

## Emily's Story – The Same Package of Seeds

I am jealous of my sister. She has no thighs. She eats what she pleases, exercises if she feels like it and never seems to put on weight. Whereas I, her full sister, have been doing battle with the same 40 pounds for a decade. I watch my calories, exercise regularly, and only cave in once in a while with a pint of ice cream.

We come from the same package of seeds, why aren't we more alike?

It was explained to me at Suppers that we are all so different biologically that even among family members there can be enormous variations. The lesson for me is that I can't gauge my success by the experiences of any other body than my own. Agonizing over *why* we're different has not helped me one little bit. Accepting *that* we are different has launched me on a journey to find out what works for my particular body. So far I can identify all the things that don't work for me: weight loss programs, calorie restriction and relentless self-loathing.

One of the mistakes I was making was setting big goals, like "I'm going to lose 20 lbs by June." If I could lay out a plan that would reliably shave 20 pounds off people I'd be a millionaire. At Suppers, I learned to set the kind of goals you can check off a list: eat eggs for breakfast. Check. Call a Suppers friend before and after a trip to the grocery. Check. Check. Walk one hour three times a week. Check. Check. Check. These goals were really clear and I got to have the lift of checking them off several times each day.

So far in Suppers I have developed a love for vegetables and I'm learning to prepare them in pleasing ways. I have learned to substitute my favorite prepared foods with healthier versions. OK, they don't have fewer calories but I am succeeding at reducing salt and avoiding highly processed sugars and trans fats. I've also learned to observe myself and make connections between how I feel and what I ate. Sometimes knowing the connections stays my hand the next time I feel like reaching for a quick fix pint of ice cream.

I'm surprised how much I enjoy all these vegetables. I have discovered I enjoy cooking, especially with friends. That has been really good for my budget, not because the food is cheaper but because I'm not always looking for diversions that cost money. And the really nice thing is that I'm getting along better with my sister.