

## PREFACE

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# Character Development for Life Transformation

I founded Slimming Together in 1986, after I won a hard-fought battle with food addiction and lost over sixty pounds. I'd spent twelve years as a junk-food addict, overfeeding my body while my spirit starved. When I finally achieved my personal weight-loss goal, I felt deeply inspired and incredibly free. It was truly life transforming. I experienced a burning desire to help overweight people take control and begin loving life as I had learned to love it.

Over the years since, my weight-loss/personal-development program has made a positive difference in the lives of countless women and men. I've personally had the pleasure of working with tens of thousands of people in the United Kingdom and in Southern California. I've also had the pleasure of reaching over a million readers in the UK as a regular columnist for a national newspaper magazine for five years. I still contribute to health magazines, which I very much enjoy.



Joanne before losing 63 pounds

I thrive on personal contact and interaction with people, and I feel very blessed to be doing work I love. Even after all these years of teaching classes, workshops, and seminars, I find I enjoy it more and more. Writing *The Life Transformation Diet*

is just another step in this incredible journey, allowing me to share what I've learned with wider circles of people. Life turned out quite well for the fat girl from Dennistoun who once believed she was the ultimate hopeless case!

## **A Prisoner of My Addiction**

I was born in Scotland, in the district of Dennistoun in Glasgow, which I still think of as Mother Glasgow. I lived there until I was sixteen years old, when I moved with my family to Jersey, a very beautiful island fourteen miles off the north coast of France. It's the original Jersey that New Jersey in the United States is named after.

My addiction to junk food started when I was about twelve years old, and escalated into a full-scale nightmare in my late teens and early twenties. I was bulging out of my largest clothes. Yet despite feeling desperate to get my life on track, I could never seem to stop overeating. In fact, the more desperate I felt, the more I ate and the bigger I got.

I was addicted to chocolate, and for years I ate as many as fifteen bars a day, in addition to large portions of fries, pizza, and other high-calorie foods. I didn't eat fifteen bars of chocolate in one go, of course, but throughout the day I had that many. I seldom ate a proper meal. I craved junk food. I kept journals for a number of years, where I documented my chocolate binges as well as my feelings of inadequacy and self-loathing.

For many years I experienced crippling depression due to such poor nutrition and a very negative state of mind. Although I longed to lose weight, I was weak in the face of temptation. I tried desperately to succeed, but my cravings for chocolate always got the better of me.

My hunger was both physical and emotional. Eating junk food softened the pain, at least in the short term. Food was my escape, my refuge, my comfort. I didn't have a care in the world while I was eating chocolate, but once I'd had my fill, I'd feel over-

whelmed with remorse and guilt. My life was a cycle of secret eating, depression, and bingeing. I was obsessed with weighing myself, and I alternated between fantasizing about food and fantasizing about being attractive.

I was a prisoner of my addiction. My cravings for junk food ruled the day. I longed to be lean and energetic, and of course I wanted to look good. I longed to develop the strength to follow through on my good intentions, and to succeed in life. I desperately wanted to be free of my painful inner turmoil and destructive thoughts, and instead begin to trust and respect myself.

It took me about twelve years to change my attitude and behavior, but eventually I did. Step by step, I dealt with the emotional pain that fueled my need to overeat. Step by step, I improved the quality of my diet and lifestyle. Step by step, I broke free from my self-imposed prison of fat and depression, and experienced the calling to light the way for others.

## **The Beginning of Slimming Together**

On 6 October 1986, I held my first Slimming Together class in Jersey. My greatest desire was to create an environment where people would feel supported and encouraged without judgment. I was well aware of the need for discipline, but I didn't want anyone to feel ridiculed or humiliated. I wanted people to know that I appreciated and respected them. I aimed to blend discipline and compassion with an equal measure of inspiration.

I felt passionate about teaching the importance of dealing with the deeper issues that trigger overeating. I'd grown frustrated with the endless array of diets that provided no real solution. Overeating is seldom really about food. More often it's about deep emotional pain or chronic repression. To succeed long-term, we need to stop looking outside ourselves for the miracle solution. Instead, we need to work at an intelligent level, developing inner skills and self-awareness, making changes in our attitude as well as our behavior. The key to success does not lie