

The Usual Questions from a Beginner with some surprising answers

Are you hungry on a lowcarb diet?

If I am, I eat.

Is it hard?

What worthwhile endeavor isn't challenging? Even into my 15th year of this, yes, it is still occasionally hard, although after about my third year, it got much less difficult when I really figured it all out for myself and surrendered my preconceived ideas of how I was going to be able to eat (it's rarely as easy or "fun" as the books, or even most beginning lowcarbers, lead you to believe).

What is your favorite/hardest aspect of this?

Favorite: The freedom from hunger and control over my eating behavior for the first time in my life. Food doesn't control me anymore, I'm not constantly thinking—or trying to keep myself from thinking—about my next food fix.

Hardest: I'm an addict, and I am merely recovering; I'll never be cured. And I have the kind of addictions that a lot of people don't even want to believe exist. My culture (and the makers of food products) want me to have all kinds of feelings about what, when, why and how I eat, and I had to learn the long and hard way that as an addict to certain foods, I have to eat to fill my fuel tank and keep my feelings separate from foods. Although with time and practice it's become much easier for me to walk down this relatively lonely road, our culture is not geared to people who approach food and eating the way I do.

How do you feel vs. eating a low cal/low fat WOE?

You're asking me how I feel without irritable bowel syndrome, without joint pains, without psoriasis, rosacea and seborrhea, without gas, and without anyone asking me when my baby is due? You're asking how does it feel wearing size 8's for over six years now as opposed to how it felt to wearing tight size 16's, spending at least an hour a day on the toilet?? (okay, so I get less reading done!) You're asking how I feel with the boundless energy I don't remember having since I was about 10? How I feel whenever I'm invited somewhere and I don't have to agonize over finding something that looks good on me, or how I feel when I unexpectedly run into someone who hasn't seen me in a few years?

Seriously, I did lose all my weight *twice* on lowfat/lowcal. The second time I kept it off for about 2 years. But none of the health or skin problems went away those times, and both times my world and my thoughts continued to revolve around my next meal (fix). I had to play little mind games with myself to keep enduring the hunger and staying the

course. Every day I woke up wordlessly repeating my mantra..."c'mon. Keep going, you can do it." Now when I wake up I weigh myself, pull tomorrow's food out of the freezer, and go eat a nice big breakfast (about 450 calories worth, most days. That's over 3 times what I ate for breakfast in my lowfat days.) Then instead of saying to myself "keep going," I simply GET going.

Which do you find easier? Low cal/fat or Lowcarb?

It's not a matter of easier. It's a matter of different. To do either one successfully takes serious determination and different kinds of strength. My own experience is that lowfat took a more single, physical strength (enduring the hunger), as well as the daunting task of staying in emotional "fight mode," having to constantly resist the totally primal, physiological need/drive to eat more, both due to not eating quite enough food, AND because with lowfat eating most of us are still eating some of the foods that perpetuate cravings.

Long-term lowcarb, on the other hand, takes more complex, inner strength—it can often feel like swimming against the current. We're living in a culture that rather vaguely accepts lowfat and calorie counting, in a culture that says "oh sure we're all supposed to eat right, but just this once won't hurt you"; in a culture that says "here, you can eat this special treat I made/bought for you and you'll feel better *and* you will please me too. This is a special occasion, join us and we'll all eat better tomorrow." Rejecting that little facet of our culture is never easy, only slightly less difficult to do on a full stomach, without strong cravings.

Successful lowcarb will make you feel lonely sometimes and most likely require you to at least occasionally offend or frustrate other people who, with absolutely no evil intent, try to please or otherwise choose/control what goes into your mouth. This is a tricky cultural dance step to learn, one that takes everybody time to adjust to—rejecting little parts of the culture without rejecting the PEOPLE who choose to do it that way. THAT takes a kind of strength that a lot of us are not very comfortable developing.

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