

No Time to Weight A Personal Journey – Part II

By Stephanie Worrell

It's been almost exactly three months since I had my gastric Lap-Band surgery and I can officially report that I'm 30% less of a person. I'm referring to weight loss—although, some days it feels like I've lost more than poundage. With each inch and panty-size dropped, my relationship with my lover named “Mr. Food” is becoming less and less satisfying. Love affairs work that way sometimes. When one party grows (or in my case shrinks) the other can pull away. Good-bye, Lover. . . I think.

Of course, I've gained a few things too. Because of the new restriction I have on my stomach intake, things don't go down as easy—or at all. So, barfing and heavy drooling are my new habits when food isn't agreeable. In fact, almost all sticky or starchy foods are refused – and, when they are. . . it isn't pleasant. It's a common side-affect of the surgery. Popping marshmallow Peeps, swallowing gum and consuming cinnamon bears for lunch are all out.

The other day I was shopping with my daughter and couldn't resist the buttery call of the big, doughy mall pretzel. One bite and I was drooling like a St. Bernard on a hot summer day – maybe one with an additional foamy, rabies-like condition. That's what happens first when you eat something disagreeable, just before the inevitable upchucking. And (just for the record), apparently barfing at the mall is considered bad etiquette. Especially, if you are at Build a Bear Workshop and older than age five.

All pleasantries aside, the negative-effects of the surgery have been fairly minimal. I'm glad I didn't choose to have the Rouen Y gastric procedure for a number of reasons involving both fear and potential complications.

Rouen Y is the other gastric surgery option available to the morbidly obese and is generally touted as the quickest weight loss procedure. Basically, it involves cutting your stomach and rearranging it so it's physically (and permanently) smaller. Although the promise of faster weight loss was tempting, I just couldn't shake the picture in my mind of foot-long Ginsu knives and quick handed-Japanese chefs whacking my stomach down to size – the result of too many dinners at the local Kyoto restaurant.

My surgeon also showed me statistics that revealed it to be a more dangerous procedure. The Lapband became my only option. There are still risks, but Lap-Band is adjustable, reversible and apparently less dangerous (although, the possi-

bility of choking to death on my spit is of personal concern).

Even though the weight loss has been steady, my usually positive and supportive husband pointed out a few weeks ago that I might be MUCH thinner if I cut out the night eating. I was stunned, not knowing what he was talking about. With slanty, peeved-off eyes and a non-post surgical foaming mouth I bellowed, “What ARE you talking about?!” He informed me that he'd been regularly finding numerous dishes piled in the sink when he got up in the morning. That's when I realized what else I'd gained post-surgically – “Mr. Food” visits in the unconscious night.

Eating in my sleep. All made sense now . . .the M&M's stuck to the side of my face at dawn, mysterious chocolate syrup drizzled down my pajama top, a big sandwich missing from the fridge. A REALLY BIG SANDWICH. Apparently I can only eat selectively during day, but at night . . .there was a party in my tummy. Or, maybe I was just having relations with Mr. Food in the dark that did not involve eating. My husband decided he didn't want to know, so instead, hung a large cowbell on the refrigerator door that now awakens me during nocturnal straying.

I'd picked my surgeon because of his general reputation for excellence and most importantly, his reputation as a hard-butt doctor (not literally, although he's not bad in that area). So, I haven't had the gumption to tell him about the night eating, especially since a week prior to my scheduled surgery date, he almost pulled the plug because I hadn't lost the required ten percent of my body weight required for safety reasons. And, because I had to have the surgery prior to a change in my health insurance benefits, I only had one last week to get the surgery covered under my current plan. It was nine more pounds or no surgery.

I think to the surprise of my doctor, and mostly myself, I lost twelve pounds and paid the price of quick weight loss, including severe dehydration and exhaustion. I would strongly recommend listening to your doctor versus continuing your affair with Mr. Food if you are going to have gastric surgery. That week was the moment of truth for me. It was the first time I realized that it was me or Mr. Food. For once, I chose myself.

So, I'm working hard to eliminate the night eating. If I don't, my strict doctor will deflate – or even worse – inflate my band. More drool and foam. No thanks. Today I feel realistic about my new body. Even when I make my weight loss goal, I know my stomach will probably remain flappy and I don't think I'll ever be


“perked” with boobalishishness. But, I am the proud new owner of six pairs of lacy, regular underwear. ‘Regular’ being non-maternity, which is a big deal because, I've sported maternity drawers for the past ten years, two of which, were spent expecting.

My husband, who graciously handles the household laundry duties, plucked a black pair out of the dryer and asked me who I was wearing “these sexy things” for. I told him that I was wearing them for myself. Then, noted that IF and WHEN I really start feeling sexy, no panties will be required. I'm starting to believe that I actually may someday feel comfortable in my own skin.

Overall, I'd have to say that I'm feeling good about my decision to have gastric surgery. More impor-

tant than sexy panties and a nocturnal food fantasy life, I've started to regain my good health. My blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugars are all at healthy levels. And, best of all – I can talk about everything I have in common with Pavlov's famous dog – who showed the world that every living, breathing creature can be motivated to change.

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