



HALF-ASSED

a weight-loss memoir

commentary track

jennette fulda

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For more information, visit

<http://www.halfassedbook.com/>

How to use the Commentary Track

The commentary track for *Half-Assed: A Weight-Loss Memoir* contains additional information about events in the book as well as insights on the writing process. Everything is referenced by page number. Like the commentary track for a DVD, it's best to use it *after* you have consumed the original product. Read the book first, then read the commentary track.

Thanks again, and I hope you enjoyed reading my memoir!

The cover



My original mock-up

Yes, that's me on the cover. Yes, those were really my pants. I didn't know I was going to be on the cover until I looked up my book on Amazon one day at work and there I was. I didn't get any more work done that day because I was so freaked out.

The picture of me standing in one leg of my fat pants was taken as part of a photo shoot I arranged for my author photo in the back of the book. Later, I pitched the idea of the title *Half-Assed* to my publisher and used the image to make a mock-up of a possible cover. They liked it well enough to use the image to make the final cover. I was very happy with the end result!

General comments

Each chapter in the book covers a different theme. Hopefully I wrote it well enough that you can figure out the themes on your own. I liked organizing all my thoughts on a particular issue in one chapter, but it made chronology difficult to keep straight. I had to shift backwards and forwards in time to cover all the material I wanted to in each chapter, which could get confusing. I eventually had to go through my weight-loss blog and make a timeline of important events so I could keep the order straight.

For the most part, I wrote the book linearly, starting at Chapter 1 and going straight through. The only exception was the last chapter, which I started on a couple chapters before I got to the end. The first draft took about 4-5 months. After that I spent time revising, cutting out sections, rewriting parts, adding in new stories and rereading the thing a bazillion times. My deadline for turning in the manuscript was October 1, 2007.



I started at the end of December 2006, so it took about 9 months. After that, several months were spent copyediting and proofreading.

I typed everything in Microsoft Word on my desktop computer at a desk right by a window, draping a comforter over my legs to keep me warm during the winter. Each chapter was saved in its own Word document which I uploaded to an FTP server every night because I'm paranoid about computers crashing. I was supposed to aim for 80,000 words, so I kept an Excel spreadsheet with the word count for each chapter. Thankfully the book ended up being the right length on its own and I didn't have to do any significant cutting or adding.

I referred to my weight-loss blog a lot during the writing process to jog my memory about how I felt at different points of my transition. I wrote a lot of new material too, particularly about my early years. Any material I grabbed from the blog was polished or revised to fit the narrative of the book. I didn't want blog readers to be bored by the book, but I didn't want new readers to miss out on the best parts of the blog. I only got to go through this experience once and I didn't think I should trash the observations I made about it on the blog simply because I'd published them already online. Hopefully the end result is a good compromise between the opposing forces.

I was very mindful to only write about my own experiences and to never use phrases like "when you're fat you feel..." or "You do this when you're fat..." It's presumptive to talk in the second person about obesity because everyone's experience is different. I only know how I felt and what my life was like.

I am currently blogging about the entire blog to book experience on my book blog. Hopefully these posts will be finished by July 2008. Please check the site for more details:

<http://halfassedbook.com/2008/02/01/blog-to-book-starting-a-blog-and-generating-interest/>

Copyright page

There's a small note on the copyright page that I wrote about the truthiness of the book.

Chapter 1

Page 1

I wanted to start the book with something that would hook the reader and encourage them to read more. I toyed with opening with my gallbladder attack, but it seemed too easy and obvious to start with a medical emergency. It was also confusing starting there, jumping backwards in time and then forwards again. I chose the frog dissection story instead because it's unexpected. How many weight loss memoirs start out with the narrator staring at frog guts? This was the first time I saw fat curled within a body and not as white strips in slabs of steak in our freezer.

I'm pretty sure the boy in question did not actually make a joke about the IHOP. That was me making the past funnier than it was.

Page 2

Here is a photo of me at the beach that day. I'm not that fat for a person, but for a flamingo, I'm huge.



Page 3

I searched and searched for a copy of this survey to scan and include in this commentary track, but it is buried somewhere so deep in my closet that I would need spelunking gear to retrieve it.

Page 4

For some reason it took me a really long time to admit that I used to eat like they were going to stop making food. I didn't write the paragraph admitting I was a big fat cliché until one of the last drafts.

Page 5

Cristy's mom was absolutely thrilled to be mentioned in the book. I'll bet she'll be doubly thrilled to be mentioned in the commentary track.

Page 6

I'm still really bitter that I didn't get a PE credit for marching band.

Page 9

I always felt bad that I didn't try harder to be friends with the really fat girl who dropped out of college after a couple weeks. I bet we would have had a lot to talk about, but I wasn't ready to talk about my fat problems yet.

Page 11

The appearance of the first footnote! I know it's bizarre to include footnotes in a memoir, but as I was writing I noticed I mentioned a lot of medical information I learned during my weight loss. I figured it was best to back this up with actual proof instead of hoping people just took my word for it.

I didn't talk about this much in the book, but I spent about 9 months after my sophomore year of college just hanging out in my room. I don't think I was clinically depressed, just highly unmotivated and confused about what to do with my life. I know it really freaked my mother out and she was glad when I finally used the Internet to apply for a job and not just to read fanfiction.

Page 12

I never realized how ghetto my apartment complex was until years after I moved out. A girl went missing when she walked to the Burger King to apply for a job and I later learned a lot of drug dealers lived there. I'm glad I was so poor that I didn't have anything worthwhile to steal.

Page 13

I wrestled with how much to reveal about my relationship with my father. It's complicated and ongoing and this is a book about fat, not my daddy issues. Ultimately, I decided to talk about the parts of our relationship that had to do with my weight and keep the rest private.

Page 14

There was a lot of unspoken pressure to explain why I got as fat as I did. I spent a lot of time dwelling on it, trying to figure it out myself. Ultimately I decided just to be honest and say I didn't really know why it happened and list the most likely theories. Frequently people want a simple, quick, understandable reason for why things happen in life, when most of the time it's messy, complicated and not easily put in a box.

Other comments

Chapter 1 went through a lot of revisions. The first draft was - well - it was total crap. All copies of it should be erased from my computer and the hard drive should be demagnetized. I experimented with jumping around chronologically, but it got really confusing. I finally decided chapter one would be a history of my weight through the years and chapter two would focus on my experiences and emotional problems during those years.

Chapter 2

Page 15

I originally had a joke about Oompa Loompas rolling me around Willy Wonka's chocolate factory in here, but my editor rightly said it was over the top.

I truly am disappointed that I don't have more horrible fat girl stories. I've heard of women who were asked when their babies were due or had rotten fruit thrown at them or were called "Lard Ass" on the train. No one bothered to do any of that to me. I don't know if I got off easy because I lost weight rather young or if I just stayed indoors so much that I didn't have as much opportunity to be ridiculed. It makes me wonder if the awfulness of being fat is hyped up because people only focus on the awful events. Whenever someone was mean to me, it was memorable *because* it didn't happen that much.

This story about me on the bleachers went through many revisions. Originally I was being too wordy, so I spent time cutting out unnecessary words or parts where I was trying too hard to be clever. At first I wrote it like I was recounting the event to a friend, "There was this one time a boy walked up to me..." but decided it played out better to write dialogue. This made it more powerful and put less distance between the event and the reader.

Page 18

I don't remember crying too much about being fat, so this incident was rather rare in its emotional impact on me.

I scheduled a book signing at a Borders in the same shopping center as the Catherine's store where this event took place. I was really looking forward to pointing it out to people, but I had to cancel the event. Sad frown face :(

Page 19

I changed the name of my teachers as well as their physical descriptions so none of them will shoot me at my high school reunion. (I lost 200 pounds and I wrote a book. High school reunions were made for people like me.)

Page 20

I debated whether to include Felicity in the book because I'm pretty sure she'll be pissed about it. But I thought it was important to contrast the way I felt about my body with the way she did. Felicity is not her real name, obviously.

Page 22

This section about food was a last minute addition. I resisted it at first because it sounds like the clichéd, food porn section that would be the first thing someone would write if they were writing a weight-loss memoir. But as I was writing the book, I started thinking about what I used to eat, making a list of all the odd things, and it made me realize how off-the-wall some of my choices were. I decided it would be dishonest not to include it.

Page 23

This story about hiding from my relatives was another last minute addition. I tend to take a rather level-headed, sensible approach to life, so I decided to include a story with more emotional impact showing how screwed up my fat issues were making me socially.

Page 26

I later read a fashion blog that made fun of the style of dress that I wore, but I love it anyway!

Page 27

This passage about there being good programming on my personal television network was another late edition. I wanted to emphasize that I had a pretty good life. I'm a white, middle class, woman with a college degree in a first world country. I don't have that much to bitch about. Life seems more horrible when you only focus on the crappy parts associated with my obesity.

Page 28

I waited to be thin so long that it still seems a little odd that I can actually start sentences with the phrase, "After I lost all that weight after college."

Chapter 3

Page 29

The story about my trip to the emergency room was probably the most heavily rewritten passage in the book. It took forever to trim it down so it wasn't clunky and weighty. If you notice, the second sentence conveys a lot of information. It tells you where we are time-wise, it tells you where I am, and it tells you why. It took awhile to compact all that information into one sentence.

I originally started the chapter with the story of my second gallbladder attack and then flashed backward to the first attack, but all my beta readers found this to be horribly confusing. Dealing with chronology was by far one of my biggest challenges in writing this book.

Page 31

I had to convey a lot of medical information about gallbladder surgery and weight loss surgery in this chapter. I wanted to make sure the reader knew the full ramifications of the situation, without weighing down the pace of the story with a long medical lecture.

Page 32

I felt weird writing dialogue for people in this book. I have no idea what exact words the doctor said because I don't carry a tape recorder around in my pocket. I truly was putting words in people's mouths. However, it helps to have dialogue to break up the text, so I wrote it anyway. Hopefully people understand this isn't meant to be a stenographic transcription.

Page 33

I never had a doctor be rude to me about my obesity, which I hear is an unusual thing.

I added the paragraph about how my family didn't talk about fat only after my editor asked me about it. This is one of the good reasons to have an editor: they see your blind spots. She noticed unanswered questions that the reader would be curious about.

Page 34

I had to cut an irrelevant tangent about my phone survey job because it slowed down the pace of the book. In it I mentioned that I once did a survey about grocery shopping and noticed that almost all of my callers bought lots of cookies. It made me feel better about my own poor shopping habits.

Page 36

I thought it was important to go over the effects of weight loss surgery in detail so readers understood the seriousness of the decision. I've never understand why people think it's the "easy" way out. It sounds really complicated to me.

Page 40

I'm still pissed that I had to shoulder the majority of the bill for my surgery. I could have paid off all my student loans by now with that money.

Chapter 4

Page 41

Originally the beginning of this chapter up until the part about fat acceptance was part of chapter three. I decided it made more sense here.

Page 42

If I hadn't been keeping a blog at the time, I would never have remembered all the details of my failed attempts during this year. It makes me wonder how much of my life I've forgotten because I never wrote it down. Actually, it makes me wonder about the accuracy of memoirs in general. Memories are shifty things.

Page 44

I almost didn't make the joke about the Hitachi magic wand because I knew my mother would be reading this book.

Page 45

I debated whether to mention the fat acceptance movement in the book, but I decided I should explain why I decided to lose weight instead of deciding to try to be happy fat. I figure most of the people in that movement wouldn't be caught dead reading a weight-loss memoir, so I probably don't have to fear a big backlash. I tried to be even-handed and fair in my treatment of their philosophies and only recounted my personal experiences with them instead of making generalizations.

Page 51

I sent a copy of the book to everyone I mentioned in it that I knew how to contact. I let them review it so they could tell me if they had any problems that I could consider editing before publication. My younger brother never read a copy, saying he trusted my judgment. He finally read it a month after the book was released and thankfully he enjoyed it.

I still haven't seen a complete episode of *The Biggest Loser*.

Page 54

It was a little jarring to suddenly include the word "fucking" in the book since I hadn't previously used profanity. It was a direct quote however, so I wasn't going to censor my old post. I know some people are put off by profanity. I try only to use it when necessary, otherwise it loses its emotional impact because it becomes so commonplace. Finally deciding to lose weight was an emotional moment and deserved usage of the F word.

This bit about how I was going to measure my weight loss congealed in a later draft when I realized I should explain how I was going to track my weight.

Page 57

I know at least one Amazon reviewer was annoyed that I don't say what diet I did in the book. I decided not to mention it because I don't like feeling responsible for other people's lives. You need to figure out what's best for you. Don't pick a plan just because a blogger/author told you it worked for her!

Other comments

For a long time, the first four chapters of the book sucked. I wrote the book linearly and as I wrote I started to figure out how to write a book. That meant that the last half of the book started to get good, but the first half was mediocre. I had to do a lot of massaging and reorganizing of the front half to get it in printable condition.

Chapter 5

Page 62

I have no idea if there is a Betty Crocker cookbook with a chocolate cake recipe on page 126. It was a lie just like the rest of my made-up story.

Page 64

It's funny reading this again because I separate egg whites all the time for recipes and I consider it pretty easy. At the time, however, it was like brain surgery. Sometimes I forget how far I've come.

Page 66

The treadmill we bought had a maximum weight limit at least 50 pounds under my actual weight. Amazingly it never broke! I still own it.

Page 70

One of my friends suggested that I come up for a catchy name for the whole "lifestyle change, not a diet" concept, market it, and get rich. If I knew how, I probably would.

Other comments

The hardest thing about writing this chapter was conveying information about things I did over several months in a succinct form. I attempted to do this by telling specific stories of the first time I went to the grocery store and the first time I walked on the treadmill. I tried not to let it drag or turn it into a lecture on what to eat and how to exercise.

Chapter 6

General comments

This was another chapter where I had to compress events that happened over a long period of time, in this instance many months. I wish I had lots of funny little stories to tell about things that happened during those months, but honestly, it was fairly boring and repetitive. I walked on the treadmill a lot and tried to eat healthy. I struggled a lot to make this chapter interesting.

Chapter 7

Page 83

In all honesty, I'm not sure if it was the artist down the hallway or the marketing manager down the hallway who first noticed my weight loss. One day I was washing my hands in the bathroom when the artist walked in....followed by the marketing manager. I nearly dropped the soap because I had always thought they were the same person! They don't even look alike, but for some reason I'd merged them into one person I occasionally saw in the hallways. My brain is weird.

Page 84

There was a story at the top of this page about a friend of mine who used to play "Is he gay or not?" which I compared to the "Is she fatter than me?" game. It confused people because I had to suddenly jump around in time and space to tell the story, so I just cut it out.

Page 85

I mention my current weight and BMI a lot in the book, not because I'm obsessed with those numbers, but because I needed to give readers a sense of my size as the story progressed. I originally didn't mention it that much, but my beta readers were sometimes confused as to how large I was at different points, so I went through inserting lots of cues.

Page 89

My imaginary transformation sequence was inspired by the 80's cartoon series She-Ra. Princess of Power!

Page 90

I was worried that Cristy might be hurt by the part of the book about her, but thankfully she proved why she is my oldest, best-est friend and gave her approval. She didn't even ask for a name change.

Page 93

Confession: I have not actually gone out for ice cream with Cristy since I wrote this. I figured I would do it before the book was published so I wouldn't be a liar, but we've never gotten around to it. I promise we shall do it someday though! I still eat ice cream and I'd be happy to share a banana split with her.

Chapter 8

Page 95

The second paragraph of this chapter was another trouble area that for some reason took a lot of revision to get right. Don't ask me why because I don't know.

Page 97

There was originally a joke about penguins or something thrown in at the bottom of the page which my editor rightly suggested I cut out. Frequently I took a joke too far trying to show how clever I am and she would reign me in, keeping it shorter, succinct and better.

Page 100

I have no problem talking to sales clerks these days, but it used to terrify me.

Page 102

During the process of writing this book I realized I hang out with my mother a lot.

Other comments

This is the first chapter where I used a framing device to cover several topics. Notice how I use moments in my typical day to talk about certain self-image issues. This chapter is focused on self-image changes whereas the last one was focused on physical body changes.

The lost chapter!

Originally, my book proposal called for a chapter about the media's attitudes about fat people. I wrote a draft of it, but when I read through my book it was completely out of place. I bounced along for 100 pages talking about my life and then suddenly slammed on the brakes to rant about the media. That works fine on the blog, but had no place in a memoir, so I cut it out. I worked in some of the observations elsewhere, like my comment about *The Sopranos* in an earlier chapter. Some of it I just cut entirely, leaving the material to be covered on the blog.

Chapter 9

Page 106

I still haven't bothered to learn how to knit. Someday, oh yes, someday.

Instead of "it completely blew my mind" I originally wrote "It was a total mindfuck." I decided the profanity was jarring, so I rewrote it.

Page 107

I reread all my statements about Lane Bryant several times to make sure I wasn't opening myself up to a lawsuit for libeling their store.

Page 112

I traveled to New York five years and 200 pounds later and truly enjoyed walking around the city unconcerned about my size.

Page 114

I researched clothing sizes for this chapter and was surprised by what I discovered. I know women always complain about garment sizing, but I didn't know there actually wasn't any consistent system. I spent a lot of time reading about it because it was very confusing and I didn't want to get any facts wrong.

I was a little concerned about flashing forward to a point where I'd lost 200 pounds since it might confuse readers. Again, this is an example of why chronology was one of my biggest struggles in writing the book.

Chapter 10

General Comments

We've had several chapters in a row that are about internal thoughts and changes, so it was important to insert an event-driven chapter. This is my mom's favorite chapter because she knows everyone involved and can remember when these events happened.

Page 117

I don't think the relatives in question knew I'd stolen this cake until they read the book.

Page 118

I kind of worried that my references to baby Jesus might offend my religious readers, but I included them anyway.

Page 120

I only remembered to insert "from Indiana" in the last stages of proofreading. I never noticed that I hadn't mentioned where I lived anywhere else in the book.

Page 121

My relatives enjoyed being mentioned in the book and my aunt Beth even let me use her real name.

During the first draft, I spent a lot of time writing about where people were in the kitchen and describing my brother and me getting out of the car and going up the steps. Eventually I cut most of it out because it was unnecessary and just stuck to the essential story points. It's amazing how many extra words and sentences you can cut out and still make your point.

Page 123

Notice how I seamlessly slip in a promotion for my blog there? :)

Page 124

My brother has pointed out that Wes is not actually muscular, and he's right. Wes is strong and was great at moving heavy treadmills (which I appreciate very much), but he's not a bodybuilder. I'm not really sure why I said he was muscular.

Page 126

There was a joke about blow jobs in here that everyone absolutely hated and made me embarrassed that I'd even written. And I don't know why I just told you that.

Chapter 11

Page 129

I sometimes wonder if I'll run into the cat walker on the trail to discover he's read my book and recognizes me from my author photo. It hasn't happened yet and it probably never will.

Page 131

The nice girl has since moved out of the complex, but Bill is still around, alive and unharmed by falling 2 liters of soda.

Page 134

I was so sad when my Eyeore tank top became too large :(I even took it in a couple times, but eventually the placement of the tank top straps was too far apart for it to hang right on my shoulders.

Page 135

When my brother read about the hippie who hit on me, he wanted to reach into the book and punch him out of brotherly instinct.

Page 136

A couple other guys have hit on me since this incident, and they've all been somewhat creepy or ill-kempt. Which makes me wonder, why am I only attracting kra-zee suitors?

Page 137

I am happy to say that my knees are no longer achy! It's odd, but one day I simply noticed that they hadn't been in pain for awhile.

Page 139

Since the publication of the book, I have flirted on and off with a morning exercise routine. It's nice to get it over early in the day so I don't talk myself out of it later. But sometimes it's nicer to sleep.

Page 140

I sometimes wonder if the 400-pound man will read my book, see me on the trail one day, and run me down with his scooter.

Chapter 12

Page 141

Here's another section where the time-shifting might be (but hopefully isn't) confusing. In the last chapter I'd moved out of my apartment and now I'm suddenly back in the old house. Damn you, chronology!

Page 143

I sent copies of the book to several people I mentioned in it before my deadline. One of the only changes my mother requested was a sentence or two explaining how stressful her moving situation was. She wanted people to understand why she had been eating. It was indeed very stressful and I'm amazed that she was able to handle it with the grace that she did.

Page 144

I've stopped buying Go Lean Crunch because I tend to binge on it.

Page 145

My editor really helped to cut down this paragraph about the conveyor belt analogy so it was more to-the-point. Another good reason to have an editor! They never get credit though because their work is mostly invisible.

Page 146

I tried not to insert too many section breaks in the book. I preferred to work on making things transition fluidly. At this spot however, I thought it helped set the next event on its own and increase its humorous impact.

Page 152

I used to be really scared of overeating at holiday events, but lately I'm okay with indulging as long as I eat well the rest of the time. I think it's confidence that comes from past success.

Page 153

One of my relatives mentioned the part where I talk about judging what they're eating at a recent family reunion and I had a sudden, convenient bout of amnesia. "I wrote what? I don't remember that."

Page 155

In case anyone is concerned, I have a different job now which includes health insurance. There are also bagels in the break room, but those are the trade-offs we have to make.

I don't like the turkey meatloaf recipe my mother requests. It's in one of my cookbooks, which is why I have it. Personally, I think it smells gross.

Chapter 13

Page 157

I really wish I could have included my rotating progress photos in the book somehow, but there are certain limitations to print media.

Page 158

There really is a grease stain on my blouse in my first "before" photo.

Page 159

I still get a lot of ads for Lane Bryant served to my computer, which is odd since I haven't shopped there since 2006.

Page 162

I eventually did get a PO Box for my domain name listing after a psycho girl kept leaving comments on my blog for a week. I use it for business stuff now and get to write it off on my taxes.

Page 164

One of the things I learned from this experience is that anyone can become an expert on a topic. All it takes is time and experience, or a lot of research. Five years ago, no one would have asked me for weight loss advice, but now I get questions all the time. All experts started as novices.

Page 166

One of the best things about my blog and my book is getting mail from people who've told me they've found the courage to change their lives because they've read about my experiences. I feel like I'm making the world a better place and I didn't even have to leave my apartment.

Page 168

I'm still surprised by how few hateful comments I get. The ones I do get are only memorable because they are so rare.

General Comments

This is the longest chapter in the book.

Chapter 14

General Comments

The idea of this chapter was a late addition to the book and not in my original outline. Originally I covered all of my food changes in chapter 5 and all my exercise changes in the next chapter. When I read it, it sounded like I'd made all these huge changes in my life all at once, which was not accurate or reasonable at all. I ended up splitting both of those chapters in half and merging the early parts into the existing chapter 5 "Diet and Exercise." Then I moved the rest into this chapter.

Some of the events in this chapter, such as my first 5K, occurred many, many months after I started writing the book. It was sort of annoying that my life kept happening as I was working on this project because it kept screwing with my outline.

Page 176

I'm at a point now where I've tried everything in my local grocery's produce section, so I'm going to have to find other sources of bizarre fruits and vegetables to eat.

Page 179

I have since made this soufflé again and I really like it. Go figure. I guess it just proves my point about acquired tastes. I'm also really good at separating egg whites and I don't even have to use a Tupperware device.

Page 181

I'm not really that into aerobics tapes. I prefer to do aerobics in groups for some reason.

Page 188

I have since run another 5K, and also a 10K, 15K and a half-marathon. All of the race routes have gone by this park. Bizarre, yet true.

Chapter 15

Page 189

After writing this book, I got a new dentist. I did this partly because I got new insurance and partly because I was afraid the staff may have read my book and I really didn't want to talk about this chapter. (Especially not with wads of cotton stuck in my mouth.)

Page 190

I've told so many people the story of My Amazing Weight Loss that I'd be happy never to tell anyone again. Now I can just point them to this book.

Page 195

Just for the record, the last 15 pounds are by far the hardest.

Page 197

I have to admit, I am really glad that I don't have to deal with the judgmental bullshit that weight-loss surgery patients get.

Page 200

The weight-loss as vengeance motivation doesn't really work for me in the long term. It might get me fueled up for a day or so, but eventually I don't care what other people think anymore. I guess this ultimately better for me since I don't live a life filled with hatred and bitterness.

Page 203

I suppose all these references to Star Trek and computer programming make me sound like a geek, but, oh well, I am!

General Comments

This is another chapter where I use a framing device (the dentist's visit) to explore a lot of random thoughts about weight loss.

Chapter 16

Page 205

I realized after the book was published that I mention raspberry vodka at least twice. This must make me sound like a lush, which is funny because I barely ever drink.

Page 207

The skin question is by far the most commonly asked question I get. The next most common one is about how I started running. I wrote a blog entry about my skin so I could point people to it instead of answering them over and over again. Immediately after I finished it, I realized it belonged in the book too. Thus, this is one of the few instances where a blog entry and a segment of the book are nearly identical.

Page 208

I was flattered that my doctor bought a couple copies of my book to give to patients as encouragement. My annual exam turned into an impromptu book signing.

Chapter 17

General Comments

I suspect that people browsing in the bookstore immediately jump to this section of the book because of the chapter title.

Chronology confession: This focus group actually happened a couple months before I lost half my weight. I moved it later so I could use the act of people asking me questions as a framing device to outline my thoughts on what is required for successful weight loss.

Page 215

I had a big, long list of observations I wanted to mention in the book, many of which didn't make it into the first draft. I then went through trying to stick stuff in where it felt natural. The confession that I liked the obesity epidemic because it made me feel less alone is one of those items. Ultimately, I couldn't cram every observation I had about weight loss into the book. I had to accept that and chill out about it.

Page 222

For better or worse, I don't feel bad about knocking my cat off my lap to get another fudge pop anymore.

Page 223

One of the most commonly asked questions during my book promotion was, "What finally made you decide to lose weight?" It seems like that's such an essential part of any clichéd weight loss story that I always hated answering it.

Page 227

Thankfully, I only played "Is she fatter than me?" as I was losing weight. I haven't played it lately, which is good, because it always made me feel dirty. I think I used it as a way to get a sense of what size I was, just like I recalibrated my image in the mirror every day.

Page 228

My toilet did break, but maintenance came and fixed it.

Chapter 18

General Comments

I wanted to avoid the traditional "happy ever after" ending to my weight-loss memoir. I am a lot happier than I was when I was fat, but I wanted to stress that losing weight does not solve all your problems. I also thought it was important to address the fact that I could regain weight if I don't keep up with my lifestyle changes because that does happen to a lot of people.

Page 230

When I was obese, I thought it was ridiculous that people would give up a year of their lives rather than be as fat as I was. Now that I've experienced the increased mobility and better mood that comes with healthy living and weight loss, I'd have to think on that a bit harder.

Page 233

I really did think I'd be completely the same when I was thin, but as I've described in my book, it didn't happen that way. In retrospect, it seems silly to think I could go through a transformative experience like this without being transformed.

Page 234

The paragraph with the bus analogy was another late edition. It was based on a blog entry I wrote about how I didn't have to feel the pain of obesity anymore. It got a very good reaction from readers.

Page 235

I was sort of happy that I didn't run off into the sunset with a guy because then I didn't have to worry about sending the message that I could only find love once I was thin. I still have problems finding love! So there!

Page 236

Now that it's been several years since I started losing weight, I've noticed I'm taking these little things more for granted. I cut my toenails last week and didn't even think about the fact that I couldn't used to do that.

Page 239

Call me vain or egotistical, but I have to admit I really like the way I ended the book.

Notes

Page 241

I spent several nights putting together the footnotes, but I wonder if anyone even bothered reading them. It was a pain in the ass trying to figure out how to format them. My proofreader really earned her money there.

Acknowledgements

Page 245

I thought about mentioning specific bloggers in the acknowledgments, but I knew I'd leave somebody out. I didn't want anyone to hate me forever, so I opted for a fill-in-the-blank approach instead.

I would also like to acknowledge Jen Rios and Isabella Michon, my fantastic publicists who worked hard to get the message out about my book. I feel bad for publicists because they work hard promoting books and deserve to be acknowledged, but they start their work after the manuscript is turned in. So they're SOL.

About the author

Page 247

I tried to write a bio that made me sound competent and accomplished without sounding boastful or annoying. I also chose a "before" photo where I looked reasonably well-groomed and well-dressed. There were a couple other poorly lit photos, some in front of cakes on my birthday, that I ditched. I hate it when people go out of their way to chose a "before" photo that looks crappy just so the "after" photo looks better by comparison.

Back matter

I got to help write the description of the book on the back, which I think is rather unusual. My publisher asked for some ideas and I was happy to pitch something.