebo Diet after realising that conventional diets only worked for some people, not all, and that she needed to master the psychology behind weight loss in order to really help people conquer their overeating.

The online plan uses various mental techniques over a seven-week period to alter the way our minds view food, such as tapping or meditating.

Each week followers are given a new exercise to practice as well as audio or video recordings with educational information about nutrition and how the brain works.

In week three they are presented with a food colour code to use, which provides a list of healthy foods to eat. In the book this material is presented in written form.



Nikki discovered that overweight people eat to fill an emotional gap so they eat the wrong things. She has now trained her brain into wanting healthy foods

'Overweight people often eat to fill an emotional gap, so end up eating the wrong things for the wrong reasons,' she said.

'My plan is called the Placebo Diet because this is exactly like a placebo effect - they believe a certain 'bad' food will make them feel better so inevitably, it does, just like when people believe a placebo pill will get rid of pain and it does.

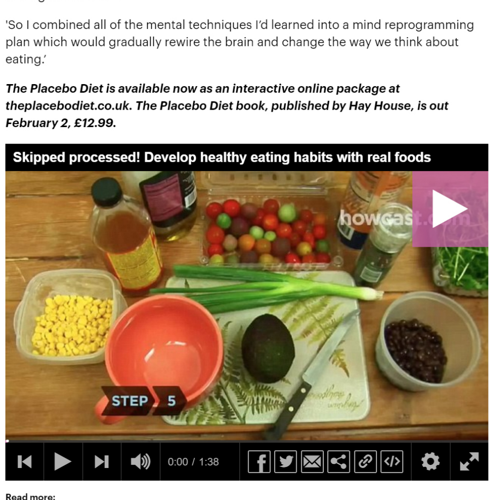
'But the 'feelgood' factor of bad food only works temporarily until the guilt or negative health effects kick in.

'I saw no reason why it couldn't work the other way too. By making people believe healthier foods would make them feel good, and unhealthy foods would make them feel bad, I knew they'd be more likely to choose the healthier options and find dieting much easier.

'So I combined all of the mental techniques I'd learned into a mind reprogramming plan which would gradually rewire the brain and change the way we think about eating.'

The Placebo Diet is available now as an interactive online package at theplacebodiet.co.uk. The Placebo Diet book, published by Hay House, is out February 2, £12.99.

Skipped processed! Develop healthy eating habits with real foods



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Tiffany Trump stuns in a white jacket with a colourful cherub pattern as she leaves her London hotel at the end of her father's State Visit
Kate Upton showcases her stunning figure in black bathing suit... just seven months after welcoming her baby daughter Looking good
Poldark's Aidan Turner looks worlds away from Captain Ross as he debuts bushy beard at season five premiere After finishing filming for the show
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Pregnant Rachel Riley displays her blossoming baby bump as she leaves Countdown filming with beau Pasha Kovalev in Manchester
Pamela Anderson arrives in LA after spending time in Paris with beau Adil Rami... as she says Julian Assange 'would end up dead' if he comes to US
PICTURE EXCLUSIVE: Kendall Jenner stuns in an elaborate red Giambattista Valli gown as she shoots H&M campaign in a maze in Rome
Rochelle Humes enjoys a smooch with husband Marvin as she larks about with ex-TOWIE star Georgina Cleverley on sunny Mykonos getaway
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2019 CMT Music Awards: Carrie Underwood joins Maren Morris and Jessie James Decker in leggy looks at star-studded red carpet
Sarah Hyland puts on a leggy display in a sequined little black dress with a low-cut neckline as she attends the 2019 CMT Music Awards
Cara Delevingne and Ashley Benson grab fresh drinks after hitting the gym for a tough sweat session in Los Angeles Working up a sweat
James Corden reveals how he got Tom Cruise's phone number as well as his pre-presidential run-in with Donald Trump during chat with Howard Stern
Michelle Pfeiffer and David E. Kelley are a sartorially elegant couple at Fragrance Foundation Awards in NYC Stepping out
Love Island star Lucie Donlan's remarkable TWO STONE weight loss is documented in throwback snaps as she dropped from a size 12 to 6
Bond faces his most difficult opponent yet as Health and Safety inspectors arrive at Pinewood following the stunt explosion which blew up the set
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Lottie Moss turns heads as she exhibits her cleavage in a white crop top and chic powder pink suit at restaurant launch Stunning
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Hilaria Baldwin shares complete family photo including step-daughter Ireland as she jokes that Alec 'didn't have to make that goofy face' Sweet moment
Elisabeth Moss proves her style icon status by rocking three different outfits for GMA as season three of Handmaid's Tale returns to Hulu
Jenna Dewan finally makes it Instagram official with new beau Steve Kazee (six months after he did) The 38-year-old actress made it official
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AGT judge Gabrielle Union flashes her megawatt smile as she nails casual chic at LAX Union was recently in Miami with her NBA husband Dwyane
Love Island's Olivia Buckland gets sentimental tattoo of her wedding flowers nearly one year after marrying Alex Bowen in lavish ceremony
Corrie's Faye Brookes looks chic in a printed coat as she snuggles up to fiancé Gareth Gates on date night Faye and Gareth looked more loved up than ever
Cindy Crawford, 53, still looks good in her skinny jeans as she strolls alone in NYC after checking in on her model daughter Kaia Gerber, 17
Behati Prinsloo reveals she's happy husband Adam Levine has left The Voice after 16 seasons: 'It is good news for me, good news for the kids'