

Getting Lucky on Lowcarb

I've been observing lowcarbers since 1996, and although I see a lot of people coming to online forums asking for people to wish them luck, I haven't seen luck be a factor in a single case. Yes, there are times when it's probably not the greatest idea to embark down this path. I would never suggest someone attempt to start this in the middle of a divorce, death of a close loved one, career change, relocation, during the major holidays or any other predictably stressful time.

But, one of the most fundamental truths I had to face was that if I wanted this badly enough, if I really wanted it to stick, I would have to come up with the wherewithall to eat the way I have to eat (no matter what that turned out to be!) straight on THROUGH easy times and hard times.

I think I have a life that is about as normally stressful, and as normally "lucky" as anybody else. It wasn't really the hard times and crises that were thwarting me, it was how I chose to handle myself during them, mostly how I tried to deal with how I felt (scared, mad, rattled, irritated, anxious, frustrated, tired, out-of-control, sometimes even deliriously happy) during those times.

It is helpful to establish and get comfortable with a new kind of rhythm with eating during a time that is not out-of-the-ordinary stressful. In my case I'd even say it helped me to come to derive a new, QUIETER kind of comfort and peace with the simplicity of eating fully and right no matter what else was going on around me. Unlike the false and momentary comfort (high) of binge eating during rough times, eating right usually helps—and it has never done anything to exacerbate—stress or a crisis. With this new skill, I CAN and have endured just about all of life's more challenging events while keeping my eating in total control.

I think this is so hard to believe for those of us who turn to food to attempt to do things that foods are not really capable of doing (except for momentarily distracting us from our feelings)—or try to use food as a kind of tranquilizer or antidote. To my mind it's exactly like an alcoholic who can't conceive of getting through the end of a perfectly normal day without "relaxing" with a drink.

I've been lowcarbing since 1996, and since 1998 I have eaten what some people would call "rigid" anti-yeast, meat and veggie lowcarb. Those times have hardly been stress-free. I've done this through the death of my mother-in-law which took place slowly but included an 8-week crisis (massive stroke) at the end in 1999. I've done it through the "friendly" divorce of my 80-year-old father from a wife with Alzheimer's disease whose family wanted to take her into their home, and I did it through her death and funeral two years later in 2001. I've done it through a LONG "terminal illness" of a beloved childless aunt, who was given given 24 months MAX to live but she made it 37 months. I sat with her over Christmas and New Years 2003, as she died an excruciatingly slow and painful death. I've done it through the running away from home of my oldest son when he was in high school (he's 29 now, things are much better), and through his tumultuous

separation from the family nest. I've done it through watching my youngest son have his young dreams come true by being cast in the lead role in his high school musical and watching him perform in front of 3 evening audiences of over 1,500 people each. I've done it through two rounds of chemotherapy on my close friend and boss with the resulting doubling of my own workload. I did it through 9/11. I did it through a failed root canal and an abscess tooth that happened concurrent with an 8-week-long personal inflammatory breast cancer scare (false, thank goodness!) Most recently I did it as my elderly father suddenly fell, then lost his mind, then was pronounced terminal, then moved into to my house and then died all within 2 weeks, in 2009.

I've also done it through the more ordinary everyday stresses—through countless dinner parties, pizza parties, work, school, and church events, through disagreements with my husband, through a few meals with people I hardly know, through vacations. I've done it when it's awkward or embarrassing, when it would have been so much easier, or much cheaper, NOT to do it.

I had to quit finding reasons NOT to do it because if I wanted to I could find a reason to quit virtually every day.

None of this is to sound arrogant or self-righteous. I'm trying to illustrate in a real way that each one of our ordinary lives IS by turns happy, sad, scary, busy, boring, thrilling, frustrating, and stressful, and that to attempt to "fix" or in some way engineer away the stress, or to wait for a better or luckier time is futile. In my opinion, what we have to accept is a more fundamental personal truth. We food addicts simply are not capable of eating according to how we feel or what's going on around us.

Yes, some people CAN do this. That doesn't matter. We can't. Fighting or denying that this is true about ourselves only makes us crazy and miserable and, of course, keeps us stuck in our own comfortable but vicious cycle. It keeps us fat.

So yes, always always always keep trying! If you don't try, you aren't even taking that first step. But please remember it has nothing to do with luck, or perhaps it's that once we're past the first few weeks of the withdrawal struggle, we mostly make our own luck, day after month after year.

It really comes down to accepting what is true about ourselves, about what we can control and what we can't ("God, grant me the serenity"...) and having a plan and total responsibility for our own personal eating needs at all times, good and bad.

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