

# A Journey Without A Roadmap

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Have you ever tried to refold a roadmap? I have. It's not pretty. Two hundred miles from home, toddler yelling, and dear husband giving me *the look*. What made me think that a road trip across country with a 2-year-old was a good idea? My inability to refold this innocuous little piece of paper seemed to be the straw to my camel. I pushed it to the floor, determined to deal with it later.

This trip was so carefully planned! I knew every route, every turn we would take to get there. Then we saw it: a detour around a bridge. OK, no big deal. "Just follow the signs," I say to my glaring husband.

An hour later we passed a sign that said, "Next Town: Jumbo, Population: 13," and I knew we were in for a long ride.

For me, low carb began this way. I read the book, I had my list of what foods to eat and what not to eat, and I was armed with recipes galore. I had my roadmap to low carb success. Actually, the first months went smoothly according to the plan. If someone had told me then about the twists and turns my journey would take, I would have given up right then and there! But now I'm so grateful that I got to explore that road on my own!

New lowcarbers often email me asking how I got where I am, and I'm never sure just how much to tell them. How can I express to them that it's not knowing what I ate or didn't eat that will benefit them most? What they will receive value from is their own journey, and that journey is one they must navigate by themselves.

My physiology is different from theirs, and theirs is different from the next person's. How our bodies' react to the changes we make in our daily eating is not the same, hence the term YMMV (your mileage may vary).

Eventually, to reach my goal, I had to give up dairy, all processed meats, nuts, fruit, and fermented items. But that doesn't mean the next lowcarber must do so in order to be as successful. I certainly didn't want to give up those things. After all, I'm supposed to be able to eat those things on a low carb diet, right? Well, for most people the answer is "Yes." It just isn't "Yes" for *me*.

Giving up dairy was one of the hardest decisions I made along the way. I fought it for months - dairy isn't a problem for *ME*, I kept telling myself. I was afraid really, and angry. Afraid that it was a problem for me, and later angry that others could eat it with impunity and I couldn't. Why me? Well, because it has to be somebody I guess. Eventually, I came to *accept* how much better I felt without dairy in my life.

Acceptance, now there's a hard thing to reconcile with. I have almost 3 years of lowcarb-ing behind me, and I still struggle with it. Accepting that this is how you will eat for the rest of your days is a *HARD* thing to do, but eventually it frees you from the resentment. Accepting that your husband, your kids, or your wife can eat Twinkies by the boxful and you can't is *HARD*, yet it frees you from the anger. To quote half the fathers in America: "Nothing worth having is easy."

The changes, both the expected and the unexpected, we make to achieve our goals *ARE* hard, but it *IS* worth it.

I can't teach you or anyone else all of these things. They must be learned through experience and through trial and error. Am I saying that you can't learn anything from other lowcarbers? Of course not! There are many great ways to gain helpful knowledge about lowcarb-ing:

- Participate in chat rooms, mailing lists, news groups, and bulletin boards.
- Read books, websites with other's experiences and don't be afraid to ask questions. The more you know, the easier it will be to navigate the back roads of *YOUR* journey.

My low carb journey didn't turn out anything like I had expected but that's OK. I learned so much more about myself than I ever imagined possible along the way.

Remember that little town of Jumbo I mentioned? It turned out to be a nice little town: an intersection with a stop sign and four or five homes with children playing hopscotch. We stayed on those back roads as we weaved our way across rural America, stopping at little farmer's markets along the way and listening to the old men swap stories from the past. It was the most memorable vacation of my life.

Thank goodness for detours.

Heed my advice regarding vacations and your low carb journey. Toss the map out the window and enjoy the ride.

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Still at goal in 2010