

# A Holistic Weight Loss Journey

How I lost seven stone in  
a sustainable way.



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## Introduction (Not quite as easy as ABC)

Hello and welcome! You've no doubt downloaded this introduction to holistic weight loss because you're interested in losing weight. Makes sense!

Let's start by saying that this is **not** a guide, or a plan, or a recipe to get-thin-quick.

It is a summary of my own sustainable weight loss journey. It is an overview of what worked for me. Over the period of around two years, I lost seven stone and five dress sizes and I have done a lot of the inner work to permanently change my internal landscape and maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle.

I did this because I wanted to. Losing weight was for me.

I was over 40, I didn't want to get to the menopause and still be carrying weight that I would struggle to shift. I wanted more energy for my kids and, most importantly, I wanted to feel comfortable in my own skin.

It was really difficult to begin with - I'm not going to tell you that this journey will be easy! I had all these entrenched beliefs and old narratives running in my mind, and was addicted to sugar and junk food, but I made the decision to commit to myself for a year, come what may, and do the best I could.

My goal back then- which seems so simple now but felt unachievable at the time because I was wearing a UK size 22- was to be able to walk into M&S and buy something pretty in a size 14.

This was a big goal at the time and I doubted I could do it. But I did! I smashed it and am now a comfy size 10 in Marks & Spencer.

This text is also a rejection of diet culture. The toxicity that surrounds women's bodies and women's weight is unhelpful and potentially damaging. Restricting food, cutting food groups, obsessively counting calories is not a healthy place to be- mentally as well as physically- and my God, isn't it boring!

How would it feel to not have to think about what you can and can't eat and what you can and can't wear? How wonderful would it be to unburden yourself from those negative and often intrusive thoughts and beliefs? How liberating would it be to free yourself from that cycle of yo-yo dieting?

It is often said that if diets worked you'd only ever do one! So true! Being overweight is big business. They have a vested interest in you 'falling off the wagon' because the next time you feel compelled to get back on it, they can sell you a load of crap that you will want to buy because you're desperate. Each perceived 'failure' makes you feel more and more desperate and you'd give anything to be smaller.

The truth is, there are no quick results. There are no shortcuts, or hacks, and the bogus claims in the books, videos, supplements and medications are bullshit. A truly sustainable and holistic weight loss journey is about consistently showing up for yourself, day after day, and taking care of yourself, because you fundamentally believe that you are worth it!

Not easy, right? Not easy when you have spent a long time feeling not enough. When you've internalised societal pressure and come to believe that big equals bad and that 'I would be so much better/happier/more confident/more successful if I were thin'.

That is a Titanic-sized ship of shame and self-hatred that you're not going to be able to turn around overnight. This is why diets fail- we continue to run old, unhelpful scripts that keep us in an old mindset.

If you want to lose weight- because **you** want to- that is your choice and you have your reasons; if you want to start a journey where you practise radical self-love and embrace yourself as you are; if you want weight loss to be a side-effect of new healthy habits, rather than an all-consuming focus, then this is written to inform and inspire you.

If, on the other hand, you want to get thin quick, this won't be for you.

I decided to put pen to paper to be of service to other women who are in a similar place as I was. I've summarised my journey into three stages that I'm calling A, B and C. This journey is definitely not as easy as ABC, but if you're called to make changes and prioritise your self-care, read on and see what comes up for you.

Take good care!

Amy x



## **A is for... Acceptance**

I know this might be difficult, but the first step on this journey is accepting yourself as you are now. It is time to make peace with your body. It is time to start healing all those old wounds. In order to move forward and achieve the goals you have set for yourself, you need to accept the body that you have and where you are now, with all its perceived imperfections and challenges.

This isn't easy, but it does get easier with practice. Give thanks for your body, appreciate what it does for you every day - start by *recognising* what it does for you - and get in the habit of cultivating gratitude for your body. It might feel like a ridiculous or alien thing to do but give it a go...*'thank you, legs, for carrying me every day', 'thank you, body, for growing my three beautiful children'*.

Start small if you need to, but find something to be positive about and grateful for.

You don't have to love your body, but with gratitude and acceptance comes a truce. You may have been at war with your body for a long time - and the fight has been exhausting, no doubt -it is now time to make peace.

Do this consistently - every day- and, slowly, over time you are reframing your perception of your body and moving away from the negative to a more positive self-image.

## **Practise self-care**

1. Start a **gratitude journal**. Record what you are grateful for about your body today.
2. Make time for **self-care**- this can be anything that you enjoy! A luxurious bath, a walk in nature, laughing with a friend- whatever brings you joy.
3. **Touch your skin!** This might sound odd, but we become disconnected from the body when we feel negative about it. Start with self-massage; rub some beautiful oils on your arms and legs. Give yourself a foot massage.
4. Get brave and book and massage with a professional or a lover! Maybe start with a foot rub and work up to a full-body massage if that's your thing.

The key thing here is to get used to being in your own body again. We are embodied souls but we often experience life as though our mind and body are two distinct entities. Work up to standing naked and really looking at yourself in the mirror.

Eschewing all negativity, what do you really see in this body? Find something that you like about your body and say it out loud...*'I like the shape of my legs', 'I love that my body has made three healthy children and this belly, and these stretch marks, are a sign of that miracle'*.

Start to feel into your body again. Find 5-10 minutes each day to move and stretch- maybe you practise some gentle yoga, maybe you start with some simple stretches, move slowly and mindfully, really feeling the sensations in your body. Think about how the muscles and joints are working together, think about how your body feels when you move in different ways.

Reacquainting yourself with your body in this way rebuilds mind-body connection and, in turn, restores trust. Think back to when you were a child and the carefree nature of movement; running, cartwheels, roly-polys! Children move with that freedom because they are embodied - they unconsciously trust their bodies. Children operate with intuitive mind-body connection. Think about this - when was the last time you did a handstand? What's stopping you?



This stage is not woo-hoo, look at me! This work is quiet, private, personal. It is a deeply reflective and personal journey. This is you reconnecting with your body in a positive way- which is likely to be something you haven't done in a long time. It will be challenging to begin with, but you are doing the inner work here, and that is powerful. You are reframing perception and reprogramming the mind to seek the positives. This work is the beginning of a mindset shift that will carry you on this transformational journey.

**Time to reflect:**

- How will you practise self-care?
- What three to five self-care practices can you commit to regularly?
- Why is self-care important to you?
- How will life be different if you accept and embrace your body?



## **B is for...Be Clear**

Okay, be honest, how many times have you tried to lose weight before? How many times have you joined a slimming club? How many fad diets have you started? How many pieces of random exercise equipment have you got festering in a cupboard? These previous attempts might have worked in the short-term, but they haven't proved to be long-lasting or sustainable- or you probably wouldn't be reading this.

This section is all about the importance of being super clear on your purpose, your motivation and your goals.

So often, many of us try to lose weight for the wrong reasons: for someone else, to get a person, to keep a person, to fit into something, for a holiday, for an event, to not be the fat one in the friendship group, to be 'more

attractive', to have more energy for work or the kids. All of these are very common reasons. What they all have in common is external motivation.

In these situations, the motivation for wanting to lose weight is outside of the individual. So, when it gets hard, and it does from time to time, when the temptation is too great... the stress... the hormones... the time of the month... it's easier to quit. *'I'll start again tomorrow', 'I'll just buy a bigger dress', 'I deserve a treat', 'It's been a really tough day', 'life's too short to skip dessert'...*and so on.

Being clear on your motivation means doing it for yourself because you want to! Because you know that you are a valuable person and that you deserve to feel happy, healthy and good about yourself. Intrinsic motivation is the internal desire to do something because it is a good/fun/right thing to do and you know you will feel the benefits of it.

When it comes to weight loss, being intrinsically motivated shifts the focus from obsessing about numbers on a scale, or measuring success by dress size, and means that you are motivated to eat well and move your body because like how it makes you feel.

This is a very different approach to losing weight; you are creating a virtuous circle, creating and reinforcing healthy habits and breaking the vicious circle of 'failure', shame and self-loathing, the loss-gain-shame cycle. You are also doing the vital inner work that will make your weight loss long-term and sustainable. You are building new pathways in the brain and reprogramming those unhelpful beliefs in the unconscious mind. This is what leads to sustained weight loss and breaks the toxic cycle of yo-yo dieting.

You are shifting your mindset and making lasting changes that will benefit every area of your life.

### **Time to reflect:**

- Think about your goals. What do you want to achieve and why?
- Where do you want to be in 3, 6, 12, 24 months?
- Fast forward two years, imagine you have achieved your goal(s) and are in a great place. Describe what life is like. How has life changed? How do you look after yourself? How do you feel about yourself?
- Check that your goals are all about you!
- What five healthy habits will you include in your life starting today?
- How will you keep yourself accountable on this journey?

## **...and Be Consistent...**

Starting a self-love led health journey is a journey without an end. It's a permanent mindset shift. It is a path that changes your relationship with food, exercise and your body forever. You won't look at food in the same way, you won't crave unhealthy food, you won't want to lead a sedentary lifestyle - you will want to move your body!

It might feel unlikely now - you may find it hard to imagine yourself there - but it is completely possible for you.

Previous attempts to lose weight have been visits to this place - short-haul trips that got you to the event, into the dress, onto the beach- you may have lost a few stone, but you likely put some, most or all of it back on. That's because it was a temporary mindset shift, you hadn't done the deep work, you hadn't done the inner work to shift the mindset permanently, so it could only ever be temporary weight loss.

The most important thing you can do now is show up for yourself- consistently- every single day- without thinking there is an end date. You show up because you are worth it, you deserve it, and you know, believe and feel this deeply. This doesn't come overnight. This is slow. This is

deep work. This is confronting. But this works. And you know what else? It's completely free! You can do this on your own, all you need is you! You don't need clubs, pills, supplements, fancy equipment - you just need you, your intrinsic motivation, some rock solid goals, and the desire to be happy and healthy because that is what **you** want and you know you deserve.

**Time to reflect:**

- What are potential barriers to your success?
- What could stop you working towards or achieving your goal?
- What could you do to overcome these barriers?



## **C is for...Choice**

You may not feel like you have much choice. You may not feel like you are in control sometimes but the reality of this situation is that you can choose to stay as you are or you can choose to make changes. The choice really is yours and the first step is to regain your personal power.

If you're looking to reduce your weight or embed some healthy habits and want some guidance, you really are spoiled for choice. Weight loss is a billion dollar industry, with countless books, videos, plans, apps...often with contradictory and conflicting advice...and it can be really hard to know who to follow and what to believe.

My approach rejects much of this! The trouble is, we are all different, we have different bodies, genetics, environmental factors, and what works for me may do little for you. What worked for me when I was in my 20s

(SlimFast) didn't work for me in my 30s. Our bodies change as we age, become menopausal, respond to stress and trauma - there are just too many variables and a one-size-fits-all get-thin-quick plan you download from a website so that you can fit into a party dress is not going to be 1) easy or 2) sustainable.

When you buy into these diets, programmes and fads, the creator doesn't know you. They don't know your body, history or relationship with food and the process is reduced to a very simple balance of calories in vs energy used. This is a reductivist approach that excludes a lot of really important personal information that can be the difference between losing weight sustainably and not losing weight.

A holistic wellbeing journey is a personal journey that reflects our individual circumstances and experiences and takes in all the factors that make you you; mind, body and soul.

Your job now is to do your research and make your choices. Choose what works for your body, your mind and your lifestyle. Choose sustainable, choose long-term, choose life-changing. Choose food that nourishes your body, choose exercise that you can commit to, choose positivity, choose to love yourself, choose to care for yourself like you would care for someone you really love.



The key to this approach - and I know it works because I've done it- is to embark on a journey of self-love and radical self-care. It makes perfect sense, loving yourself and looking after yourself properly means that weight loss is a side effect of a holistic wellbeing journey - it's not the goal in and of itself.

### **Time to reflect:**

- Think about choices you made in the past, what worked/didn't work for you?
- What choices will suit you and your lifestyle now? Think about family, work commitments, affordability etc - your choices need to be realistic to be sustainable.
- What movement/exercise can you build into your daily life?
- Where can you find support if you need it?

# C is also for Control

'Control' is a dirty word when we talk about food and dieting. We want to cultivate a positive and healthy relationship with food - we do not want to encourage feelings of lack or develop compulsive or controlling behaviours around food.

I want to make a point here about control because sometimes we can feel like we have little control of our weight or appetite, or we can feel like we have lost control. We can feel unable to resist food or manage temptation and we can even feel like food is in control of us.

This is a reminder that you are in control of your goals and choices. You are in charge! You are in control of what you put in your mouth. You are in control of the choices you make around food and movement.

There will be times when you're feeling stressed, emotional, hormonal and your strength and determination is challenged. Even in the toughest of times, remember that you are the boss! You are in control; don't allow a temporary state or situation to take control of you.



## **My ABC**

So this section is my personal ABC and a bit more about my journey and the choices I made - for me.

Although hard, and with a lot of emotional baggage and body image issues to work through, I cultivated acceptance. I worked to accept the body I had whilst working to make the changes that I wanted to see. I kept a gratitude journal and made time for regular self-care and self-love practice.

I was super clear about my goals and used a range of goal-setting strategies and habit change coaching to set an unmissable target in my future and plan a direct route to achieving it.

Once I had A and B in place, I could work on implementing C. Now, as a lifetime dieter, overweight since childhood, I had tried everything going- literally! So desperate to not exist in a bigger body and always under pressure to be smaller, I had tried Slimming World and Weight Watchers (multiple times), SlimFast, the Cambridge Diet, Keto diets, the Special K diet (I mean, really!) I would have tried Lighter Life but I couldn't afford it. I dreamed of being able to have a gastric band and liposuction! Every January, it was the expensive gym membership that went unused from February onwards.

I knew that these plans didn't work for me. If they worked for me, I wouldn't have to keep doing them. So I decided to not sign up to any of them and I definitely didn't take out a gym membership. I had, however, discovered time-restricted eating and intermittent fasting, and I chose that. I also chose an activity that I knew I could stick to. I chose to start with 6k steps and 30-minutes of yoga daily.

Using a combination of intermittent fasting, healthy eating, daily movement and radical self-love, I lost seven stone in just over two years and have maintained a healthy weight ever since. I never count calories, I don't eat low-fat or sugar-free versions of anything, I eat full-fat, I eat intuitively. I have learnt to trust my body again, I listen to my body and nourish it when it is hungry and needs fuel. I don't overeat. I don't think, obsess or worry about food, and I have practically zero cravings.

I have a lot to say about TRE as it is the method that worked for me in a steady and sustainable way. Read more about the specifics of that journey in my **Beginners Guide to TRE and IF**, you'll find it on the website- [www.thewomenswellbeingcollective.org](http://www.thewomenswellbeingcollective.org)

For support, advice and inspiration follow **Amy** at **The Women's Wellbeing Collective**. Amy offers classes, courses and retreats and works as a Holistic Wellbeing Coach with women 1:1 and in small groups.

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