

Finally Released from My Food Prison

by Joy Santos

Food was my friend. Food was my enemy. It was like being in prison -- waking up thinking about what I would eat that day, worrying about if I would overeat, obsessing over my weight as I stood on the scale twice a day, carrying my little calorie book with me everywhere, and writing down everything I had eaten that day before going to bed. How I felt about myself each day was determined by the numbers on the scale. I woke up one morning and said to myself, "This madness has to stop!"

I had struggled with food addiction my entire life. I had tried every imaginable diet, had attended the 12-step program, Overeater's Anonymous, and still saw myself heading precariously down the path which claimed my mother's life at 67. She died of Type 2 diabetes, an entirely preventable disease.

I want to live! I have two amazing granddaughters who are only 8 and 12 years old. I want to go to their weddings! I don't want to follow in the footsteps of my parents. But at 62, I am only five years away

from the age at which my mother died.

When a friend told me about the [Food for Life Nutrition and Cooking Classes](#) offered in Anchorage, I was ready. We began attending the classes together in January, 2010. Something just clicked for me. By the second week, I jumped in with both feet. I experienced immediate results. Not only did I enjoy the food and start to have more energy, but I could eat as much as I wanted of these healthy foods and the scale showed my weight going down!

After about the third week, I stopped counting calories. What freedom! I was no longer afraid to eat. And to my amazement, my food cravings just disappeared. Not having to put limits on how much I could

eat transformed my whole emotional state. My addictive behaviors around food simply evaporated. This is the first time, ever, that I haven't been fixated on calories and on what I can't have. I knew I needed to change what I was eating in order to be healthy enough to live to see my granddaughters grow up; I didn't expect to be cured of my food addiction as well! This is a miracle to me.



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Everything in my life has changed. I can taste and smell my food better, so I enjoy my food more. My blood pressure dropped 20 points right away. I have more energy than ever! After working out at the gym for over an hour, I still have energy left. My skin is clearer than it's been for years. I also feel clean inside, like all the toxins are out of my body. I'm now wearing size 10 slacks, which I haven't been able to do since I was 30. And I no longer define myself by what I eat or what I weigh. This is the first time I've had a happy relationship with the food in front of me.

Another huge change for me is that now I actually cook! I used to eat mostly fast food. Now I have a cupboard devoted to spices -- I've never done that before! I bought some measuring spoons, something I didn't need before. I'm finding it easy and

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fun to prepare delicious plant-based meals. The only downside to all this is now that I'm actually cooking, my kitchen is messier than it was before, but who cares. I'm having fun!

My husband is on board with me and has lost 20 pounds. Sometimes he wonders who this woman is that is so busy cooking in his kitchen!

There is one more really surprising change in my life. I've been a nail biter since I was five years old. Now my nails are growing out! With a family history of various addictions, it feels like a miracle that I was able to break that pattern by changing what I eat.

I no longer fear the future. I'm in charge of my life now. I've broken the pattern my parents set and I fully expect to attend my granddaughters' weddings.