

Finding my way back to me...

Here's the thing - I have had trouble deciding whether or not to share what's been going on with me since January 2nd on facebook. My circle is pretty wide with friends I haven't seen in 25 years, and those connected with my children. I didn't want to make it awkward for my teens. However, for better or worse, I am pretty transparent. And, maybe there is someone out there like me who might see my story as encouragement.

So, as my JFK friends can attest, I grew up a chubby kid, morphed into a healthy looking teen who thought she was fat, and then an adult who has bounced from size 10 to size 22 and everywhere in between over the last 26 years. I have done over 15 formal diets of every brand, and lost at least 273 lbs from them. Always to gain again. I've been sober 17 years, but in some ways I don't think I have ever reached true recovery because I just switched to food for comfort. I consider myself a high capacity person, and folks always remark "how do you do it all and stay so calm?". Well my immediate family may disagree, but most of that is a result of self-medicating with food.

There are some close to me who do not understand why I just don't apply better discipline around food. I agree, why can't I? After my last failed attempt last spring, I have come to the belief that I am addicted to food, and like any addiction you need to remove it. Removing food and surviving doesn't work out. So I have researched, prayed, reflected, prayed, and decided to have Lapband Surgery.

Some of you might know what that is, but for those who don't it's a form of bariatric surgery. They wrap a plastic band around the upper portion of your stomach to shrink it, reducing the quantity of food you can eat. Since January 2, I have had 2 series of blood tests, upper gi, ekg, echocardiogram, cardiologist consult, attended support group meetings, read a book, took an online course, had a complete physical, met with nutritionist, and even had my "head examined" at the Institute of Living to make sure I was competent to make this decision. Yes, surprise, surprise - I am!

Over the last 14 days I have been on a liquid diet and jump-started the process with an 18lb weight loss. Yesterday I had the surgery and a bonus surgery of a hiatal hernia repair that they found when they went inside. I have 4 small incisions, 1 a little bigger, and overall am feeling pretty good. In a couple weeks I'll be able to take in solid forms of food, primarily protein. Sugar and the like is in my past. I have a facebook friend who gave me great advice, instead of "I can't have that"; my mantra is "I am so fortunate to have eaten so many of those items in the last 43 years".

Lapband is not a cure. It does not remove the emotional eating for you. What it does do is reduce the hunger trigger, allowing me to re-wire my brain. Already, I feel so much happier inside. I've had 2 slight headaches in two weeks instead of the daily ones I usually experience. I hope that my wide array of orthopedic issues will disappear in time. I am working out a program of recovery for myself, applying a lot I have learned from other programs and the Bible. I have a high degree of hope, commitment, and excitement to see how God will use me once I remove the obstacle my weight has always presented.

Who knows, I may even play a little soccer someday!

There is no better time. I am surrounded by a family who loves me, a husband who has never made me feel anything other than beloved no matter what the scale showed, and some really great friends who are awesome encouragers. Thanks to everyone who has prayed and dropped encouraging notes to me on facebook and email. My hair stylist even sent me a card today – how lucky can a woman be!

I hope you will be seeing less of me...soon.

Peace and love, Sandy

“Sober since 1985, Sandy Valentine – wife and mother of four - looks at her recovery this way “Over the 17 years of recovery from alcoholism, the metaphor of “peeling the layers of the onion” has come to represent my journey – particularly since it typically comes with a lot of tears. With each layer, I grow closer to God and life becomes richer and more “flavorful”.” Join her as she shares the “peels” through this periodic column.”