

Krista's Story – Progress Not Perfection

"I'm calling your friends and telling them I'm divorcing you."

My husband was trying to be helpful. It was a glorious cold day outside, but the atmosphere in our kitchen was stormy. We'd been out the night before with friends and the whole family was paying the price for my indulgence. I had turned into a witch. Again. And he was determined that my friends stop sabotaging me.

Within a half hour radius of my house there are five of us who grew up in Austria, and the thick social glue that bonds us is a common language and a passion for baking and eating the traditional pastries of our childhood. The others seem to relish the *kuchen* and *tortes* without paying a heavy price. But I feel like a drug addict. If we go to someone's house, I have to avoid the room where desserts are on display. If I see them, it's all over. My friends and family have tried to help, making Linzertorte with reduced sugar (don't bother trying) or giving me just one piece of strudel and hiding the rest.

In all other respects, I eat a perfect diet. In fact, I've made a career of teaching people how to eat for health. But the truth is, I need help myself because the deadly combination of tradition and sugar is more than I can resist without support.

I read an article about Suppers and a week later picked up a program brochure describing food as our worst national addiction. I thought, "Bingo", I have to see how this program works. So I started going to meetings. The meals were great. The cooking style was completely different from mine, but the basic principle was the same, eat whole food according to your individual needs. The energy at the table was inspiring, and the people were all bonding over issues similar to mine. We were all there because we needed help developing a taste for foods that heal and learning to let go of the ones that keep us sick. I had accomplished step one but not step two.

Within a few short months I was encouraged to start facilitating my own meeting for sugar addicts. I already knew how to prepare the right foods, I just needed to work a little on actively practicing non-judgment. First I had to forgive myself and bring my secrets out into the open. After years of beating myself up for my weakness in the face of sugar, the thought of being candid was a relief. Candor works like magic. Compassion and authenticity became the order of the day. They help people roll up their emotional sleeves and get to work on the problem at hand. I was happy to invite people into my home, as long as no stigmatizing came through the door with them.

Our meeting makes lots of recipes from the website, and I've contributed many of my own. My children are loving the leftovers, particularly when they find turkey chili in the frig. In helping other people identify their triggers for unwanted eating, I have become clear about my own. There are three types of situation when I'm at risk of inhaling a pint of ice cream: If I let myself get too stressed, if I over schedule myself, and when things are going really *well* and I find myself in a mode of celebratory self-sabotage. Self-awareness takes a long time to cultivate. But I've made a lot of progress. Now, instead of eating obliviously and beating myself up after the fact, I observe myself making poor choices while the food is in my hand. Sometimes I catch myself; sometimes I don't, but I feel like I'm heading in the right direction.

The roadmap out of this problem is a little different for each person, but here are the guidelines I've set up to transition off of sweets.

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Krista's Tips on Transitioning Off Sweets

Take a leap of faith and try roasted sweet potatoes to satisfy the desire for sweet. You can add almond butter or coconut milk and blend them in a food processor with cinnamon and vanilla extract.

Creamy butternut squash soup may work too.

In order, move from baking with white flour to whole wheat pastry flour. Move from whole wheat pastry flour into brown rice flour. Reduce sugar and sweeten foods with bananas, apple sauce, agave or maple syrup. Work your way off baked treats to whole fruits and dried fruits and nuts.

Keep no chocolate in the house.

Keep no pastries in the house.

Have coconut milk ice cream on hand unless you start eating it abusively.

Have a little protein at each meal.

Stop being scared of fat. Brains are made out of good fat.

Play with varying amounts and types of carbohydrates (vegetables and non-gluten grains) to see how long different meals hold you.

Always have foods with fiber, fat and protein ready in the frig. Chili or soup work.

We aren't divorcing, of course, But it's the holiday season, which means a special challenge. My daughter has taken over the holiday baking for the family. "Give me one and hide the rest," I told her. There's about a 50/50 chance I'll find the hiding place after she goes to bed. I keep telling myself, the holidays don't go on forever. I'm not experiencing perfection, but I've made a lot of progress.