

AS 2009 BEGINS, my thoughts turn once again to my old nemesis, Diet. As a result of our long and tumultuous relationship, I tend to relate to Diet as I would an overbearing, out-of-town family member. I have been successfully putting off her inevitable visit since mid-October ("Sorry – now's just not a good time. There's Halloween to get through, and Thanksgiving, and Christmas..."). But January 1st is here again, and Diet is on my doorstep, suitcase in hand, and eyeing me with a sardonic, "My! How you've grown!"

Typically, I sigh and resignedly step aside to let her sweep in and take over my life and my pantry – at least for a few months, until I get fed up and kick her out. I will then commemorate my newly reclaimed independence with several months of celebratory binge-eating. I am discovering that we have a very dysfunctional relationship, Diet and I. While she certainly has her flaws (can you say "controlling?"), I have to own up to my own issues; chiefly, my total lack of moderation.

As I reflect on my past relationship with Diet, I am struck most by the fact that it is characterized by ridiculous extremes. Take, for example, January 2007. You may remember me from Kroger – I was the kook behind you in the check-out line with a cart full of distilled water, grade B maple syrup, cayenne pepper and fifteen pounds of lemons. The lemonade diet, also known as the Master Cleanse, does not tout weight loss as its primary goal. Instead, weight loss is a happy side effect that naturally arises from depriving yourself of all solid food. The goal of the controversial Master Cleanse is to rid your body of toxins. Therefore, in addition to drinking massive amounts of the prescribed lemony drink, the diet involves a daily salt water flush (a.k.a. the internal bath) which holds the remarkable distinction of being even more unpleasant than it

sounds.

The salt water flush can be broken down into four simple steps:

- Clear your morning schedule.
- Mix two level teaspoons of salt in a quart of lukewarm water.
- Chug this mixture like a frat boy on a



that humans have labeled this atrocity a "shake," I am confident that they will rise up in indignation to exact violent bovine revenge.) Nevertheless, while the P-B shake does, in fact, taste like weathered volcanic ash, it is incredibly effective at cleansing one's colon. While a spanking-clean colon is all well and good, however, I was really just intent on losing weight. Which I did...until I inevitably began eating solid food again. After months of on and off cleansing and binging, 2008 dawned exactly as 2007 had – with me in my fat jeans and Diet pounding on my door.

In order to placate Diet in January of 2008, I promised that I would focus a bit more on her neglected twin, Exercise. Whereas Diet tends to be too controlling, Exercise just wants too much of my time. Thirty minutes of focused attention every day? Exercise is just too needy! However, I felt it was time to pay a little more attention to Exercise – maybe I just hadn't given her a fair shake. After all, I reasoned, lots of other people seem to enjoy her company, and they

Diet & Exercise: The Evil Twins

By Allison Harrell

dare.

- Ensure that for the next few hours you are not more than three steps away from your bathroom, or suffer calamitous consequences.

For your average dieter, adhering to a fast of indefinite length and subsisting on salt water and doctored lemonade probably qualifies as radical. Being the overachiever that I am, however, I determined that I would attempt the "Ultimate Fast," and add to the lemonade diet several daily P-B shakes. For the uninitiated, the P-B shake is a concoction consisting of psyllium husk powder, which is a natural fiber, and bentonite—a thick, gelatinous liquid that is derived from deposits of weathered volcanic ash. (As an aside, if cows ever discover

are so perky and toned. So when I was introduced to Power 90 Extreme, a popular

90-day fitness program, it seemed like the time had finally come for Diet, Exercise and me to all coexist in perfect harmony. Now, credit must be given to fitness guru and P90X creator Tony Horton for truth in advertising. This is certainly an extreme program. For me, of course, that was the clincher – no moderation required. Over an hour of strenuous exercise daily? Check. A rigorous eating program? Heck yes. A set number of days during which I can relinquish the responsibility of making my own wise nutritional decisions in favor of adhering to a stringent, pre-packaged program? Sign me up!

I did it. For 90 days I did the exercises, I followed the eating program, I even evangelized others to the P90X system.

Occasionally during that 90-day period someone would ask the dreaded question, "What are you going to do when this is over?" Now, I must make it perfectly clear: P90X is a highly successful program. Based on its rabid internet following, I know there are tons of people out there who have maintained a P90X lifestyle beyond the 90 days subscribed by the program. I, however, am not one of them. I concluded my 90 days of extreme fitness so burned out on Diet and Exercise that I shoved them both out of my speeding minivan on the way to Sonic. For the remaining 275 days of 2008 I resembled Homer Simpson at a Super Buffet.

Did someone say dessert bar? Gotta go scrape all the crust off the cobbler... it's still warm...ice cream on top... ahhhhh.

By December of 2008 I was right back where I had started in January, except with slightly less self-respect and a wicked sugar hangover.

Looking back on my decades-long failed relationship with Diet and Exercise, I realize that these experiences could certainly be viewed as a total waste of time and energy. However, I can't help feeling that there is a valuable lesson buried somewhere under all the self-loathing and sour cream. And here's what I'm finally figuring out: for me, extreme is not a healthy way of life. So here's my radical resolution for 2009: I'm going to try to make this the year of moderation—no extreme exercise systems, no ridiculous diets. So where does this leave me and the High-Maintenance Twins? I still haven't figured out exactly how to resolve our volatile relationship, but for starters, I'm going to try speaking more kindly to both of them (and to myself). Maybe we can work it out over a latte' — low fat, of course.

Allison Harrell is a freelance writer living in Frisco.

New Year's Resolution or Revolution? by Terri Gerrard

WHAT IS THE MEANING of a New Year's Resolution and why are they so difficult to keep? Weight problems affect much of the population thus making weight management among the most popular resolutions. Despite 26 billion dollars spent on weight loss each year, the rate of both childhood and adult obesity is increasing, not to mention the decline in overall health in the general population. With that amount of money spent, why is a weight loss resolution so hard to keep?

One's health should be a priority yet many of us fail to put it at the top of our list. If, while attending a party or going on a trip you feel you need to provide your own food, by all means do so. Be aware of your starting point and compare the amount of calories you consume to the amount you are burning.

Skipping breakfast is a common mistake. Think of food as fuel and your body as a furnace. Feed the fire and do so frequently with planned, healthy meals and snacks, 5-6 meals/snacks per day. To supplement, try a protein shake once or twice a day. They are easy to prepare by adding a scoop of whey or soy protein to water or low fat milk and add fruit for an extra boost. Remember; feed the furnace first thing in the morning.

Weight loss is a big business, if you find your wallet getting smaller than your waistline you might want to ask yourself a few questions prior to purchasing a specific book or engaging in a weight loss program.

First, does the diet exclude a certain food group because it's "bad," or the reverse, does it claim a food is the "key" to weight loss? Does it make sensational claims? Does it fail to mention lifestyle changes, and claim there is no need to exercise? Does it require large sums of money and a long-term contract? Does it take into account special needs of medical conditions that may limit activity? Conversely does it address the sports-specific needs of athletes? The answers to these questions may be a red flag to avoid such programs.

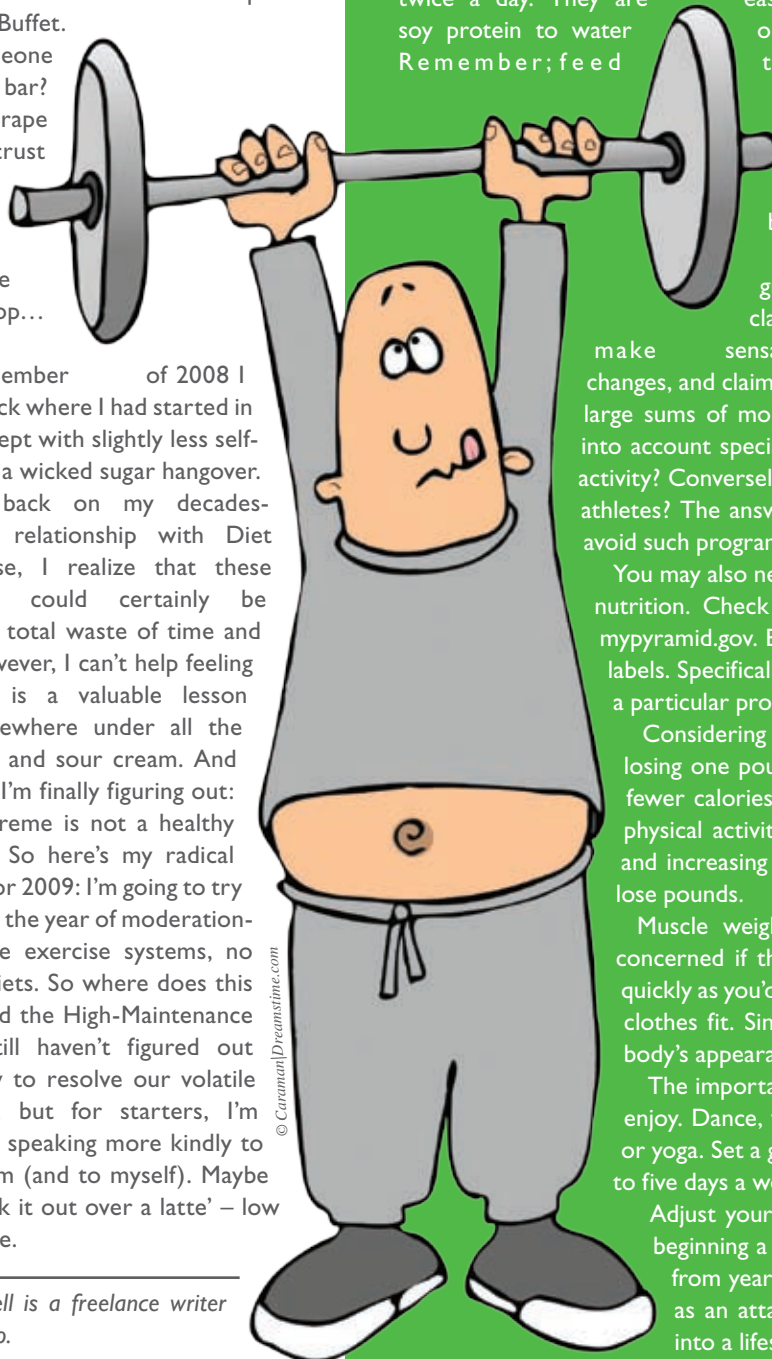
You may also need to update what you think you know about nutrition. Check out the new food guide pyramid at www.mypyramid.gov. Educate yourself about portion sizes and food labels. Specifically, understand how many servings there are in a particular product.

Considering that one pound of fat equals 3500 calories, losing one pound of body fat in a week requires that 3500 fewer calories be consumed, or 3500 more burned during physical activity. A combination of eating with moderation and increasing physical activity is the most effective way to lose pounds.

Muscle weighs two times more than fat, so don't be concerned if the number on the scale doesn't go down as quickly as you'd like. Instead check out how much better your clothes fit. Since muscle takes up less space than fat, your body's appearance may improve more than the scales let on.

The important thing is to get started. Find something you enjoy. Dance, walk, hike, jog, swim, bike or try martial arts or yoga. Set a goal to exercise at least 30 minutes a day, four to five days a week.

Adjust your attitude from "I'm going on a diet," to "I'm beginning a new healthy and fit lifestyle." Discard failures from years' past and start viewing this year's resolution as an attainable goal. Turn that weight-loss resolution into a lifestyle change. It is possible!



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