



One 

How I Found The Joy of Weight Loss



 For twenty-two years all I wanted to do was eat. I couldn't stop thinking about the next snack or the next meal.

Food was my only comfort to help fill the emptiness I felt inside. Today, right now, at this moment, I'm 160 pounds lighter than I used to be. It's been over eleven years since I had a weight problem. I have finally succeeded in losing weight and keeping it off. I have found real happiness and joy in my life. I can handle any problem that comes my way and I don't just depend on food for comfort and fulfillment anymore. I am one of God's true living miracles, and this is my story. I offer it to you because I know that you, too, can be one of God's living miracles. You too, can rise above your problems and be liberated. And I promise—it'll be a completely joyous experience.

My name is Norris Chumley, but my nickname at school was E. Normous Chubby. I was always overweight. I was born overweight: over thirteen pounds. I was a chubby kid, then I quickly grew to be a fat kid. At age sixteen, I weighed 400 pounds. There wasn't a day that went by that I didn't feel bad about being a fat kid. Because I was so obese, I also felt stupid, invalid, weird, and ugly.

One time, when I was going to take swimming classes, I couldn't stand to be seen in a bathing suit—and I was only five years old! I remember the coach joking about how fat I was and the other kids also laughing at me. It was incredibly painful, week after

week, to endure their torture and my own self-hatred. Consequently, I didn't learn to swim until I was thirty-two.

It wasn't as if my family wasn't aware of the problems associated with weight. There wasn't a time that my family wasn't on a crash diet. Every meal would be dry, broiled meat with very little flavor, with tasteless, steamed vegetables. We never had any butter and rarely used any margarine. While we would never have desserts in front of the rest of the family, my mom and I would secretly binge all day and every night. There was constant pressure for us to be thin and perfect, but we never were. We knew we were miserable fat failures. I am telling you about my difficult childhood because I learned to find joy out of misery. If I hadn't had a hard time as a kid, I might never have learned the deep value of joy as an adult. If I hadn't had a severe weight problem, I may never have worked very hard to recover from it. You can use your pain and misery to motivate yourself to change, too. Therefore, I hope you'll share your difficulties with yourself and others. It'll help a lot to open up and get honest about your life.

Eating Together in Secret

My mother was “morbidly obese” (that's the term doctors use for us fat folks) and was probably over 400 pounds herself, although she would never have admitted it. I loved her more than anyone, even more than the food she fed me. She took an extra-special liking to me, I think, because she was so fat and I was a fat little reflection of her. We would eat together in secret. She had chocolate candies hidden in every drawer of the house. There were cookies in places you would never expect, such as in the library, and we had a whole, separate deep freeze full of ice cream. There must have been a hundred pints of ice cream in that deep freeze and we would eat them every day.

In addition to the ice cream I ate during the day, I always ate a pint, sometimes a half-gallon of ice cream *every night* before going to bed. Recently, I looked at the calorie count for just a pint of ice cream and discovered it to be anywhere from 900 to 1500 calories per pint. That's two-thirds the amount of calories a thin person eats in a day.

In addition to food's central role in our family, there was a lot of stress, confrontation, and arguing going on. When he was around, my father would criticize me. I think he was jealous of me. At the dinner table we would complain about how awful things were and what difficult problems we had. It seemed there was rarely anything good ever happening, and if there was it was never good enough. Dad would

whip or slap the living daylight out of me for the slightest infraction. I believe he had an addiction problem like my mom and I, except the substance was alcohol. Almost every night I'd have to hold back the tears during supper. Mom knew what was going on, but she couldn't stop it. So she would soothe me (and herself) with another helping.

Dessert: My Mother's Favorite Thing In Life

As you can see, we never really had much fun, and the only comfort in our house was food. About the only fun thing we did together was eat and, since we were always dieting, meals were no joy. I remember my mother saying that she didn't care about drinking, sports, movies, or much of anything else other than dessert. Desserts were her favorite things in life.

To her, there was nothing better than a delicious chocolate cake or an ice cream sundae. My mother and father were constantly telling me I was too fat and that I had to lose weight. My mom had gone on a crash diet when she was in her twenties and had gotten to where she was fairly thin. But then she gained all the weight back. She lamented for years how she could never lose the weight again. Therefore, she was always on a diet.

My mother once dragged me to a commercial weight club when I was twelve. I was not just the only child there, I was the only male. Every eye was on me when I was made to get on the scale week after week. The leaders of the club program had a policy of screaming out loud when someone had lost anything, and the whole room would cheer loudly. I never lost more than one pound in a week, and frequently gained. The silence when I got on the scales was deafening. I wanted to murder those people. I hated them making my mother and me weigh and measure everything, and buy those repulsive and tasteless frozen diet dinners. The whole thing ended in yet another dieting failure after several months of utter torture. The only change was that we were much worse off emotionally than when we began.

It Was Hard to Make Friends

When you're as fat as I was, people don't like to be seen with you, so I didn't have many friends. I was certainly never able to hang out with the kids that were cool. It was

hard to make friends and it was very hard to keep friends. A technique I used was to appear very happy, be the class clown, and to be the best listener anyone could ever meet. I would show off my obesity by selling peeks at my giant breasts for a quarter and make fun of myself in order to get laughs and sympathy. But laughs and sympathy were as far as it went, because most kids ultimately treated me like a loser.

The few friends I did have had lots of problems, too; but they were true friends. In high school, I was generally accepted by the intellectual theater and music clique, and found a little company in the arts. Here, I could be a 400-pound freak and be somewhat cool. The theater thrives on extremes and drama, and that was me all over. I guess it was a form of circus sideshow, high-school style. But I never got cast in any school productions, because the teacher couldn't deal with having a 400-pound actor in any of her shows. I was relegated to backstage "technical" parts, always longing to be on the stage.

I also played the piccolo—stereotypical for a fatso, right? However, I was very good at it, eventually working so hard that I won first place in a statewide music audition for high school seniors.

What I Ate When I Was 400 Pounds

Every morning when I was still in high school, I went to a fantastic job at the local television station as a producer and director. Before I left home, I would have a huge breakfast, three or four eggs, potatoes, and a bowl of cereal—a giant version of the so-called healthy American breakfast. Then I would have a couple of doughnuts on the way to work. While at work, I would have a couple of candy bars and several Cokes for a mid-morning snack and then it'd be time for lunch and I would go to McDonald's. I remember my standard order very well: three Big Macs, two large fries, a large Coke, two apple pies, and a chocolate shake. Then I went to school.

If I made it in time, I would have another lunch at the cafeteria, then, during the day, while in class, all I'd be thinking of was how to get some more food. In my locker I kept big bags of chocolate candy with peanuts or candy bars or jellybeans. After school, I'd head to the doughnut shop and have four, five, or six doughnuts, and occasionally a couple of pieces of cake. Then I'd go off with my friends and smoke cigarettes. Just before dinner time, I'd stop again at McDonald's and have a couple of

hamburgers, maybe French fries, and then I'd go home and have dinner with the family.

A “Diet” Meal, Then Ice Cream

At home, in front of my father and siblings, we would have our unpleasant diet meal.

Then, at about 8 o'clock, my mother and I would drive off, say we were going on errands, and would immediately head to the ice cream store. Every night, I would have at least three or four dips of ice cream with hot fudge sauce. Then we would drive across town and go to another ice cream store.

Often I might have the double, triple-decker, super-duper mountain-top, which was something like seven scoops of ice cream with hot fudge and nuts and whipped cream with a cherry on top, *every single evening*. I got to the point where I was unable to sleep at night unless my belly was completely filled up with ice cream. That was the typical day of a 400-pound teenager. Crazy, huh?

No Girlfriend, That's For Sure

I had a hard time as an adolescent. Most kids my age were beginning to think of the opposite sex and to be romantic and start dating. I couldn't do any of that. I did ask a few girls out, but no one would go out with me.

Imagine being a girl of normal weight, wanting to be cool and popular at school but being seen with a 400-pound guy. It just didn't work. I wanted to go to the high school prom but no one would go with me, so I simply pretended that I was above it, that it was stupid to go to the prom. In hindsight, I know it was the only choice I had. I stayed home alone that night.

I got cheated out of being a teenager because I was too fat. And I will never be a teenager again. I've learned to accept that; but for a long time it hurt. To tell you the truth, though, when I lost all this weight, I felt like I was a teenager again. I was suddenly seventeen at thirty-two years old, with a new body, a body that was useful. I could walk, I could run, I could play. It was great. I had a sex life.

Trying to Fill the Emptiness with Food

Years later I realized I had been in a lot of pain and had a lot of repressed anger. But I wasn't really aware of that at seventeen. Now I know that many people who are fat feel the emptiness I felt. When you feel empty, when you feel ashamed, when you feel that you're worthless or no good, you want to try to soothe your feelings. My way was to eat.

It's hard to feel pain. From an early age, I never wanted to feel any pain or discomfort. I didn't want to have to struggle. I had the crazy idea that everything was going to be easy and perfect. Life just isn't like that.

Until my thirties I didn't understand that pleasure was being able to live freely and fully within one's limits and boundaries, in the way our Creator intended us to be. I kept trying to be happy, kept pretending to be jolly, trying to believe that everything was fine. I could never completely feel satisfied from food. I couldn't fill the void. I was seriously, deeply hungry all the time. No amount of food in the world would fill me up. I hated my body. I couldn't walk up a flight of stairs without being totally out of breath. I couldn't stand being 400 pounds. I couldn't go to a movie theater and sit in a regular seat, so I didn't go to movies anymore. I couldn't sit in an airplane seat. I broke chairs. I couldn't walk anywhere—I had to drive or be driven. It's horrible to weigh 400 pounds. I pray to God I never weigh that much again.

I went to our family doctor and asked for some diet pills. He gave me a prescription for some strong ones, along with a poorly copied diet handout. I thought I had found the answer; now losing weight would be easy. Since I was so unhappy, I decided to make the process quicker. So I doubled the number of pills I took and began fasting. I would only have a cup of juice a day and no solid food at all. After a few weeks I got so hungry I had to eat something, so I allowed myself one can of green beans and a hamburger patty every Friday afternoon.

Mind you, I was always under supervision of my doctor. He made me come in every two weeks, get weighed by the nurse, and then spend about two minutes with me congratulating me for losing eleven to twenty pounds every week. I told him what I was eating (or wasn't) and he didn't blink an eyelid. I'd ask him for more pills, and he gladly wrote out prescription after prescription. I lost 130 pounds in only three months. And I was out of my mind, totally buzzed out from all of the diet pills. But then, on the outside, I looked great—thin and handsome! Inside, however, I was still 400 pounds: desperate, depressed, and ready to kill myself.

Right after I had lost 130 pounds, some friends of mine introduced me to Catherine Stine, a fine artist, illustrator, and painter. Actually, I was so unhappy and depressed that I was too afraid to like her at first, although I was very intrigued by her. But something inside me liked her because I started having romantic and erotic dreams with her in them! We became good friends. Then we started going out on dates and lived together for a while. After four years, we got married. I ended up gaining the weight back. Catherine still loved me anyway, even though I had a hard time loving myself. Fasting and diets, all the various programs, none of them worked. I thought I was destined to be fat forever.

I added it up recently: I've gained and lost over 1,000 pounds in my life.

A Last Resort

There was one big turning point in my life when I was thirty-two. I was smoking three packs a day; I was about 330 pounds or so. I could barely move. My wife and I weren't getting along. I hadn't worked in almost a year because nothing I tried worked, and I couldn't sell any movie or TV projects. I was a producer who was too messed up to produce. I was desperate and I knew at the core of my existence that my life had to change or I would be dead soon. I couldn't continue living the way I was living anymore. I had tried every diet and nothing had worked. I couldn't unravel the mystery of my obesity. My problems were beyond me.

People had told me that God would be there for me if I ever needed help, but I always avoided that because it felt like being too weak or uncool. I'd heard about people being "saved" but thought that was corny and only for losers. While I considered myself spiritual and certainly believed in God, I felt that if I couldn't solve my own problem, then I might be better off dead. I was too proud to humble myself and admit I couldn't handle my weight problem. Until that one day, that one moment, when I just reached the end. That feeling of desperation and emptiness was too great to hold down inside anymore.

As a very final resort, I decided to go to a spiritual group meeting of people who had the same problems I did. I called the telephone number in my town and found out about that group and went. Unfortunately, there was nobody there. So I sat in a dark place in a basement meeting room all by myself, desperate and miserable. At the end of the hour, after nobody had shown up, I left. On my way out I ran into a very thin,

straggly punk girl who was late for the meeting. She gave me a list of other places to go, other meetings, and other support groups.

The next morning, I went to one of them. That meeting, at a church community center, was filled with about forty people. They were mostly women, but I didn't care. It was a ninety-minute discussion group where each person spoke about how God or their "Higher Power" had helped them. At the end of the time, I was the last person who hadn't spoken and everyone looked at me.

I couldn't say a word or move an inch I was so embarrassed. After an eternity, I said to myself: "Oh my God, how am I going to get out of this?" I just burst into tears and began to tremble. The whole room was staring at me.

Then I heard words coming out of my mouth: "Well, I have this problem and I can't manage it." It wasn't *me* talking. *I* didn't know what to do. Whatever happened, the situation I now felt was out of my hands, and all I could do was just sink into the chair in a pool of emotion. Me, a fat man crying out of control... this really was the end.

But another man was there, right next to me, and he put his arm around my shoulder and said I was going to be all right. Then, all sorts of people walked over to me and hugged me and gave me little slips of paper with their phone numbers on them. I was a basket case. I couldn't believe that anyone cared about me!

A New Desire To Live

After an age of people hugging me, and being unable to say a thing, I finally quit crying and pulled myself together.

I managed to get to work, but as usual I couldn't get anything done. All I could think about was a dozen chocolate brownies at the corner bakery. I was hurting big time. My life was on the rocks. I was a fat emotional mess, an utter failure, and I had just completely embarrassed myself and let go of my pride in front of a whole crowd of strangers. Oh God, I needed relief. Those brownies were calling my name and pulling me out the door, so I got up out of my chair and went to the door. Something, however, stopped me. I think it was that desire not to die, not to eat myself into the grave. I thought about the list of steps I had heard about at that meeting. The first step was to admit I had a problem. I'd just done that. The second was to be willing to believe in something bigger than myself. I already believed in God, so that was easy. The third one was to ask God for help. That one was hard. My pride was in the way.

I thought I'd try it, nonetheless, because I was by myself in my office. There was nothing left to lose, because I'd already lost it all. I'd already embarrassed myself, already was a failure, so I didn't have to worry about failing again. I swallowed my pride, got down on my knees, and even though I thought it was humiliating, I said a prayer. Aloud, I said: "God please help me. I can't do this alone." The tears poured out of me again, this time even more uncontrollably. This time, the pain was gone. These were tears of release. This was crying for joy. Help was there, and I knew it and felt it instantly.

While I was on my knees praying, the phone rang. It was a major network calling to say they were going to give me half a million dollars to develop and produce a television movie. It was a story about Thanksgiving. I couldn't believe this was happening to me. I felt the presence of God with me, handing me a miracle. God was instantly, miraculously solving all of my problems, and all I had had to do was ask. I'll never forget that moment, and I'll never doubt the existence, helpfulness, and love of God ever again. Man, was it ever thanksgiving time!

My Show Wasn't Over, It Had Just Begun

Just as soon as I hung up the phone, the brownies were calling my name again. I began to realize that, even though God was with me, I had a choice, and it was up to me to make it. I could go to the bakery or I could go to another meeting. I decided to forgo the instant but temporary chocolate pleasure and choose long-term freedom and happiness. I decided to go to another meeting. At the back of the room was a table with all sorts of spiritual books on it. I happened to pick one up at random titled "For Today." It was one of those meditation-of-the-day calendar pocket books. I looked in that book to the day, September 6, and the thought for the day was, "God is the producer of this show, not I."

At that moment, I thought to myself: "This is another miracle happening. God is speaking to me through this book! This is no coincidence. This is God the true Producer speaking to me, reassuring me, comforting me, telling me I'm not alone. Unbelievable!"

The way was clear. All I had to do was let go and let Him be my producer. I decided then and there to do whatever it takes to let God show me the way to lose weight and get my life back.

What happened next continues to amaze me to this day. My whole being took on an ease, a kind of “rising above” perspective that let me see my life and my experiences in an entirely refreshing and peaceful way. I was no longer a product of my problems, no longer a trapped animal full of fear. I was a strong and powerful man, able to go through life without having to constantly soothe my wounds and quench my pain.

Don’t get me wrong—the pain was, and is, still there. But it doesn’t matter much anymore. I am now God-equipped to handle it. I’m not consumed by my eating problems, or swallowed up in fear. I no longer carry another me in fat. The deep wounds I endured are healed, for sure, but I’ve got a lot of scars and I don’t care—I’m healed! The past really doesn’t matter; now I see my scars as symbols of battles won and of survival. What’s different now is that I know that I’m not a fat man out of control; I’m a whole person filled with possibilities. I am now able to look back on my life and see that I was always a good person, with a good heart and mind—it’s just that my obesity problems and my swollen ego had taken the best of me and covered up all of my good parts.

This state of mind didn’t just happen all at once. Living a life of joy is a process of unfolding, learning, and doing. For years I’d been reading books and taking courses in nutrition, psychology, religion, and philosophy. The recovery program I ended up devising didn’t fall together with one big click: the pieces slowly fitted in with each other over several years. And I haven’t finished yet! Certainly all the negative experiences I’d had were very important: the diets and pills, which are ultimately so destructive and so useless; the debilitating and self-defeating shame; the paralyzing fear. I have learned to keep letting go of that stuff, over and over, every second of every day.

I’m also happy to report that my parents also recovered from their problems, but not in a way that any of us would have preferred. My mother eventually lost some weight, but, sadly, because of a severe illness. My father did stop drinking and smoking, a major accomplishment. They both passed away too young though—victims of diseases. I’m so grateful for them, nonetheless, and I now easily forgive and appreciate them for everything they tried to do to help in their own way. I’m determined to have a better life than they did and even more dedicated to others in the same predicament I was in. Most of all, I want to help my children learn ways to be happy and not have to depend on negative habits or self-destructive behaviors for their joy. My siblings, too, have risen up from their difficult childhoods and I’m very proud of them.

In the next few pages we’re going to begin your unfolding and your liberation. We’re not going to wait for you to be sick or desperate any more than you may be right

now. We're going to release you of your fears, shame, helplessness, and misery with High Powered help. You may not feel ready, you may still want to hold on to your troubles because you're used to them. That's OK, it happens to the best of us.

Know that I'm on your side. I offer you all my years of trial and error, and all my research and experimentation, and, honestly, my success. I can now say that I know how to lose weight and keep it off forever, because I've done it. I know how to teach you to do it too, as I have for a lot of others. You're worth it. If I can do it, so can you.

I was able to lose 160 pounds, and I am able to maintain a reasonable weight and stay healthy because I am in partnership with God. What does that mean? Simple, I make a regular effort to stay on a balanced food plan and make sure to be active every day, in exchange for God's total care and help. See, I just could never do what I wanted to do on my own. I didn't have the strength of will, or the personal fortitude or peace of mind. I was always feeling like something was missing, or that I was inferior and worthless, and unable to do what ordinary people could do. So, in desperation and pain, with a strong desire to survive and recover from my problems, I just gave up! I simply decided to just stop trying to do everything myself, and went to God for help. He was there, and was very real. (By the way, I only say "He" because that's the way the English language is constructed. I could say "She", too, but it's not what most people are used to and honestly neither gender works very well to describe our Divine Creator. God is so vast and so omnipresent, He is way beyond gender description. It is our knowledge and ability to communicate our experiences that are limited, not God.)

Once I gave my life and problems to God and asked for help, I was spiritually and emotionally released from my self-hatred enough to learn basic nutrition, healthy eating behavior, and realistic exercise. I discovered what ordinary weight people ate and how much they consumed by watching them. I took a course in food habit behavior modification. I went to nutrition classes, and read lots of books. I enrolled in the St. Luke's/Roosevelt hospital weight management program in New York City. I kept food logs for several months of everything I ate, and why, where, and how I felt while eating. I studied the USDA Food Pyramid, and then prayed for the ability to follow it. I boned-up on exercise theory and read many scientific studies. I interviewed lots of people who had lost weight and got their advice on how best to do it. I subscribed to newsletters and got lots of material from libraries on how to eat and move. What I didn't do anymore was to give my hopes away to quack fad diet books and weight loss scam products, as I did a million times in the past. I was determined to just eat and move like ordinary, everyday people, and not have to obsess, diet, or exhaust myself with strenuous exercise ever again.

With all of this effort, shortly thereafter I created my own practical eating plan, based on common sense and the USDA Food Pyramid and “Dietary Guidelines for Americans,” concentrating on eating only “ones”: one serving, one portion, at one time. All of the knowledge, data, and advice I’d gathered all came together for me in a profound revelation one day while walking on a quaint street in New York City’s Greenwich Village, near New York University, where I went to school. I knew there was “one” God, not many, and that I was “one” person, and I’d seen that people without weight problems eat mostly “one” thing per meal, and not more than one. As this began to dawn on me, the Bob Marley song “One Love, One Heart” came wafting out of an apartment window above me. I felt a great sense of spiritual joy well up in me. The answer was simple: I should learn to eat only one serving at a time, and I should eat several small meals and snacks per day. It all came together in the Joy of Weight Loss Food and Activity Plan which has helped me and hundreds of thousands of people immensely over the last decade. And I hope it’ll now help you, too.

Regarding exercise, I found out that one doesn’t need to be an athlete or to slave away at intense exercise for hours a day in order to manage a weight problem. With Divine Grace I was able to get up from the couch and begin to move. It’s like the fear and dread were lifted. It was truly liberating to know that just doing what I could easily do at first—about ten minutes a day of walking—would be enough. God would help me get out and do it. I was no longer alone in my problems—God was there to both show me the way and give me the strength to do what I had to do in order to be healed. In other words, there was great hope for me.

Because I felt so much happiness from God, I didn’t need to stuff myself anymore. Small amounts of food were enough. I could eat anything at all, if I wanted. Having only one portion of something was truly satisfying. I no longer needed seconds or thirds to be filled. I made sure to eat from all five food groups, in exactly the amounts that the experts recommended. I stopped trying crazy diets, and got the power just to use common sense in my eating—having carbohydrates, meats and dairy, fruits and vegetables, and little or no fatty or sugary junk foods or desserts. At first I was shocked at how little food a person needs in order to live and feared that I could never survive on so little. But I knew in my soul that I needed to eat far less; so I prayed to God, and began to feel very satisfied on small amounts. From experience, I discovered how little I need to eat to be healthy. I also knew I couldn’t continue to have ice cream or desserts and still lose weight, so I asked God over and over again to be free of the maddening desires.

Almost miraculously, I got that power, and my cravings were lifted. Taking it day by day, sometimes minute by minute, I just stayed on the food plan and didn't have to eat what I knew I shouldn't. I have never felt extremely hungry since, and it's been over eleven years. Now, on a non-weight loss food plan, I have absolutely anything, but am able to keep true moderation. I have desserts and occasional junk foods, and I enjoy them!

When I was still really fat, I knew I had to exercise, but I was the last person to be able to get up and do it. I absolutely positively hated to exercise. The idea of going to a gym was completely repellant. But I knew I had to do something to move my body. So I surrendered that problem to God as well. What I received was the knowledge to see it in a different light: that being just the slightest bit *active* might actually be enjoyable. That was very, very freeing to me. The knowledge that I could lose weight if I just went for a nice walk around the block every day, and that would do it, was liberating. With just that freedom, I began walking just ten minutes a day. A few months later, I discovered a stretch and easy movement class for overweight people at a nearby hospital called "Any Body Can." It was led by an angel named Joan Avalone. I prayed for God to give me the strength to go to one of the classes. Swallowing my exercise hatred, my fears and insecurities, I went. Surprise! It was actually really fun, and made me feel really good afterwards. The teacher was a sweetheart, and the other folks in it were even fatter than I was, which made me feel better about myself. I just kept doing what I'd learned: surrendering and asking for help, eating on my food plan, going for walks and to my stretch and movement group twice a week, and the weight slowly came off—about two pounds a week. Once I lost about fifty pounds, I then felt I wanted more active fun and signed up for a dance class at New York University.

I went to that class faithfully, twice a week, even though I was the only man and was out of place because I was overweight. Another really nice teacher, Abby Saxon, at first thought I was in the wrong room. But when she heard that I just wanted to learn to dance and to lose more weight she welcomed me warmly. She was a great teacher, too, making the steps easy and over-the-top fun. Great music, too. Boogie down, baby! I just love to dance! And I could do the choreography surprisingly well! I guess I was a dancer trapped in a fat man's body. I would just fly around the room and lose myself in mid-air. What joy! The weight really poured off me then—consistently two to three pounds a week. Best of all, I lost my sense of insecurity and obesity embarrassment in that class. Thank you, Abby, from the bottom of my heart.

Once I had reached a reasonable weight and kept it off for over one year, I decided I should dive into another deep fear and dread—swimming. I couldn't swim.

Remember, I told you about my horrid experiences at five years old in the swimming class? I never did go in the water after that, except once as a 400-pound teenager, and quickly sank into a lake, drowning, and had to be rescued. Me and water didn't mix, and I was terrified of it. So I followed my desire to heal that part of my past and enrolled in a beginning swimming class. Again, I was the only man in a NYU class of all Asian women! But I didn't care. I surrendered my fears and insecurities, and the teachers, Scott Wilet and Dan Cordle, taught me to swim in no time. How easy it was! How lovely to glide effortlessly through the water! What JOY! I can now swim a mile without stopping!

Another really important part of my healing process was opening myself up enough to reach out to others. The anonymous support group that I mentioned earlier was really a helpful start for me. I kept going, sometimes every day, other times once a week. I discovered that there are *lots of support groups out there*, and all I had to do was make the slightest effort to find them and just go. I love these groups. I hear great stories of other people's lives, how they lost weight and found joy and happiness, and I make a lot of new friends, too. Instantly, I found much in common with other people. I also began to make small efforts to open myself up and let others know me. I asked God to let me risk my own self-hatred and fear of embarrassment and just tell folks about my feelings, interests, experiences, needs, pains, fears, sorrows, and, most importantly, joys.

In hindsight, I'd always wished that there was one book, one source of information that had everything I needed, in a way that would actually work. With all the millions of diet and exercise books and tapes and products out there, I had never found one that had everything I needed, in the right combination of effective elements. That's why I wrote this book for you. It's my attempt to put all the pieces of the puzzle together just for you, in a way that you can actually find useful and effective. After years of trial and error, I'm grateful to God for showing me what really, truly works and to give it to you so that you will experience the freedom and joy that I have, without nearly as much work as I had to do to find it.

Today, compared to how much I hated myself as a child, I'd have to say that I'm the most "Chumley" I could be. I am perfectly imperfect. I'm a lot thinner, I'm a lot happier. Things are much lighter in my life, things are a lot easier—although life is still difficult. I've got lots to learn and a lot to accomplish. In fact, I feel that I've just begun to scratch the surface of what I'd like to do in terms of learning, service, and creativity. This book is, I hope, creative and of service to you.

I can go into any clothes shop and buy nice things right off the rack. I don't have to change my whole wardrobe over and over due to gaining and losing anymore, ever. I can wear shorts and tight-fitting tee-shirts and look good. I can dress up in a suit and tie and look like a gajillion bucks! People look at me on the streets and on the bus and subway...not because I'm fat, but because I'm thinner and handsome! I don't mind wearing a bathing suit at a public pool. I love dressing in hip, fashionable clothes and going to parties. I love dressing up for meetings and business functions. I also love just wearing old clothes and playing and getting dirty sometimes. Once, after clothes shopping one day, I was walking down a street and saw a really handsome looking man in the mirror of a storefront across the street who was wearing some really cool clothes like the ones I had just bought (and was wearing home). I looked a little closer and that handsome man in the mirror was me! Talk about joy of weight loss!

Thank you, God, for giving me my life back.