

Woman's obesity has been a difficult long-time load to bear

Dear Abby: So *Slim and Satisfied* thinks no one would tell an obese person, "Gee, you're fat! Why don't you go on a diet?"

Well, it's happened to me dozens of times. Total strangers have stopped me on the street and said, "You have such a pretty face, have you ever tried (one or more of the following) Weight Watchers, Optifast, Nutra-System, Overeaters Anonymous, TOPS, Diet Centre, Jenny Craig, hypnosis, or that wonderful doctor who does stomach stapling surgery?"

I've had people come up to me in a restaurant and say, "Do you really think that you should be eating that?" The "that" could be anything from a salad to dessert. They don't think that a fat person should be eating anything period.

Hairdressers and makeup specialists have told me it is pointless to bother about my hair or make-up, weighing as much as I do.

And buying clothes is a nightmare. I either order mine by mail or have them made by a seamstress. If I enter a store to buy a gift for someone, a salesperson is sure to approach me and say, "Sorry, we don't carry your size here."

I broke my arm in a car accident two years ago, and while I was waiting in the emergency room, a doctor appeared and said, "Boy you really should lose some weight!" As if my weight had caused my broken arm!

Most physicians believe all fat people are lazy, weak-willed and undisciplined, rather than people who could be suffering from a genetic or metabolic problem.

I am 36 years old, and have been on more diets than I can count. A pediatrician put me on Metrecal when I was 8; another doctor gave me a 600-calorie-per-day diet when I was 11; still another put me in the hospital for a medically supervised fast when I was 13.

For the past year, I've been working with a great counsellor who understands obesity. She has helped me more than all the diet doctors and weight-loss groups combined. I am learning to understand the connection between eating and hunger, which was lost in all those years of bingeing and dieting.

I know I'll never be thin because I'm genetically programmed to be fat, but I hope to find my natural weight through a program of learning to eat from hunger.

I hate exercising, but I do it every day, because I know it's important (for both fat and thin people) for health reasons.

Abby, you've done a terrific job in educating the public about obesity and discrimination against fat

Dear Abby

with ABIGAIL VAN BUREN



I know this is too long for your column and you'll have to trim it but please try to print some of it. I speak for so many people.

Looking Beyond Looks

Dear Looking: I haven't trimmed a word, because every word you've written is essential to your message. Please write again when your mission has been accomplished — as I know it will be. I want to print your success story as an inspiration to others who are also "Looking Beyond Looks."

people. You have helped fat people stop hating themselves and to understand they have a physical problem — not a lack of will power.

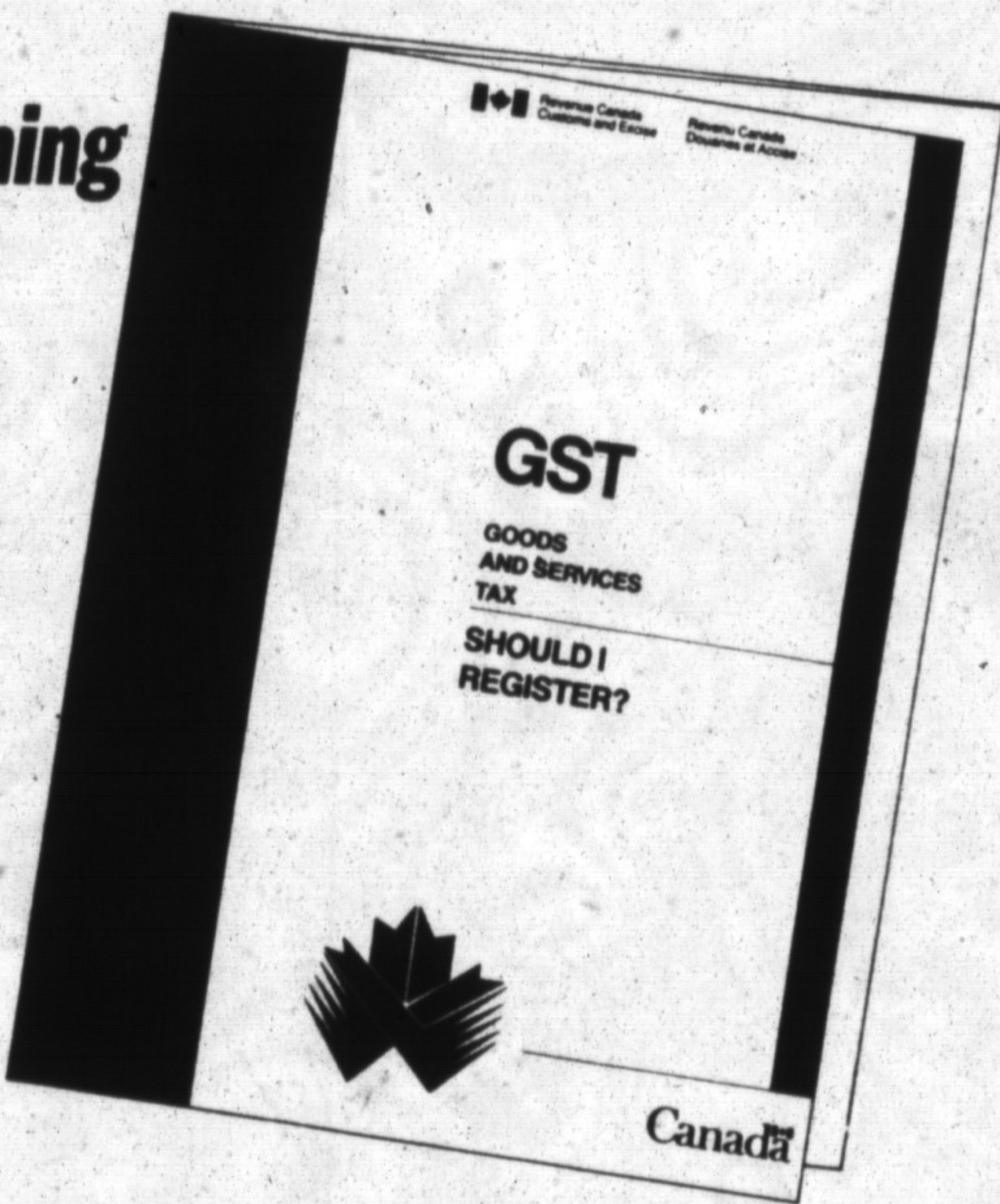
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