

The Post Crescent
Is Losing Weight a Big Deal in Today's Society?
By Gloria West
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Is losing weight a big deal in today's society? I would say so, and rightfully so. The poor eating habits of Americans has created an overweight society along with the many "Diseases of Affluence" including: high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, cancer and osteoporosis. Why? Just look at our out-of-proportion diet of high fats, sugar and salt. We try to correct this by the latest geographical diets: Mediterranean diet, L.A Weight loss, South Beach diet and maybe there will be the North Beach Diet. Before that occurs, hopefully we can patent our own hometown weight loss system called the "Fox Cities Marathon Diet." Yes it is hip, not necessarily new, but a sure bet. I want to present to you one of the founders of the diet, Jeff Aletrgon. I do not think he has made a lot of money on it but he surely deserves some credit.

By 1991 at the age of 30, Jeff found himself overweight at the age of 30. He admits to a 5'10' frame of a hefty 200 pounds plus. According to the current health charts, that is about 27 lbs overweight. Ah huh! What exactly happened around that period of time? The appearance of a new kid in town called the "Community First Fox Cities Marathon." No, Jeff had never ran before, nor exercised but his weight problem was calling him to do something. So Jeff created his own weight loss system called "I-will-do-the-local-marathon-to-lose weight" system.

Now, we all know of those who perhaps have joined a marathon, health club, diet plan, new years resolution who start off well intended weight loss plan, but how many can attest to being able to do this and firmly keep off the weight for 16 years? Jeff can. He continues today, 16 years of participating in the Fox Cities Marathon and 16 years of being 30 pounds less than he was at the age of 30.

In 1991, when this 30 year old man made up his mind to do his first marathon, he did it a regiment of training that he actually designed himself. Jeff had heard of the Marathon 101 classes, then taught by Jim and Janine Boldra, but was a bit too self conscious to join. He was able to eek out some of their ideas second hand from a friend who was taking the class. However, Jeff created his own training plan. When I asked Jeff just exactly was this plan he exclaimed, "Don't follow a book. Just do it and create your own book." Although he admits his first ever marathon experience may not have been too pretty, walking most of the last 6 miles, he still could call claim to fame over his biggest achievement and major goal: losing 30 pounds.

The next year was a bit frightening, as Jim was not able to readily erase the memories of his struggling body at the first year's marathon. Even though he clocked in at a respectable sub 4:30 finish, he decided perhaps race walking would be a more enjoyable and smarter approach his second and third year. That did not really cut it, as he found himself with just as big of a struggle as the fist year and not averaging any better with speed. So Jeff happily traded in this execution plan and went back to just plain ol'

running. To his surprise, the 4th year was a better experience and of course, despite posting any type of remarkable time, his major goal was again achieved; losing weight and keeping it off.

From there on, Jeff has been all over the board with his time but not his weight. He hesitantly admits, to one year posting a 5:38 finish, but he can also boast of sub 3 hour marathon occurring in 2001. Yes, in the marathon world, that is extremely impressive. “The year before that I posted a 3:05 finish. I thought, what the heck, let’s see what I can do the next year?” That year, half way, 13.1 miles he was at 1:30 minutes. Anyone who dabbles in marathoning knows that does not translate to a 3 hour marathon. It is 3 hours and some change: 3:15 to 3:20. You automatically have to factor in hitting the wall at around mile 20 and your second half will just not be as fast. Jeff defied all logic and readily admits to how he achieved negative splits his second half. As all of us may recall, 2001 was the year of 9/11 which occurred only a few weeks before the marathon. “At 13.1 miles, when I found out I was at 1:30, I began to think of only one thing: 9/11. That motivated me and with a few mantras like “how could this happen”, I got a PR of a sub 3 hour marathon.”

Jeff Altergon is a self taught marathoner and maybe what you would call a later blooming super athlete; a sub 3 hour marathon does not come easy. Yet what impresses me most is this man took responsibility for his own longevity and living a quality life. He has respectfully altered his fate of being overweight at the age of 30 and has kept the excess weight off for 16 years. As we all know, losing weight as we age, does not get easier. So consider Jeff, at the age of 46, like perhaps many others marathoners in the area, the modern day founder(s) of the “Fox Cities Marathon Diet.” No, you do not have to do a 26.2 mile distance every year to lose weight. Picking a local fitness event and training for it year after year, with a wholesome dash of will power, may be the best and sure way of losing weight and keeping it off forever. You don’t have to go to a gym to do it, invest in books to read about it or buy certain frozen foods. After all, what is the going rate to enter an event like a marathon? \$55. That is a good bang for your buck.