

# No Cheatin'... Just Eatin'



*successful*  
My ~~crazy~~ love/hate  
relationship with food

Mary Jo Fay

## IN PRAISE OF NO CHEATIN', JUST EATIN'

*"No Cheatin', Just Eatin'"* shines a light on the struggles of yo-yo dieting and weight shame that too many of us share. Author Mary Jo Fay takes you on her journey from fit high school track team athlete, to getting way too close to 200 pounds, and finally doing something about it. Through heart-break, pain, tragedy and loss, to the carrot-dangling prize of being in shape for her daughter's wedding, we walk with her. We've been there. This book shows us a different way, a doable way to slim down and find the body we know is in there somewhere."

—*Mary Catherine Carwile, speaker and award-winning author of "Heartstrings at 35,000 Feet"*

"Once again, Mary Jo Fay knocks it out of the park with her new book about weight loss. Taking a new direction on the topic, she has cleverly mixed her own life of dieting ups and downs with new insights on how she eventually lost 40 pounds while eating anything she wanted. If you think you're the only one who has ever struggled with a diet and lost, you owe it to yourself to read this book. Highly recommended!"

—*Judith Briles, the Book Shepherd*

*"No Cheatin', Just Eatin'"* is one of those rare books that most women will find themselves in, one way or another. Mary Jo Fay's journey shows us that all those weight loss goals many

of us believe to be impossible due to our age, or a variety of other excuses, are just that – excuses.”

—*Joyce Leake, founder of Odd Duck Society*

“Mary Jo tells the truth in a way that everyone can relate to; a down-to earth, honestly raw approach while sharing completely relatable stories you’ll giggle about! We’ve all played the mind games she’s played; she’s just vulnerable and humble enough to expose her underbelly, a belly we all tend to hide in more ways than one! If you don’t see your own weight or food struggle in hers, you’re not human! Giddy up! This one’s a doozy!”

—*Laura Menze, Chief Love Officer, Ready-Match.com*

“In my early 30s, I went through the big weight loss process. Although I have mostly maintained my weight over the last 20 years, this book has been a good reminder to me to be more mindful of my calories and what I’m putting in my mouth and why.”

—*Becky Drager, artist, DragerStudios.com*

“As a former body builder constantly counting every morsel that went in my mouth, I can relate to this book in so many ways. Battling the shame of cheating, especially when the next competition was right around the corner, left me with so much guilt and anguish. What was almost harder was trying to let go of all those expectations once I was no longer competing. This book allowed me to realize that a lot of other people are affected by the obsession of wanting to look good

and wanting a fast fix to obtain that. And just how much alike all of us are in our oftentimes frustrating journeys.”

—*Marjorie Collins, body builder*

“The biggest lesson I learned from *No Cheatin’, Just Eatin’* is that I can’t outrun the fork! It’s got 2 more legs than me! ’Nuf said!”

—*Dianna Sumanas, Rocky Mountain Singles*

“So you want to lose weight? Read this book! Forget about how you should eat this and not that, and so much other blah, blah, blah! Learn to approach food without guilt, take responsibility for your decisions, and make them your own. I’ve lost almost 10 lbs. in the last 3 months after reading it, and I do not feel guilty when I have another glass of wine or piece of chocolate. I get back on track and move forward. Thank you, Mary Jo Fay, for giving me the tools to make this my new life style.”

—*Nancy Stern, paralegal*

“Mary Jo Fay teaches us that ‘tryin’s lyin’ – especially when it comes to diets and weight loss. I look back at how many times I said I was going to “try” some new diet or other, never realizing that I was never fully vested in the diet to begin with. No wonder all those diets never worked!”

—*Rene Ryman, PhD, Professor of International business*

**OTHER WORKS BY MARY JO FAY**

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WHEN YOUR PERFECT PARTNER GOES  
PERFECTLY WRONG

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relationship with food

Mary Jo Fay

Out of the Boxx, Inc.  
Topeka, Kansas

NO CHEATIN', JUST EATIN'

by Mary Jo Fay

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Published by



OUT of the BOXx

Books may be purchased in quantity by contacting the publisher directly.

OutOfTheBoxx.com

303-841-7691

OutOfTheBoxxInc@aol.com

Editing: Barb Munson, Munson Communications Editorial Services

Cover and Interior Design: Nick Zelinger, NZ Graphics

Author Photo: Margie LeBow

ISBN: 978-0-9981764-0-6 (paper)

ISBN: 978-0-9981764-1-3 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016917426

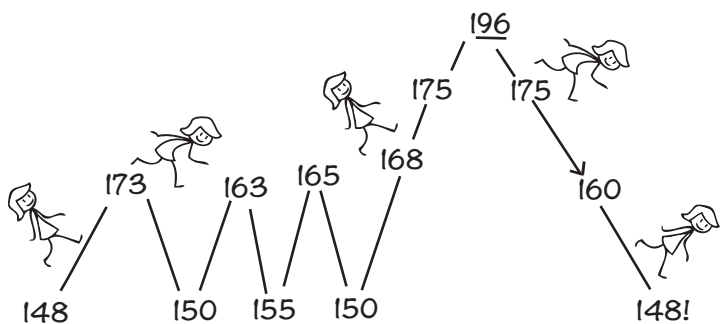
Disclaimer

This is my true story. Nothing I include in here is a recognized diet by any entity or company. In fact, it is a way of eating that likely no nutritionist or physician would approve of. I am not suggesting that you or anyone you love (or hate) eat this way. This is simply what worked, and continues to work, for me. As everyone is different, you might find that something totally different works better for you. This is not to be taken as medical advice. However, if you're already eating an unhealthy diet, filled with sugar, candy, chocolate, pizza, or whatever your food of choice is that has gotten you where you are now, it is my hope that at least it might help you make some smarter choices. See your doctor before beginning any new weight loss program.

Memoir. Self-help. Diet and Weight Loss.

First Edition

Printed in the United States

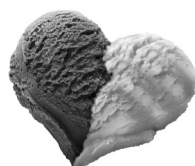


*This book is dedicated to the pounds left behind  
I just didn't want to carry anymore.*





## CHAPTER 1



# Closet Sugar Junkie

**A**re you the kind of person who has battled your weight at least once in your life, if not all of your life? Do you feel surrounded by thin people everywhere? You know the ones I'm talking about; the ones with the great figures who you always see eating anything they want and never gaining weight.

You hate those people, right? It seems like you just look at food and you gain weight, while they never gain an ounce yet still bring that large Starbucks Mocha Latte and a couple of donuts to the office every day and, nope, never gain an inch around the middle, or anywhere else, for that matter.

Well, I'm here to share with you how not all those thin people are thin by nature. Many (and I was one of them) either struggle every day to keep their weight down or have actually lost weight and now they're thin, but it was a struggle for them as well. Yep, they did it. They know full-well what it's like to be overweight – but you may not be aware of their “before” stories. You may just assume that they magically keep the weight off because they're lucky or blessed or simply have a higher metabolism or better genetic code than you.



People treat me like that all the time, as though I've always been skinny. They don't realize that, while much of my life I was of average weight (I don't think I was ever skinny), I also tipped the scales at nearly 200 pounds several years back. Yep, 200 pounds. Now, while 200 pounds may not be obese, it was a good 40 pounds more than I needed to carry around. And I wonder just how many more pounds I might have ended up with, had I not made some changes.

Those extra 40 pounds meant that I didn't fit into my clothes, necessitating spending more and more money on increasingly roomier ones. Those extra 40 pounds also made it harder to walk fast without huffing and puffing. They made me feel like I looked pregnant, and to some I did.

I mean, trust me – you don't have to be 100 pounds overweight to wish you could shed some pounds. Many folks just need to lose those 10, 20, or 50 pounds to make a big difference in their health. In fact, something like two in three adults in the US are overweight or obese today. That extra 40 pounds put me in the Overweight category on my doctor's scales. Never thought I'd see *that* day!

But, granted, whether you want to lose 10 or 100 pounds, it's simply not easy. (If it were, everyone would be skinny, right?)

Well, I did my share of trying this diet and that diet, especially all the so-called fad diets that came and went. Some worked for a while – some never really worked at all. With most I didn't last more than a week or so. Weight Watchers was OK. Tried and tested. Back in the old days they even had a cabbage soup recipe that you could make and eat all you wanted. (As if *that* would fill the empty spaces like chocolate would.)



Over the years I encountered some bizarre diets. I remember one in particular, supposedly designed for cardiac patients who had to lose weight quickly before they could have heart surgery. The first day you could eat all the fruit you wanted. Second day, all the veggies you wanted but nothing else. Third day was all fruits and vegetables. Your big reward at the end of that day was to be allowed to have a huge baked potato, with butter. The rest of the week included skim milk and brown rice, some lean meat, and God knows what else! It would be hard to get through even two days on that one!

Then I watched some of my friends go on an extreme diet that involved getting daily injections of some magic drug or other, plus cutting their calories to 500 per day. They were often bragging how much weight they'd lost in a very short time. I was thinking, duh, anyone who cuts their calories back to 500 per day (just short of starving) would lose substantially, with or without the damned injections! Count me out!

In fact, every time I decided to lose weight my next step was to run to Dairy Queen to get myself a “last supper” Blizzard. After that I'd hit the grocery store for my favorite can of mixed gourmet nuts. Then I'd run home and make up a batch of brownies and gulp them all down that same night, since on most diets I'd not be seeing any of these foods for a long, long time to come. The usual result was that I'd generally *gain* five pounds in the first 24 hours of the diet!

I confess I'm a closet junk food junkie. A choco-holic. A sugar addict. Whatever terminology you want to use. And while I understand that America's obesity epidemic is at an all time high, whenever I go to my doctor's office and they give me the usual paperwork to fill out, they're (thankfully)



more worried about my other behaviors. They always ask if I smoke and how much. Or if I drink and how much. Or even if I do drugs, to which I always wonder just how many people lie about this. They even ask me if I have any sexual problems, to which I usually reply, “Does not having someone who wants to be intimate regularly with me constitute a problem?” They rarely get the joke. But I ask you, if obesity is such a huge thing then why aren't they asking us about it right along with the drugs, alcohol, or tobacco? Or do they just zero in on what the scales shouts the minute they make you step on it? I wonder.

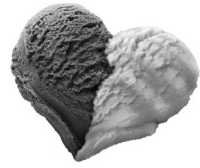
I should clarify my eating habits just a bit. Sure, I eat salads and meats and veggies – sometimes. But mostly I eat every unhealthy food out there and, quite frankly, I don't want to give it up. *But*, I don't want to carry around unnecessary weight either. I literally want to have my cake and eat it too! Doesn't everyone?

This is my journey to do just that. I call this book a dieter's memoir that reads like a novel (and a self-help book) but with a twist, and it's a big one: Incredibly, I discovered that I really can eat anything I want and still lose weight. Even my dog reshaped her girlish figure right along with me. Neither she nor I saw that coming!

But it was a bumpy road.

This is my true story, my 40-year journey that taught me there is No Cheatin' – Just Eatin'.

## CHAPTER 2



# But I'm Not That Bad – Am I?

**M**y story starts with a mirror. I often wondered if it could possibly be one of those at the circus in the house of mirrors. The kind that made you fatter than you really were. I could hope, couldn't I?

Here I was, for the zillionth time again sadly staring at my naked body reflecting back at me from the full-length mirror in my bedroom. My little, white Schnauzer, Larkin, curled up at the foot of my bed, was watching stoically.

“What do you think, girl?” I asked.

I kept hoping she'd say something encouraging as a girlfriend would, like, “What are you talking about? You look great,” or at least, “Not to worry ... your weight's not *that* bad.” I'd been trying to teach her English for more than four years and she just wasn't getting it. She yawned and then began licking her crotch instead. Obviously more important to her. She had issues too, after all.

Returning to my nakedness, I looked back at my reflection with my harsh critical eye and groaned, as usual. At 5'8” and 175 pounds I certainly wasn't morbidly obese. But my body felt like it was rebelling against me these days. I'd certainly



weighed much less at many different times in my life. And not just all the way back in high school.

Staring straight at myself, I began the painful judgment routine, starting with my arms, which I have to confess, weren't too bad. I posed like Popeye, lifting each bent arm towards the sky and was pleased to see a couple of muscle definitions there. At least all the time spent at the gym doing arm workouts was accomplishing something. So, OK, the arms weren't bad.

I moved down to my breasts. Yes, I could even tolerate them, for the most part – ironically, after many years of hating them. God had simply been way too generous with me in that department. As an athlete in high school and an equestrienne for years, too much boob was simply too much boob! For those who need further explanation, try strapping two heavy water balloons to your chest, then go jogging or, even worse, gallop full tilt on a fiery steed. Not pretty. And certainly not comfortable.

Then there were the comments that came and, even worse – *the looks*, from the males of the species. It always seemed to me that they thought we women ordered boobs in whatever size we wanted and, if a gal was pretty chesty, she obviously had ordered boobs in a larger size because she was looking to *use* them somehow. And when that was the case, the looks were even more obnoxious.

Those secretive looks were one thing. The slobbering, put-your-tongue-back-in-your-mouth looks were about as pathetic and embarrassing as you could get. What made it worse were the guys who never could connect with a girl's eyes but could only stare her in the chest. My daughter used



to talk about that phenomenon in high school and how she and her friends had come up with a defense against the look. Their response was, “You might as well look up here,” (pointing to their eyes) “because you’re not going to be meeting these girls anytime soon!”

I remember staying over at a college boyfriend’s house one night, when I hadn’t planned to do so, and as such, had no PJ’s of my own. He lent me one of his T shirts and as I pulled it over my head and settled the girls comfortably in place he turned to me and said, “Looks like a couple of rabbits fighting for air in a sack in there!” Need I say more? That memory is burned in my brain in intimate detail.

Then there was the time when I was on the girl’s track team in high school. One day, we were out jogging around the track warming up while the boys were still fooling around, waiting for their coach to arrive. As the girls’ team jogged by, smiling and flirting with all those cute boys in their cute little gym shorts (think 1974, before big, baggie shorts took over), the boys all picked up the chant of, “Bounce, bounce, bounce,” as the girls and their entertaining breasts bounced by.

Well, their comments raised quite a stir with the girls’ parents, so next time we bounced our way past the boys, their new chant was, “No derogatory remarks, no derogatory remarks!” Which only changed the verbiage but not the meaning.

I also remember one day walking across the street in my little hometown of 12,000 people, three stoplights and one Hardee’s. It was much like Mayberry. People were generally decent. And yet, there were still jerks among them.

It was summer. I was crossing the street in the middle of the two-block downtown. I was wearing a T-shirt. The girls





were tucked neatly in a nice, supportive bra. Suddenly a man slowed his car and stopped, then waved me across at the crosswalk. Then, just as I got near his front bumper, he yelled out, "Nice set of lungs you got there, Sister."

As a naive 18 year old, I really didn't know what to do with that. All I can tell you is that to this day I avoid wearing T shirts at all cost.

That was yet one more example of how the male of the species seemed to think we order our boobs in the size suited to our intention. Of course in today's world of widespread breast augmentation, that assumption is more true than untrue but it certainly wasn't the case in 1974.

I was, however, especially pleased that I'd undergone a breast reduction when I was about 30, despite my husband's objection. Bringing the girls into a more reasonable size. Yet, at present, as I gaze into that mirror, they have crept back up to 40-D's with a bit more droop than I was hoping for, but gravity does have its way over the years. At least a good bra generally holds them in fairly well, with substantial cleavage that will catch the male of the species' eye at least. So the boobs, all in all, I could live with them.

But, as I moved farther south as I looked in that mirror, I ran into my nemesis – my God-awful belly. My critical eyes immediately went to my poochy tummy that made me look about five months pregnant, especially when I turned the view to profile. (I turned it profile then, just to prove the point.) Ugh. It was still there.

I'd only had one child, for God's sake. Only one. How could only one innocent baby leave me with such a pooch? And years ago, to boot. I didn't even have any stretch marks!



And I'd only gained 13 pounds when I was pregnant, as I'd spent the first four or five months puking my guts out. In fact, the day after I delivered my daughter and went to the nursery to get her to go home, the discharge nurse who had not seen me before, looked questioningly at me as I didn't look like the other new moms, whose tummies still looked pregnant. After all, between the months of puking as well as teaching an aerobics class until I was seven months pregnant, my body was in pretty good shape.

Even better still was when I jumped on the scale at the nurse's station and was shocked at what I saw. I asked, "Is this thing accurate?" The nurse replied, "Yes, it is. All the new moms hate it and swear it can't be right. Not to worry, though. You'll lose your baby weight real soon."

What she didn't know was that I weighed 150 pounds that day after I gave birth, which was the same amount I weighed when I conceived! While all the other moms were lamenting the battles they faced getting their girlish figures back, my weight was already gone.

What the heck happened to that cooperative belly from my baby-bearing year, I wanted to know?

It seems, these days, that any extra weight I added took a bee-line for the gut. "Belly fat," as it is commonly referred to today. All the magazines and books are reminding us that belly fat is the most dangerous for our health, and the hardest to get rid of once it sets up housekeeping in your body.

I sucked my gut in as I always did during these naked body checks, holding my breath. Yep, if I could just drop those damned 20 extra pounds that the scale was pleased to inform me of – and, if it all could come off directly from my belly – I knew I would feel so much better about myself.



Here I was, staring at my pooch again. And it didn't just haunt me when I was naked either. It caught my attention every time I went to slip into clothes that had a zipper or a button at my waist. Not to mention something as torturous as panty hose! Oh my God. Talk about feeling miserable. I gave up wearing those years ago and if I absolutely had to wear some kind of stockings, I would wear thigh highs and thanked my lucky stars for whoever invented them.

I returned to my critique. One last look, with only the butt and the legs to go. Since I was still on the sideways view, I was pleased to see that I was still keeping the cellulite at bay there and, in fact, even had some muscle definition on each side, which had to be the result of years of staying busy, athletically. My calves were OK too. At least no complaints there. Whew.

I guess I liked my legs the best. At least until 2011 when I had both my knees replaced due to the disappearance of all cartilage in both of them with resultant, constant pain. (The downside to a lifetime of major physical activity – for me, anyway.) The scars had softened somewhat over time, but still looked like someone had taken a white piece of chalk and drawn an 8-inch line down both knee caps, heading towards my toes.

Thank God they weren't any worse than that – I'd seen some other folks' scars and some weren't as pretty as mine. And while I was glad my state of affairs wasn't any worse than it was, I did miss my pretty knees of a younger age. However, I was much happier with working knees, I have to admit. I didn't miss the pain either. And the fact that they still got me around fairly well, I couldn't complain too much.

One last check; I grabbed my hand mirror and turned my back to the floor-length mirror to study the rear view –



already knowing what I'd find there. I smiled. My butt and I had had a fair relationship over the years. While it was a bit flat, it wasn't horrible to look at. Cellulite didn't seem to hide there. Years of horse-back riding must have pounded it in shape, I guess. I could live with it. It wouldn't win any body-builder competitions, but it did OK in a skirt.

But all the parts of my body that were not so bad didn't stand a chance of being noticed over that damn belly. It haunted me. It felt like it called me names every single day. I hated the muffin top that showed up in most of my clothes. And on top of that, add any little indigestion or bloating and forget buttoning anything. And those days of two-piece bathing suits only a handful of years ago; well, I wasn't in any rush to return *there*.

As to the rest of my wardrobe, most of my clothes were size 14 but some of them weren't too comfy anymore either. I absolutely drew the line at buying anything size 16. But I could sense that line was already growing pretty shaky.

I stuck out my tongue at the reflection, as I frequently did. And after slipping into my sweats, I headed to the kitchen to find something sweet to fill the empty space within me that either couldn't accept myself the way I was, or wouldn't give myself the firm kick in the butt that I needed to do something different.

I've rarely been totally and completely happy with my body, but for the most part, it has served me well. While I have never been obese, and have been pretty physically active most of my life, most people don't realize that I generally do battle with my weight, maxing out at 196 pounds a few years back. Now *that* was scary. And seeing just how close the number



200 was each time I got on the scale left me terrified. This was a boundary I MUST NOT BREAK!

I liken the cause of my binging times (and any time I seem to balloon up) to something overwhelming like depression, which comes and goes with various issues in my life – like no-man-in-my-life times, for one.

Funny how, whenever I gain weight and it shows in the fact that my clothes don't fit anymore, I subtly move from jeans to leggings, stretchy yoga pants, or shorts so I don't have to worry about fit or comfort. At the same time I realize that not worrying about those issues allows me to actually compound the problem by providing even more built-in space to accommodate more fat! Vicious cycle.

This revelation occurred to me at one point, during my heaviest of times, when a neighbor asked me why she had never seen me in jeans. Did I even own any? *Of course*, I thought. Way in the back of my closet for those hopeful times that I might fit into them again.

Ironically, the same neighbor who pointed this oddity out to me indeed wore jeans, despite being substantially overweight herself. Of course, I'm not sure she'd have looked better in leggings, had she tried that option. Her thighs were her enemy. In her case, the right-size, roomy jeans seemed to be the smartest move. Yet for me, the idea of handing over more money for yet a larger, roomier pair of jeans to live quietly in my closet unworn during another weight gain, just didn't sit well. I stuck with the leggings and stretchy things for the time being. Thinking I was fooling myself, but not.

For the last couple of years I'd been stuck at 175 pounds, which for someone my height is approximately 20 pounds too much. But that was after losing 40 and then gaining 20 back.



While I realize that I'm not in high school anymore, I do remember weighing about 148 pounds while on the track team and being about as fit as I could ever get. So, considering I'm no longer a hormonal, high energy teen who burns weight even while asleep, I'm comfy compromising my ideal weight to sit right around 155. I was last there (for a relatively short time) in 2009 when I managed to drop 30 pounds before my daughter's wedding. (Great incentive, right?) I then dropped 10 more after that, over the next few months.

God, I loved that time when my body felt just wonderful and I couldn't wait to pull on my skinny jeans! Of course I was also almost an addict to my weight loss at that time. In fact during the race to be skinny for all those wedding photos I was not only counting every calorie that went in my mouth, I was also working out twice per day! And included in those workouts was running about 40 miles per week! Get my drift regarding the addiction part?

So, you might be wondering, if I lost 40 pounds once, why couldn't I simply lose 20 now? Why didn't I just do what I'd done before?

Ah, that's where I get ahead of myself. It all actually started one summer day in 1975 ...