

Ruth's Story – I Can't Believe I Need a Program

When I used the word "relapse", I didn't mean I started drinking again. I meant I went back to uncontrolled eating. I was driving myself crazy because I absolutely knew what I was supposed to avoid and still ended up triggering myself. Long after I stopped drinking, I was still feeling like my digestion was never quite right. I got bloated for no apparent reason and my food choices were usually based on urges rather than thought.

I can't believe I need a support group to help me keep on track, but I do. I can't do this alone. What's becoming evident as I run experiments with food is that I have to get a lot of things right simultaneously in order to feel the benefits. Getting off gluten didn't help much when I substituted ice cream as comfort food. Getting off both made me feel a little better, but food wasn't a total answer while I was still skewering myself with brutal self-judgment.

To avoid food relapse long term I had to do the one thing I was resisting most. Journal. I had to write about my experience. I had to develop that internal observer that whispers, "This makes you feel good; that makes you feel miserable." And I had to stop beating myself up. I didn't want to do the first few days of observations when you write down everything you eat without judging yourself. I didn't think I could let accuracy be the only criterion for success. I wanted to skip the days of honestly writing down everything I put in my mouth. What if somebody else read my journal! I'd die.

Admitting out loud at a meeting how ashamed I was turned out to be the best possible move. Two other people felt tortured by the need for sugar honesty. They could shade the truth to spouses, friends, children, coaches, and trainers, but those clean white pages were too intimidating!

I needed a program to help me with alcohol, and I need a program to help me with food. There is so much more to this than abstinence and so many things I just plain don't feel like doing.