



Weight Loss Zen

An Attitude Adjustment Guide

for Keto, Paleo & Low Carb Lifestyles

DIXIE VOGEL

Selected Chapters
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to everyone who has ever looked in the mirror and felt like a big, fat mess.

It's for everyone who has ever given up on a failed diet—and felt like giving up on themselves in the process.

It's for everyone who has ever broken down in tears or lost sleep over eating.

It's for everyone who has ever been scared of sitting down, unsure if the chair would hold up.

It's for everyone who has ever pretended not to care about weight but deep down, still really did.

It's for everyone who was just like me, fifteen years ago. This book is exactly what I would have told myself, had I had a clue.

This book is dedicated to you, courtesy of the countless folks who so generously shared their own journeys with me over the years. I am forever in their debt both on my own behalf, and on behalf of everyone with whom I've shared their wisdom.

Thank you for being here. Together, we've got this.

Contents

Preface: Journey Begins	6
Introduction: Too Fat to Be a Dieting Guru?	11
Noobs: Getting Started	15
Resolving to Get it Right: Helpful Resolutions	16
Preparing to Get Busy	20
10 Easy Steps to Actually Starting	30
Eating Plan Prep: Planning for Success	34
Top 10 Rules for Losing it for Good	38
5 More Easy Steps to Lose the Tonnage	41
For the Back-Again Crowd	45
What's Stopping You?	46
Back on Track?	51
Dieting with a History of Eating Disorders	58
Off-Plan Eating	63
Planning on Eating Illegal	64
Cheating and Other Aberrations	69
Cheating: Road to Freedom or Diet Plan Ruin?	73
The Brownies are Not in Charge!	77
Confessions of a Carb Addict	80
10 Reasons Your Diet Didn't Work (& Fixes)	84
How to Fail at Losing Weight	88
Guilt Free Dieting	94

Attitude Adjustments	103
A Losing Attitude_____	104
Fat Pix as a Deterrent? _____	109
Fatbutt Syndrome_____	112
Feeling Bad is Fattening _____	123
Feeling Skinny is Fun (& Builds Success) _____	127
Scale-itis_____	130
Dressing for Weight Loss Success _____	134
Lose-By Dates: Help or Hindrance? _____	138
Eliminating Temptation in 1 Easy Step!_____	141
Motivation? Please, Girlfriend! _____	145
Self-Definitions and Weight Loss _____	148
What's Your Hurry, Sparky? _____	152
Fat Thinking _____	155
Why Won't They Listen?_____	160
Self-Esteem: Chicken or Egg? _____	167
Epilogue: What Now? _____	173
About The Author _____	177

JOURNEY BEGINS

PREFACE

Journey Begins

"At your BMI, you have over a 45% chance of eventually developing diabetes."

My doctor looked sad as she handed me the graph, apparently resigned to her unenviable lot of providing vital information that will ultimately go unheeded.

I didn't have the mental facility just then to compare the scenario to Cassandra's curse via Apollo, forever more making accurate prophecies no one believed. I'm too much reeling from the smack in the face that word "diabetes" conjures up.

With the disease on both sides of my family (and abject terror at the thought of not being able to eat SUGAR, the horror!), I was dumbfounded. With my mouth being what it is, leaving me speechless is no small feat.

I'd already been very disturbed by a recent picture of me at the beach. And now, this. I did exactly what I would have advised friends or my kids to do in the same circumstance: I decided then and there to suck it up and make some serious changes.

Researching, I soon realized the people that had the most to lose (i.e. 100 pounds or more, like me) seemed to do best on low carb. The before and

after pictures made a solid case. Atkins was the gold standard of low carb, so Atkins, here I come! And that was the not-so-glamorous beginning of what ultimately became my love affair with low carb.

A few months in, everybody in my life was sick of hearing about my diet and I wanted more support. So I joined an online community. As I became more knowledgeable and successful (losing well over 100 pounds), I was invited to become a moderator; I eventually bought the site and ran it another couple years. A series of personal circumstances led me to leaving that role, selling the site and slowly, gradually, almost imperceptibly, losing my way as well. Without the ongoing immersion in all things low carb, my habits just got sloppier and sloppier.

I put back on some of the weight, not because it was so impossible to maintain, but because I didn't stay focused. I'm aging and my body doesn't work the same as it used to. It becomes more difficult when you get older and especially if you don't always walk the straight and narrow.

I always will be what I call a "true believer" in the lifestyle, but I've lived in varying degrees of compliance. It's a lot of stress and responsibility to head up a weight loss community. I really didn't want to be forever looked to as an example (as you will, even without touting yourself as such). Because plenty of times, I would have been an awful example! Depending on what day you catch me, that's sometimes still true.

JOURNEY BEGINS

However, I kept my Low Carb page on Facebook up and running as a public service—I couldn't bear to delete its massive-to-me following of three thousand some fans.

But I was only thinking of low carb every now and then...until the page went viral. Thanks to the help of my talented friends who were managing it, D.J. Foodie (of DJFoodie.com) and Theresa Marie (of LowCarbReviews.com), suddenly thousands of people were showing up every day, and it seemed like all of them had questions!

So I did the right thing when you're gifted an opportunity to make a difference: brushed up my skills and dove back in to the world of low carb recipes, science, and even controversy. It was either that, or let all these people down! I know low carb saves lives and here I was, in the position to do that. How could I ignore the opportunity? I had long stopped seeking this role, but it was following me.

The Universe had spoken, and it said "low carb."
(Find us at www.facebook.com/LowCarbZen.)

It's different for me, now. The losses are not as effortless as they were, years ago. Each time you slack and come back, it goes a little slower. Age and hormones and thyroid functioning all impact my personal journey. I don't feel like a failure because of that.

Instead, I ask myself the very same question I sometimes ask you: If you knew you'd never lose another pound, would you still follow this lifestyle?

That answer, for me, is simple and loud YES! I feel great. I know I'm taking care of my body. While many of us would love to lose weight, if you're doing this right, it's not JUST about weight. It's about living a healthy lifestyle, feeling good, and being kind to your body. That's one irony of weight loss Zen: not fixating on the losses helps you lose.

It's not always a straight line, from where you start to where you're going. However, I have discovered the better I treat my body, the better it treats me.

That's why I'm here. But what about you?

In truth, it doesn't matter if you're eating this way to lose weight or not. Many of the skills, attitudes and choices that come into play for weight loss are just as important for those following any special diet. Many are applicable to other areas of life as well. Sanity is sanity.

Heck, it doesn't really matter what you weigh at all! You realize that, right? If I could communicate only that one thought, I've been successful. It's true, health or aesthetics may initially lead us down this path. Or we may just feel better eating this way. But if you go through the rest of your life thinking still thinking it's all about the weight, you've missed the entire point!

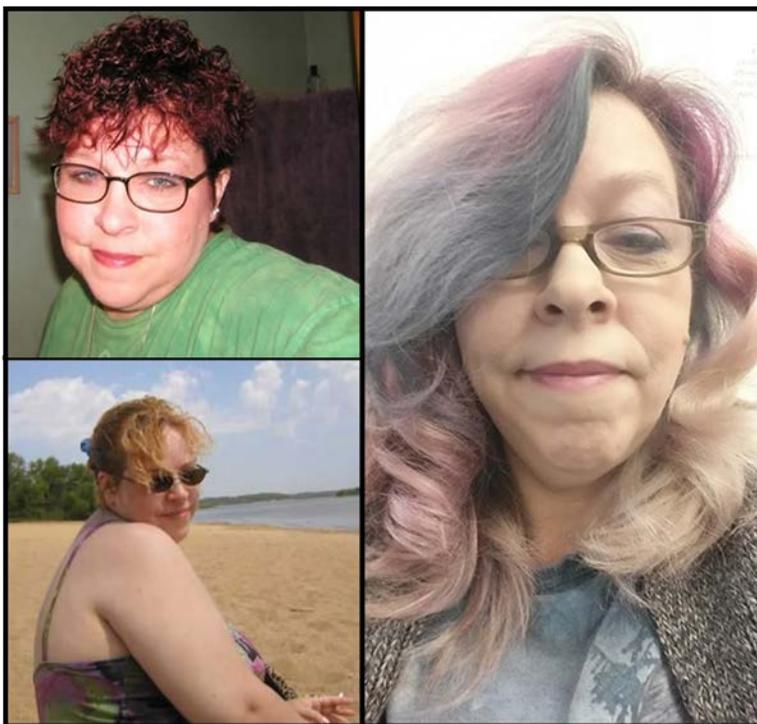
You're not a better person if you're skinny than if you are fat. You're not worthy when you eat well and worthless when you don't. You're just as wonderful no matter your diet (or not, I don't know you).

JOURNEY BEGINS

Here's the thing: certain choices tend to support long-term goals like losing weight and improving health, while other approaches tend to sabotage those same goals. If you want to maximize your success reaching your OWN GOALS, I hope to offer some thoughts, insights and smart-ass remarks to help you do that. Fair enough?

Your value is not correlated with your pants size. It comes from within, Sparky. Always has, always will. Everything else is just window dressing.

Know that always, and value yourself.



Me, Then (2003) & Now (2016)

INTRODUCTION

Too Fat to Be a Dieting Guru?

When I told my husband I was going to start making videos for my popular weight loss Facebook page, he looked utterly horrified.

I didn't get it.

"What? It's not like I'm going to hand out directions to our house or something."

I was confused. He's extremely supportive of my work. So it wasn't embarrassment.

But the look on his face suggested he thought I was undertaking something very, very dangerous.

"It's the Internet," he says, after a pause. "People are mean."

He was worried about my feelings! The man loves me. It's a beautiful thing.

Naturally, on the very first video I shared, someone commented that I was "way too fat" to be talking to people about weight loss. Her exact words were that I was "not a good advertisement."

TOO FAT TO BE A DIETING GURU?

Of course, I'm not a walking, talking advertisement! I'm a human being, with all the messiness, fallibility and general complications that condition entails.

Now, I knew it was coming, so it didn't throw me for a loop. The truth of the matter is, I'm EXACTLY the right person to talk to you about weight loss.

No, I'm not a doctor or a nurse. I'm not a scientist or a nutritionist or a personal trainer. I'm not a health food freak, or even a great cook. And I'm not your therapist, your priest or your mother.

I am, however, a chick who knows a lot about being overweight—including the real life struggles of everyday people who are overweight. I have spent the majority of my life in a condition doctors would classify as "morbidly obese."

I know what it's like to be fat. And I know what it's like to lose a lot of fat. And I pretty much know what it's like, every little bit in between.

I've led weight loss communities for years now, and during that time, have had the benefit of observing literally millions of people undertaking similar weight loss endeavors. Millions! It's mind blowing.

In that time, I've come to notice what sorts of attitudes, perspectives and approaches are very common to the people who do well, versus those common to those who struggle. And I've lived it.

Weight loss is a lot like sex: the most important bits happen in your head. I want to help you flip some

switches in your head, to move from wherever you are right now, whatever struggles and frustrations you have with your own weight loss journey, to Zen.

The coolest part about finding Zen is that it makes your efforts so much more effective! And it enhances every other area of your life at the same time. It's win-win on steroids, man.

What I call "Weight Loss Zen" is about being in your groove, the place where you really hit your stride and what you're doing stops being a struggle.

It's when the whole enterprise stops being about rules, stops being about "no" and starts just being how you live.

It's the difference between what you "can't" have and what you can!

It's freedom from beating up on yourself and learning to honor your spirit and body while making solid decisions that support long term goals.

For many, Zen's nothing short of ending the tyranny a lying hunk of metal and gears (a.k.a. the scale) has long held over mood and sense of self-worth.

True Weight Loss Zen a gift I cannot give to you directly, but I can help you find it if you're seeking.

I've been blessed walk this path alongside some incredibly wise people and in those travels, I've picked up many useful tricks and tips, which I'm going to share with you.

TOO FAT TO BE A DIETING GURU?

Your job is to hear me out. That's it. Hear me out, consider what I have to say, and look at adopting what resonates with you.

I won't claim to know what works for everybody (or every single body), every time. Because this journey is as unique as each individual that undertakes it.

But I do understand a lot of what goes through the head of someone on this journey, both because of the multitudes I've interacted with on this path but much more intimately, because I'm on this path.

So if it sounds like I'm listening in to your brain in places, it's because I sort of am. But I'm probably much nicer to you than you are. So maybe that helps.

Enjoy the ride. We are so often all about the destination here. But most of our days are spent in the journey itself, after all. So we'd best make the most of it.

CHAPTER 1

Resolving to Get it Right: Helpful Resolutions

Being involved in weight loss community for years, I've had opportunity to see lots of resolutions from dieters getting started.

Some resolutions help, while others clearly don't. Follow these tips to make yourself uplifting, helpful resolutions that you feel good about keeping.

Think behavioral resolutions as opposed to lose-by resolutions. That's because you have full control of behavior, but no control over what you may lose by what date. Our bodies are very complex organisms, and there is just an infinite number of variables that impact what poundage the body releases and when. Behavioral resolutions allow you to feel successful, which is vital to staying on course, and ultimately have the same payout on reaching weight loss goals if chosen wisely.

Ramp your way up, for goodness sakes! I cringe when I see someone who's been inactive for ages resolve to exercise two and a half hours a day, every day. This doesn't last because it's too much of a change, and the demands of making it all at once are just not sustainable. I know the intentions are good, but that's setting yourself up to fail while making the process much more painful. Give

yourself breathing room. Give yourself a transitional period. Don't make the work of being kind to your body turn punitive. Make changes as pleasant as possible. You're much more likely to follow through long term that way.

Focus on the positive. Saying "I will not eat sugary cookies anymore" doesn't feel nearly as good as saying, "I'll create healthier versions of the cookies I love." Both statements have the same net worth. But the second statement isn't about restriction; it's about benefit! Benefit takes you much further.

Resolve to replace what you must leave behind. Use this same technique for any behavior you would like to eliminate. Find something that fulfills the need you're addressing with the old behavior. If you frequently eat to relax, resolve to give yourself regular time to read, listen to music, play a game or do something else you find relaxing instead. Address needs in more adaptive ways and you won't be swimming against the tide to stay focused.

Be playful. Resolutions don't have to be cranky, serious edicts based on "our own good." You can get the same benefits in more fun ways with some creativity. How about resolving to take a walk at sunset a few nights a week? Resolve to remind yourself before bedtime of something you feel good about from the day. Or resolve to spend more time playing with your pets. Resolve to trick a carb-lover into enjoying a low carb recipe! Make your resolutions rewarding and fun. You'll be more likely to follow through.

Resolve to forgive yourself. Forgive, both for slips and especially past behavior. If you're refocusing, great! Stop griping about where you are now, and start congratulating yourself for taking better care of yourself right now! You don't enjoy whining anyway, right? Self-recrimination is nothing but depressing. Depression is way fattening! People who feel good about themselves make better choices (and feel better doing it).

Resolve to pay attention. This is a very individual journey. What works for your friend will not always work for you. Consider this journey an advanced level course in how your body works, where the dividends for graduation will be paid in success.

Resolve to make change easier. Planning ahead, using all the resources at your disposal, and doing everything you can to make your life easier in any way whatsoever will actually make your path to weight loss smoother as well. A happy, relaxed dieter is most likely a successful dieter. Use your energy wisely.

Resolve to acknowledge and celebrate ALL successes, large and small. Nothing motivates like success, and yet so many people focus only on where they fall short in an effort to drive success. Bad idea. Success attracts more of the same.

Resolve to encourage others. One of the reasons weight loss communities flourish is because they work. Actively encouraging others isn't only the nice thing to do: it helps YOU do better following your own plan because you're focusing on healthy,

adaptive behaviors. As a perk, you're also in good shape karmically and you're making the world a better place. (Gosh, I just love win-win!)

A Simple Test for Resolutions: does it further your goals AND feel good to practice? That's it. If you can answer "yes" to both these questions, you're on your way to achieving your goals because there is nothing that can keep you from soaring...

Not even you.

What's Stopping You?

I heard a story about someone who got off track for a good while, and how she found her way back. The story itself doesn't matter too much, because so many of us already know it: she wasn't doing her plan, but couldn't say exactly why. There was always this little thing or that little thing, whatever it was, getting in the way. So she'd surely do it "soon." Except soon didn't seem to ever show up.

Sound familiar?

Personally, I suspect this is phase two of the "Diet Detour" that trips up even long-term, dedicated and smart dieters. Phase one is the creep, perhaps beget by bargaining ("a little won't hurt"), becoming gradually more frequent until you're not really on your plan much at all anymore. Maybe you still believe. You may still have the faith, sisters and brothers. But you're not practicing.

So you feel guilty. You chastise yourself and maybe get disgusted. And feeling as crummy and out-of-control as you do, you look to soothe that burn with a little more junk food comfort eating, followed by promises you'll restart "soon." You even mean it. But somehow, that soon never arrives.

Well, why not do something now, then? Now is super soon, after all. You want to get back on that wagon?

Here are some easy-to-follow tips for folks wanting to get back on track. Mix and match. Pick whatever appeals to you and just get yourself restarted already, for goodness sakes! You've got a life to live, y'kno.

Start improving your habits, whatever shape they may be in, RIGHT THIS MINUTE. You don't have to exercise three hours a day for it to count as an improvement. Fifteen minutes of activity is an improvement over none, and far more manageable than hours at a time. Maybe your eating isn't clean, but you can start avoiding the worst of the worst, right? Even if you're not fully back in the swing, you can get the ingredients for some of your on-plan favorites and add them to the menu rotation, right? Just freakin' start, man.

Stop asking yourself what's "wrong" with you. There's no inherent character flaw causing detours. Stress, illness, injury, business, family, whatever all distract us sometimes. You know? Any combination thereof. There are myriads of reasons people detour. The guilt-tripping just makes it harder to keep your attitude positive. By now, you know that's crucial, right? 'Cause it is, man!

Take care of your other needs (both physical and emotional). I harp on this, because I think self-care is usually the first item on the schedule to get cut and the last to be restored. Commitments to others always take precedence. What a waste: when we care for our own needs, we are SO much better equipped to help others, it's just a no-brainer. Love thyself first.

Set the stage for success. What helped you before? Did you cook ahead? Have some favorite snacks on hand? Haul around your favorite water jug everywhere? Happily while away the hours perusing new recipes? You don't have to be fully in the zone to start doing some of the stuff that helped you stay on track when you were on track.

Start knocking down obstacles. Look at what situations create the most problems for you, and start there. If friends have desserts at get-togethers, start bringing your own, plan-friendly dessert. (Others may appreciate this as well.) If you can't pass your spouse's snacks, buy a flavor or type you don't like. If you tend to overeat when you're tired or stressed, start addressing the tired and stressed issues, and the eating part falls into line.

Please stop calling the sugar-encrusted junk food "treats." I know this is how we've referred to them for years. I still do it sometimes, too. But when what you're really treating yourself is less health, is "treat" really how you want to describe it? Would it sound as appealing if we called them "fat pills" instead of "delicious donut hole treats?" Mentally connect what you're eating with what it creates. Not feeling your best is NOT a treat!

Remember: It wasn't that hard when you were in the zone. Remind yourself. I know of almost no one who has done this for any length of time who found it remotely as difficult as anticipated beforehand. With the huge variety of options and recipes, there is no excuse to be bored or unsatisfied with your

food. Developing workable habits takes some time and effort initially, but soon become second nature.

Reread your plan. There will be bits and pieces you've forgotten, and just reviewing the material helps build motivation and resolve.

Participate in a community (like Low Carb Zen on Facebook). Even if you're not currently eating well, interacting with others who are will help inspire you. Seeing what they are talking about will also help remind you of the tricks of the trade, and why you decided to do it in the first place.

Think about the people who love and count on you. While people always say "you have to lose weight for yourself," considering loved ones can be some of the most powerful motivation available. Staying healthy and strong allows you to look forward to a longer, brighter future together. Setting a good example for your kids may significantly alter their lifestyles and health for the rest of their lives. It really is the absolute best gift you can give loved ones, taking good care of yourself.

Look for progress and celebrate it. Perfection isn't necessary (and its quest often becomes nothing more than a fancy method of procrastination). Any progress contributes positively to the sum total. There is NO improvement that's too small to build upon. It all counts.

Don't stop. If I had to sum up the secret to any and all dieting success in two words, those are the two! Don't stop. The only real failure is to give up on

WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

improving your health and your life. You're coherent enough to read these words? Then you've still got some kick left. Don't stop. Don't stop. Don't stop.

Focus on what you've got. A life of denial and restriction gets old fast. A life of enthusiasm and anticipation inspires and energizes. While this obviously applies to your menu, if you actually focus your attention on what you like about the rest of your life, it will help you be a happier person as well as a happier dieter. Happy people do better.

For many, detours ARE just another part of the journey. So treat it that way. Be kind to yourself and build yourself up. Give yourself permission to address your own needs, and remember that eating well is one of those needs that pays off so many ways.

Encourage yourself along the same way you would a beloved friend, and you can't go too far astray.

And welcome home.

CHAPTER 27

Motivation? Please, Girlfriend!

Ever heard chatter about people having trouble sticking to "the diet," not being motivated, yada, yada, yada?

Well, here's a fun fact for you. Motivation is NOT necessary to make changes. I repeat: motivation is not necessary to make changes. Heresy? Hear me out.

Motivation = the drive to accomplish something. Sound about right?

There are some things, any way you slice 'em, are and always will be unpleasant. Cutting the lawn. Cleaning the oven. Breaking up. Changing a diaper. The drive is not going to be there to experience this unpleasantness.

How do unpleasant things get done? Well, we know they need to get done, we know there are consequences for them not getting done, so we just get off our posteriors and do them. And after, we feel good because we've accomplished something.

Add to the no-motivation list: severely changing your lifestyle. Especially if, like me, you considered chocolate one of the basic food groups. Toward the bottom of my personal food pyramid.

MOTIVATION? PLEASE, GIRLFRIEND!

So let's face it directly. This is no fun! Breaking old habits, leaving previous sources of comfort, dealing with the sometimes painful task of honestly facing up? Well, holy moly, man. That sucks! But it's worth it.

I guess you could name it "motivation" when you see the scale is careening wildly towards the upper end of capacity, or you almost mistake yourself in a picture for a VW bus.

I would offer another explanation. This is not motivation. It's pain. Embarrassment, fear, sadness, and all those associated feelings you get when you first acknowledge your weight is out of control? That is pain.

As is human nature, we seek to enhance pleasure and avoid pain. Survival 101. So what you see when people commit to losing the weight, that's nothing short of evolution in action. Hooray for evolution!

However, once you buck up and start making changes, motivation begins coming into play. You see progress. You see work paying off! You get the additional energy, you feel great, you look great, and you are great! And you like it. You want more, no?

So get this: motivation doesn't precede progress. Motivation follows and enhances progress. It maintains it and spurs it along once you start rolling.

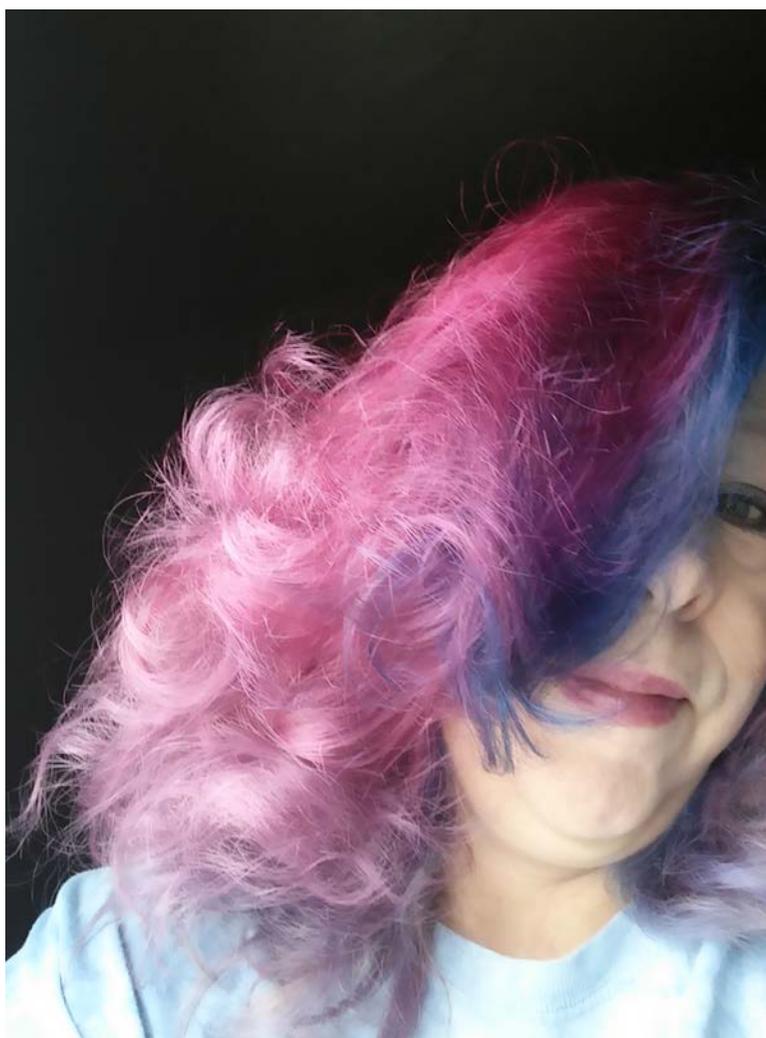
But if you sit passively on your butt waiting to become properly motivated? Uh. Might as well start

mainlining the chocolate syrup now, baby. 'Cause you ain't getting nowhere that way!

Every day, make choices that are more in line with your long-term goals than not. And the next thing you know, you're halfway there, man! Maybe it was a realization that started everything. Maybe it was pain. Maybe it was a shift in priorities that started you thinking a different way. But it's always the decision to change that precedes the change.

If you take full responsibility for what you've done with the body that you have, you give yourself a tremendous gift: the ability to change! Once you put it squarely within your control, you can fix it.

And that, my friends, is a treasure beyond value!



About The Author

Dixie Vogel is still more than a little stunned she can un-ironically add "food blogger" to her resume. She usually describes herself as a "Pink-Haired Hippie Chick & Eccentric Genius."

Although lately, she's taken to referring to herself as "the World's Unlikeliest Food Blogger" because she's doing it, but ain't a fancypants chef-type by any stretch.

In fact, this whole "low carb empire" thing just kind of happened while she was busy not trying. Her kitchen stubbornly remains an a mess and she boasts no outrageously adorable toddlers to exploit as recipe photo props. (Somehow, Thor the Warrior Kitten licking a beater does not hold the same appeal, And besides, he just keeps wiggling out of those darned aprons.)

But Dixie does understand the psychology of weight loss intimately, spending most of her life significantly overweight before losing over a hundred pounds. She considers herself just your average chick who use to be a whole lot heavier but now isn't, thanks to the magic of low carb.

In the process of finding her own weight loss Zen, Dixie has been fortunate enough to touch millions through leading weight loss support communities, culminating with the current and most popular, Low Carb Zen (<https://www.lowcarbzen.com>).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dixie also slings Tarot, teaches the mystical arts and offers one-on-one consultations and coaching at A Fool's Journey (<http://www.afoolsjourney.com>).

Dixie lives in Kansas with her husband of a quarter century plus, and some criminally spoiled cats. And there are all those birds, who seem to follow her wherever she goes.

She likes those birds. They talk to her.

How was that taste of Zen?

I very much hope you enjoyed these selected chapters from WEIGHT LOSS ZEN, and that it gave you some encouragement in finding your happy place.

You're totally welcome to share these chapters to anyone you think may find them useful. I'd love to be helpful as I can to as many folks as possible! ♥

All I ask is that you leave the file complete and as-is without changes, so readers know the source.

Find out more at the Low Carb Zen website.

www.lowcarbzen.com/find-weight-loss-zen

Peace Out.

