

Changes in OTHER People

A lowcarb list poster wrote: **I realized something really important this weekend. Not only am I changing but the people around me are changing as well. In small ways. They are insecure about my new body...more than I am.**

Yes yes yes, you are right! This is another one of the psychological challenges that can come as somewhat of a surprise as we coast toward goal—it absolutely rattles some people around us. I think there can be lots of reasons for this, and one is that when you change, it can change some of the "roles" you are playing in *other people's* minds and lives.

Oftentimes these roles are unspoken, never outwardly acknowledged. For instance, perhaps you've fulfilled the role of a "sweet but inferior looking" friend to a girlfriend or relative? As long as you're fat, she's clearly "better" in her own mind. Maybe you've been the "smart but fat" one? Or perhaps your obvious success with sticking to the WOE is making a heavy friend feel like a failure compared to you, making her feel increasingly guilty or uncomfortable about not addressing her own problems. These people in your life will often react in some surprising ways, including flaunting foods in front of you, and getting angry, making light or fun of the food choices you make; sometimes they can be downright humiliating. The comments come from THEIR uncomfortableness with the changes in you but that doesn't make them easier to deal with.

To expect that everybody will always be nothing but happy for you (as they usually are when you FIRST experience *some* success) as you settle in and live your lowcarb life is to be naive. I'm telling you, this rattles some cages. And one of the things we have to learn how to handle is occasionally having this "upsetting" effect on others without it letting it give us a quiet little excuse to return to our old eating/pleasing behaviors, to go back to fulfilling those old roles to make others happy—something we *might* not even be aware that we sometimes used to do.

If you are to have long-term success with this, adjustments in OTHER people's thinking and actions will have to take place and we have to just sort of ride those out until they happen.

I've experienced this on numerous occasions over the years. The person I work with who originally got me started on lowcarb lost 60 pounds, got to within 10 pounds of goal, then regained it all when she went off at Christmas her second year of lowcarb back in 1997. She is now my boss! She's been struggling ever since, going on and off lowcarb, never getting much more weight off without falling apart and regaining again. When she's ON the diet, she is friendly, almost an "ally" with me at staff social gatherings; when she is off plan, she avoids me and/or turns beet red and nervous-chatterly when we end up together in an eating situation. (We all know how she feels, right? We've all been there, done that?)

I have only one sibling, a sister who also happens to be a Registered Dietician. Well for years I was the fat sister with health and eating problems and SHE was the family repository of all the food knowledge and facts. But when I got thin and STAYED that way this time, the tables turned somewhat, especially because I did it "against the rules" with lowcarb. My relationship with her took the longest to adjust, but we are unbelievably close now, totally accepting of each other's bodies and eating. We came out of the same childhood circumstances, and we BOTH developed eating issues (we just went in opposite directions with them) we've had to reckon with as adults. It was oh-so-well worth the wait to develop this peaceful, respectful relationship!

Until 2009, I had an elderly father who had an elderly girlfriend who brought her special cake to his 85th birthday celebration many years ago. She got noticeably upset when I declined a piece of it—of course she tried the "just a bite?" approach, and of course I still declined. This wasn't about me, it was about how SHE has always pleased people, and it really surprised and rattled her when I could not be "pleased" in this way. She (as well as my father) never understood how or why I eat the way I do (they really didn't need to), but they went on to just accept that this is the way I am and not take it personally. They did laugh and joke about it at times, I got quizzed a lot by them—"can you eat this—or that?" and I learned to not get offended by that, just try to patiently explain it over and over again, and to even sort of laugh at myself in their presence about how "funny" I am about food. There have been a few other people at times in my life who seemed surprisingly, unnecessarily fascinated and quizzical about this part of my life.

I think an important part of the life-adjustment of this is learning to live with other people close to you not being happy or comfortable with, or even needing to understand, everything you choose to do. It's learning to be comfortable with *being* uncomfortable—and comfortable with being a certain kind of selfish. When I eat this way 24-7-365, I am taking care of ME first and you just might be surprised to find how that will occasionally irritate people who claim to want what is best for you.

This is the heavy-duty abiding I'm always ranting about folks. Decide, provide, ABIDE!

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