

Gwyneth's diet diary

We take another peak inside the diary of readers' favourite Gwyneth Watson, and find out how a rare visit from her son and a week of travel affected her weight-loss campaign

June/ July 2009

I cut out this Jonathan Cainer horoscope: *"Negativity is a bit like white bread - it is cheap and plentiful, you don't have to go very far to find it, it fills you up and stops you feeling as if you need anything else. Yet it doesn't do any of us any good.*

"Just as truly healthy, nutritious diets require extra effort, so positive thought patterns demand a bit more from us."

How true, so I am working hard this month at having a PMA - positive mental attitude.

Game, Set and Match

Son James headed south for a couple of weeks, while son Philip was arriving from Thailand, so I threw myself into mucking out one room and preparing another.

Then I played "the ironing game". The rules are very simple: you pile the ironing up until you run out of clothing to wear, iron everything (including pants, socks and towels) and - here's the benefit - put each item away before you go on to the next one. This could mean taking a pair of pants upstairs, then heading up again a couple of minutes later with a skirt. It takes many, many hours to iron, but you really know that you have moved about at the end of it.

Hope Graham doesn't read this, or he will be charging me for extra electricity!

Another game I play is "do things as you think of them". This works on the same basis as "the ironing game", but it also acts as a cover for a poor memory. It works best when you are really busy and thoughts flutter in and out of your mind - I take it everyone is like that, not just me? You have to stop what you are doing and act on

Inspirational Cooking

With James away and, with him, his limited food repertoire, I explored more recipes in Rosemary's 4-in-1 cookbook. I made North African apricot and lamb kebabs with salad, followed by Bajan grilled pineapple with honey and lime. It took ages chopping and preparing all the fruit and vegetables but, with the Archers omnibus as accompaniment, it was quite a cathartic activity, and Graham really loved the meal.

I dipped in again on another day and made chicken satay - a delicious low-fat version of the peanut and oil dipping sauce I have eaten in Thailand.

Gwyneth's diet diary cont:

Inspired, Graham found a recipe for low-fat meatballs. It appealed to him because lots of grated carrot and courgette could be integrated and disguised and the excess frozen. By the time it emerges covered in passata, James won't recognise its nutritional benefits. I thought I had got over disguising food when he was 5!

Party Time

We had a fabulous week with Philip, hearing about life on his exotic island and having hilarious telephone conversations with his girlfriend, Micky - so much being lost in translation and time delays. She told me that I looked very slim in a recent photograph I had sent her. I was pleasantly surprised until I remembered that this was taken when I was 17 years old. Naturally, Micky is pretty, petite and possibly a size 6. We had to juggle food again, as Phil has a stomach ulcer, but that did not seem to deter him from eating cheese, eggs and potatoes or drinking Irn-Bru - all of which seem to be lacking in Thailand.

Naturally, by the time we had eaten out at local haunts, stayed overnight in Newark (Cantonese restaurant), stayed 4 nights in Norfolk (steaks and sea bass), partied in Canterbury (buffet, birthday cake, Champagne and barbecue) and returned home, let's say it was unlikely I had lost any weight.

However, my PMA was still in place and I wrote down a list of activities that I could do to make amends.

You've Been Framed

With Philip back to his tropical isle, I restricted myself to one cup of coffee per day and drank water instead.

I am not a big fish eater - even when a generous fisherman friend turned up with a bucket of scallops - but tried to eat fish on occasion instead of red meat.

I got some unexpected exercise when Graham opened the patio door and it literally fell out of its frame. I was tasked to hold it up while he troubleshooted the problem. I discovered trembly arm muscles I didn't know I had.

It has taken 14 weeks since my surgery to put any weight on the heel of my hand, so unfortunately I appear not to have done any press-ups or tricep dips. Oh dear.

Inevitably, the time for excuses has run out. I have been logging on to Rosemary's blog and have found her exercise suggestion each evening on Twitter to be a timely prompt to remove my body from in front of the computer and be active!

If I go out for a walk at lunchtimes, it usually costs me money or I get waylaid in the nearest shop. The trick is to build in a routine. Perhaps I should get Graham to take me into work, and throw me out of the car about 2 miles short of the office!

I have made time to visit the July sales, though, and bought cropped running trousers that don't roll down and a top that doesn't roll up over my stomach. I now have to wear them for the right reasons, not just to look like a fashion plate.

Gwyneth's diet diary cont:

A little bird told me...

We have a pigeon perched under the air conditioning unit, where the condensation regularly drips on it, or the tray fills up with rainwater. Its first nest and eggs were washed away. It stoically rebuilt it and then sat on 2 eggs for 15 days.

Its partner, presumably the male, didn't turn up too often to take its turn at incubation, so the bird must often have been hungry and thirsty. Finally, two chicks were hatched, which required regular feeding.

I marvel at the effort this pigeon has put in to rearing its family, one of which has now perished. I am going to have to shut the blinds when the other learns to fly, as it has no second chances with the concrete beneath if it fails.

I don't know if pigeons have feelings, but the lessons I have taken from this experience are that patience is rewarded and, despite setbacks, you can achieve your goal in the end.

“Lazy little madam”

Remembering the PMA I am supposed to be applying, I am surprised at how easily I manage to depress myself through my own stupidity. I have only to put on half a pound and it throws me into a downward mood spiral and a frenzy of “I don't care really” face-stuffing activity.

It's ridiculous behaviour for a woman of my age and significant dieting knowledge and experience!

I am now receiving polite prompts from Anne-Marie, the rosemaryconleyonline personal weight-loss coach, who has noticed that I haven't been entering my increasing weight on the graphs. Would you? Also, my diet buddies have gone ominously quiet, because neither encouragement nor threats have worked.

Yes - they are all right, and once again it shows that only I can make me slim. I shall stop navel-gazing and give myself a kick up the proverbial.

I have still been a lazy little madam as regards exercise, but I am trying to control my food intake more closely and at least level off the portion pots.

Fresh raspberries and strawberries have been in abundance, and I have tried to eat them with natural yogurt or “bare”, so that my palate forgets all about fatty cream. I still believe that, overall, I eat a healthy, balanced diet, PLUS!

Every little helps

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Weight lost to date: 2st 6lb

Gwyneth now weighs 12st 2lb

top tips

- I have personalised my computer homepage to include motivational quotes, fat-loss tips and a link to Rosemary's blog
- Dig out the wet-weather gear - you don't dissolve in rain

high points

- Remembering that fresh fruit has a nice taste
- Clothes shopping, and not having to buy a bigger size

low points

- The vicious circle of overeating, low mood and overeating
- There's no button on the weighing scales that automatically deducts a stone
- Feeling fat in clothes with a tight waistband
- Not progressing, and realising I am my own worst enemy

what I have learned

- Patience is rewarded - but you have to be patient at waiting, too
- I could have saved myself £9.50 by exercising instead of buying magic knickers