

Jane Brody's Personal Secrets to Lasting Weight Loss
Personal Health

By JANE E. BRODY_MARCH 5, 2018



When The New York Times hired me to write about science and health 52 years ago, I was 40 pounds' overweight. I'd spent the previous three years watching my weight rise as I hopped from one diet to the next in a futile attempt to shed the pounds most recently gained.

No amount of exercise, and I did plenty of it, could compensate for how much I ate when I abandoned the latest weight loss scheme. I had become a living example of the adage: A diet is something one goes on to go off.

Even daylong fasting failed me. When I finally ate supper, I couldn't stop eating until I fell asleep, and sometimes awoke the next morning with partly chewed food in my mouth. I had dieted myself into a binge-eating disorder, and that really scared me. Clearly, something had to change.

I finally regained control when I stopped dieting. I decided that if I was going to be fat, at least I could be healthy. I made a plan to eat three nutritious, satisfying meals every day with one small snack, which helped me overcome the temptation to binge in response to deprivation.

Much to my surprise, a month later I had lost 10 pounds — eating! Eating good food, that is, and plenty of it. I continued the regimen without difficulty because it was not a diet. It was a way to live and a healthy one at that. And I continued to lose, about two pounds a month.

Two years later, all the excess weight was gone. I never gained it back and never again went on a diet. (Even with a twin pregnancy, I gained only 36 pounds and lost them all when my sons were born at 6 pounds 13 ounces each.)

The greatest challenge to lasting weight loss, especially for someone like me with a food addiction, is the fact that no one can give up eating. Rather, one has to learn a better — and permanent — way to handle food.

I eat everything I want, in moderation. My meals — mostly homemade — are heavily loaded with vegetables, and I choose calorie-controlled snacks like popcorn at 35 calories a cup, a graham cracker at 59 calories for two squares, and ice cream (really ice milk) at 100 to 150 calories a half cup. No seconds!

My weight maintenance secrets are simple: I read nutrition labels *before* I buy anything in a package, I practice portion control, and I exercise and *weigh myself* every day to stay within a two-pound range appropriate for my height. If the number on the scale begins to creep up, I may walk, bike or swim a little more and eat a little less for a few days...