

## Jill's Story – Miss Bengtson's Forgotten Body

As a school teacher, I have to be on with a capital "O" for seven hours every single day. Twenty-three pre-pubescent children confront me daily and I have to be exceedingly ready to keep them educationally challenged, to deal with their developmentally average wiles, and to maintain my sense of humor (and sanity).

Down time for me is a big problem. It's not like when I worked in an office where you can get by functioning on low energy. I have to be high energy or call in sick because I can't fake having zing on the days when I just don't.

So when I started getting signals from my body that it needed some attention, first I thought it was nothing important. Then I thought it was a nuisance. And then I realized I had a problem. I had no energy. My usual quick fixes didn't work anymore. Chocolate, coffee, and all the pastries and candies that drifted into the staff room just didn't lift me up anymore.

By the time a friend recommended Suppers, I was getting pressed hard to accept the possibility that my eating habits were part of my no-energy problem. I guess I failed to mention that I have 30 pounds to lose, something I've been thinking of mostly as a vanity issue. Not so. I have received a salutary lesson on the relationship between weight gain and energy loss.

My basic problem is that I forgot my body. I love my career in teaching. I have fulfilling relationships. I'm part of a faith community that's very supportive. But there was nothing in my mental or emotional world growing up that taught me that what I eat matters. There was nothing in my education that flagged me, "Consider what you're eating," when my energy plunged or depression waved at me. And when I finally got punched by reality that food matters, I was so dependent on junk food to manipulate my energy I needed a program to show me the way out.

I'm just entering the first stages of nutritional harm reduction, making myself eat a whole meal at breakfast and substituting less harmful treats for my favorite mood manipulators. This is not fun, but it is working. Just eating a good breakfast makes it noticeably easier to walk past the pastries and candies without grabbing some. What troubles me is the thought that a lot of the students I'm teaching have the same issues. And I have no idea what behaviors are driven by their budding hormones and what behaviors are driven by the crud in the bottles, boxes, cans and bags they walk around with every day. Having a forgotten body is bad enough for a 43-year old woman. I'm wondering what it means for the students I'm trying to teach.