

180-pound low-carb weight loss success story.

**Livin' La Vida Low-Carb: My Journey From Flabby
Fat To Sensationally Skinny In One Year**

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Introduction

The latest statistics from the U.S. Centers For Disease Control and Prevention reveal that nearly two out of every three Americans are either overweight or obese and that number is still on the rise in virtually every state. That is a haunting statistic that every man, woman, doctor, politician, and health expert in this nation should be concerned with as we look to the future. It is obvious to me that whatever we are currently doing is not working and something desperately needs to be done to help people deal with the growing problem of obesity.

But what can people do to lose weight and keep it off for good when there are so many seemingly conflicting messages about what is good for your health and what is not? How do you know which diet plan is going to help you find that elusive permanent way to lasting weight loss?

I had to personally come to terms with those questions myself in early 2004 and decided for myself that I would try livin' la vida low-carb. That's the catchy little phrase I like to use to refer to the decision I made to start eating an entirely different way from what I was used to eating. This experience has so radically transformed my life that I just had to write a book to tell the whole world about it.

The seemingly impossible task of writing a book like this one about my weight loss experience was indeed a daunting one that I had to contemplate in many hours of thought and prayer. While I am used to writing short essays on a variety of subjects on the Internet, I have never written an entire book before and it was indeed a challenge like none other I have ever gone through in my entire life. But, looking back on it now, if I was able to find it within me to lose 180 pounds in about a year, then writing a book should be a piece of cake (as long as it's low-carb, of course!).

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This book was a labor of love birthed out of the tremendous outpouring of support I have received from friends, family and even complete strangers who told me they were motivated and inspired by my weight loss success story. After I lost my weight, so many people would come up to me asking my advice about what I did to lose weight so it could possibly help them in their own weight loss efforts. After telling my story at least a hundred or so times, several people suggested that I write a book. So here it is.

It has been an unbelievably incredible journey for me to travel down and I am extremely humbled to have been able to accomplish this feat thanks to the strength God gave me throughout the entire process to make it happen. And I give Him all the glory for this because without Him, I could do nothing. Both the weight loss and this book have shown me in a dramatic way that with God all things really are possible for anyone who dreams big.

What you are about to read in the upcoming pages of this book is my own personal account of how I successfully lost a lot of weight and have kept it off permanently. I would caution you about trying to exactly replicate everything that I did to lose weight while livin' la vida low-carb because everyone's body is different. While what I did worked for me, that doesn't necessarily mean it will all work for you in the same manner. But I hope my story can at the very least inspire you to lose weight if that is something that you need to do.

In case you are wondering, I am not an expert on the subject of weight loss and health by any stretch of the imagination nor do I claim to have all the answers to your specific weight situation. If you have any questions about your health, then I highly recommend you consult your doctor since he has been trained to

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deal with such issues. I am just one man sharing my story of successful and permanent weight loss.

Also, if you are wanting to know more about the actual process of low-carb and why it works, there are plenty of books out there that can give you the scientific data and history about low-carb and what it is about. If you are unsure about which low-carb program you might be interested in trying, then I highly suggest you pick up Jonny Bowden's Living The Low-Carb Life which gives an overview of all the low-carb plans out there and helps you decide which one will work best for you. The purpose of my book is to simply share with you my anecdotal experience of what I did to lose weight and sharing with you the lessons I learned following a low-carb lifestyle.

As I look back on my life that began anew on January 1, 2004, I will always remember that specific date as a significant life-changing mile-marker that forever altered my future. It was on that fateful day that I was bound and determined to not only make losing weight my New Year's resolution that year, but also to make it my New Life resolution to keep it off once I lost it! Although I had tried many diets in my life, succeeded at losing weight on many of them, and predictably failed to keep it off (and actually gaining back an additional 25 pounds or so each time, too!), somehow this time was going to be different. Little did I know just how incredibly different it would actually be.

I can remember that embarrassing day that I went to weigh myself on a special industrial-sized scale for heavy cargo so I could get my starting weight for my "diet" (I will explain later why I don't like to use the term "diet" regarding my weight loss). It's funny now, but I weighed way too much for conventional scales which cannot register weights more than 300 pounds. I knew I weighed a whole lot more than 300, but how much more?

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As if being on a scale like that wasn't embarrassing enough, staring with utter disbelief at those three big red digits on this gigantic scale like a deer in headlights absolutely startled me to the core. 4-1-0!!! Did that scale really read four-hundred and ten pounds?!?! Are you kidding me?! How in the world did I ever allow myself to get that big?! Aaaaackkk! Needless to say, I was quite disturbed.

After the initial shock of discovering what I weighed began to wane, I quickly realized that 410 pounds was my reality. I knew I was a big man at 6'3" tall, wearing size 62/32 pants and 5XL shirts, but 410 pounds was absolutely enormous. I know it's going to be hard for some people to believe, but I never even realized I had actually gotten that big until I was already there.

Most of us don't have the luxury of seeing ourselves as others see us every day unless you vainly stare at the mirror for hours on end. But it really would do us all a lot of good if we would take some time to look at our bodies and determine if the physical condition we are in is where we need to be. For many of us, we have a lot of work to do.

That's exactly where I was physically in January 2004. I had allowed myself to become this behemoth monster of a man, but now I was bound and determined to lose weight and never ever get that heavy again. This epiphany is the breakthrough moment that anyone who ever hopes to lose weight for good needs to go through. You will not be able to deal with your weight problem as long as you refuse to acknowledge that you have one in the first place.

Unfortunately, a lot of people probably think that people who are overweight and obese already know they are that way and just refuse to do anything about it. While I agree that there are some overweight and obese people who have completely given up on trying to lose weight and just don't care anymore because of

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their repeated failures on various diet programs, the overwhelming majority of overweight and obese people would undoubtedly say we would like to do something about our weight problem if we could just find that key method or solution to make it happen for us. For far too long, nothing we have tried seems to work. We are on the brink of throwing in the towel on trying to lose weight because it seems like a hopeless cause. Believe me, that is exactly where I was for most of my life.

Pick a diet, any diet and I bet you I have done it at one point or another.

Powder diets. Rabbit food diets. 1500-calorie-a-day diets. Starve yourself diets. Any and every diet you have ever heard of, dream up, or fooled me into thinking might work I had tried. And many of them produced marginal success until I got off the "diet" itself. The vicious cycle of "lose, gain, lose, gain some more" seemed like a perpetual problem I would have to deal with for the rest of my life.

My first glimpse of tremendous success on a weight loss plan was when I actually lost an astounding 170 pounds in 1999 following a low-fat diet and had gotten skinnier than I had ever been in my entire adult life up until that point. But, guess what happened? Within a year of losing that enormous amount of weight, I had ballooned back up to my previous weight and then some. That scenario had pretty much been my life's story up until the first day of 2004. By the grace of God, though, from that day forward I would never be the same again!

I had already heard about the Atkins diet from some friends who had some modest weight loss success on it themselves. I can vividly remember hearing them talk about the foods they were eating and all I could think about was just how crazy they must be stuffing their faces with all of that fat.

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We have become so conditioned by low-fat advocates and even our own government standards that boldly declare fat is bad for you and that eating low-fat is considered healthy that my initial gut reaction to Atkins was to avoid it like the plague. I was so indoctrinated with the low-fat lie that I didn't even want to give this weight loss method a real chance to work for me.

I remember when I lost all of that weight in 1999, many people just automatically assumed that I had done it on Atkins since I lost as much as I did. I can remember angrily responding, "No way, are you kidding me? I wouldn't be caught dead doing that diet because it's not safe." I was such a dope at the time. Little did I know that just five short years later I would be doing the very same diet I was condemning so harshly and would become one of its strongest advocates.

Prior to starting the Atkins plan in 2004, I had not properly educated myself on what all it entailed. I just assumed it was a diet that let you eat all the meat, cheese and eggs you wanted without any consequences. If you ask most people about low-carb, that's probably how most of them would describe it, too. But I had not studied for myself the tremendous health benefits of a low-carb lifestyle and was completely ignorant of how and why it worked.

That's why in December 2003 I decided to buy the bestselling book by the late Dr. Robert Atkins, the father of the low-carb eating lifestyle that began in the early 1970s, called Atkins New Diet Revolution. This book goes into great detail about what all is involved in doing the Atkins version of the low-carb lifestyle, including what foods can be eaten, the four distinct phases of the plan, weight loss success stories, recipes and more. For anyone who is serious about doing Atkins by the book, then this is the absolute first step to doing it the right way.

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Don't fall into the trap that I did of assuming you know what Atkins is and how to do it. Just get the book and read about it for yourself. With more than 45 million copies sold worldwide, a lot of people are intrigued by success stories they hear from people like me. That was one of the deciding factors in my decision to write this book because there were so many people asking me to share my story to help them, a friend or a family member with their weight problem.

While many so-called health "experts" have issued warning after warning about the alleged dangers of doing a low-carb lifestyle, real-life examples like myself have proven that these alarmists are simply ignoring the fact that this way of eating really works for people. Their "the-sky-is-falling" warnings are just their opinions based on what they were taught in medical school which was based on the mistaken notion that a portion-controlled, low-fat, and low-calorie diet is the only effective way to lose and maintain your weight.

Yet, the fact that the low-fat diet is a very heavily-promoted, but failed weight loss approach combined with the truth that these negative claims against low-carb have not been substantiated by any long-term medical research tell me it is a bit premature to totally dismiss this weight loss solution as a viable option for people who are overweight or obese. I'll talk about how I personally became carb-conscious on my way to livin' la vida low carb in Chapter 1.

But, as you will quickly notice as you navigate through this book, I am going to be completely honest with you about my own experiences on the low-carb lifestyle. Let me tell you, those first few days on Atkins were really, really hard for me. Actually, the first day I thought I was literally going to die, I'm not kidding you. Ask my wife, she'll tell you how utterly miserable I felt. I even called my local talk radio station on New Year's Day 2004 while

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the host was discussing weight loss resolutions and I shared how awful I felt being on the first day of my Atkins diet.

My body ached like it has never ached before and I had the worst possible pounding headache I had ever had in my entire life. With all of this going on in my body, I could barely move. I have no doubt in my mind that my body was going into shock from my soda withdrawal, which I had been used to drinking nearly 200 ounces per day! Yes, I said 200 ounces per day, equivalent to over one and a half cases of 12 ounce cans per day. I'll talk about this subject in greater detail in a later chapter, but all you need to know is that this was the most difficult physical challenge I had ever gone through. Thankfully, though, it didn't last.

The good news is that it only got better from there physically as the pain from the first day quickly began to subside. Within a week, I had replaced drinking all those sugar-filled sodas with caffeine-free diet sodas as well as guzzling nearly 2 gallons of water per day. That certainly made for an interesting period of my life when I got to know the inside of the men's restroom very well. But it was a necessary change that made an incredible difference once the weight started pouring off. The impact that water can have when you are livin' la vida low-carb is the subject of Chapter 2.

Did I mention the weight started pouring off of my body immediately and in bunches? In my first week alone, I lost an eye-popping 15 pounds! I was totally stunned by this weight loss total and it showed me this low-carb thing was really working! Although I expected it to work, I had no idea it was going to work this well this fast! I became even more convinced of how effective it was when I lost another 8 pounds in the second week and a grand total of 28 pounds in the first month alone. Woo hoo! I was definitely loving livin' la vida low-carb, baby!

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Around the end of January 2004, a local radio talk show host from WORD 1330/950AM in the Greenville/Spartanburg, SC area named Ralph Bristol, who wrote the foreword to this book, started talking about conducting a weight loss contest on his afternoon show. He wanted to feature people who were dangerously obese and hoped to create an incentive to help them lose weight. When I heard this, I thought to myself, "Yeah, that's me! I could do that!" The name of the weight loss contest was "Ralph's Incredible Shrinking Ton" and it was to feature five contestants who cumulatively weighed a ton, or 2000 pounds.

I enthusiastically contacted Ralph via e-mail as he requested and told him how much I weighed as part of the process of becoming part of the contest. I was hopeful I would be chosen as one of the five, but I didn't know if my weight was going to be heavy enough for the contest since he was looking for five people who each averaged 400 pounds. Since I had already lost nearly 30 pounds on my low-carb program before I heard about this contest, I knew I was hovering around 380 pounds when I entered myself as a possible contestant.

Ralph responded back to me that although my body mass index was lower than any of the other four contestants, he would still like for me to be one of his five "Incredible Shrinking Ton" participants to compete for an array of prizes from local sponsors. The contest was scheduled to run from the last Friday in January through the Friday before Thanksgiving in a race to see who could lose the most weight as a percentage of their starting weight over that time period.

Since I had already lost nearly 30 pounds on Atkins before this contest began, I was ostensibly at a slight disadvantage from the start. But I was certainly not worried about that because I knew I had a whole lot more weight to lose.

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On the day of the weigh-in at the radio station, I stepped up on that big digital scale and was pleased to confirm my weight loss progress up to that point. But I was still a very big boy weighing in at a hefty 382 1/2 pounds and had plenty of fat to lose for the duration of the contest.

My competitors in the contest included two other men and two women and we were all extremely big people. In fact, one of the guys in the contest named D.R. weighed in at a staggering 619 pounds! He was doing Atkins like me and had the ability to lose a lot of weight, too. Because of that, I knew I had my work cut out for me to compete with D.R. in this contest. But I was determined to win that contest.

With a weight loss contest on the radio to help keep me accountable, I decided for the first time in my life to exercise. Oh, yes, that dreaded word for so many of us lifelong couch potatoes who shudder at the very mention of the word. For 32 years of my life on earth, I had never even cared to participate in any organized daily exercise plan. But now I was about to embark on an exercise routine for the first time ever because I knew it would be essential to my success at losing weight.

Beginning with the treadmill and gradually working my way up to the elliptical and Stairmaster machines, this aspect of my weight loss plan was extremely challenging, yet rewarding. In Chapter 3, I will discuss about how beginning an exercise routine was such an integral part of my weight loss success and how I almost quit exercising altogether during an especially difficult period.

With this new way of eating well underway and daily exercise incorporated into my weight loss efforts, I knew I needed to add some supplemental vitamins to help me keep my energy level up and to provide my body with the nutrients it needed to function at optimum level. I started off with a multi-vitamin, but eventually progressed to adding fish oil, fiber, calcium and even potassium

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(you'll find out later why this nutrient is extremely important to add to your diet when you are on a low-carb lifestyle!). Read about the crucial role these and other vitamins played in my weight loss success in Chapter 4.

Well, I got through the month of February and quickly dropped another 40 pounds that month, which took my total weight loss to nearly 70 pounds in just the first two months. Holy cow, this is the best diet program I've ever seen in my entire life! Am I ever livin' la vida low-carb!

A lot of people want to know what motivated me to get started on a low-carb lifestyle to begin with. That's difficult to say because it wasn't just one thing, but rather a series of events that led me to begin this exciting way of eating and losing weight. I hope you enjoy reading my responses to a list of the top ten arguments people have against the low-carb lifestyle. It will arm you with clear facts to counter the ways people will try to discourage you as you begin this way of eating for yourself. This chapter is a must-read because you will encounter a lot of misinformation from uneducated people when you are on a low-carb program and you will need to be motivated to stick with it despite their negativity. I will share with you what motivated me to finally begin livin' la vida low-carb in Chapter 5.

I will readily admit that one of my biggest weaknesses prior to beginning Atkins was sugar. Can I get a witness anyone?! Whether it was cookies, cakes, candy bars, cheesecake, or chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream, I loved and craved anything and everything that had lots and lots of sugar in it. I could never get enough of it (and that was evident by the enormous belly that was protruding out the front of my body!) because I was literally addicted to it as so many people who are overweight or obese are.

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But all that had to change forever when I started livin' la vida low-carb because sugar is the most basic form of carbohydrate there is. UGH! The fact is though sugar is arguably more responsible for the obesity problem that so many of us face in this country than the much more demonized fat. I'll explain this in greater detail and share with you how I kicked the sugar habit for good in Chapter 6.

If I have heard it once, then I've heard it a million times. "Atkins is just too boring. You have to eat the same foods over and over again and it's just not worth the trouble." While some people on a low-carb lifestyle may choose the same low-carb foods to enjoy over and over again, most successful people on this kind of eating plan have learned to add some variety to their plate with great-tasting recipes borne out of a little creativity with those foods considered "legal" when you are livin' la vida low-carb. Getting creative when you are eating low-carb foods is the subject of Chapter 7.

While God is undoubtedly the centerpiece of my life and He guides my every step, I am extremely thankful for my wife, Christine, who has been and will always be my most influential motivation on this earth. But I would be completely remiss to not recognize others like Rodney at my local YMCA and Harlan from my church who faithfully stood by my side throughout this experience and gave me the exact words of encouragement when I needed them the most. I'll talk about the importance of having a strong support system of friends, family and even complete strangers in Chapter 8.

I was absolutely loving my new eating lifestyle and the results it was producing during those first few months on Atkins. But soon my elation would turn to concern when I hit my first weight loss stall. This was the true test of my willingness to keep going even when the going got tough.

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By April, my total weight loss had reached a mind-boggling 85 pounds and I was riding high on the thrill of weight loss nirvana. I was even talking about the prospect of reaching my weight loss goals much sooner than I would have ever expected and did not envision anything that would get in the way of that.

But then it happened. Scccccrrrrrrreeeeecch! BAM! What happened?

You guessed it! That was the horrifying sound of my weight loss coming to a complete and utter standstill. The scale just refused to go down even a pound or two for the first time since I had started Atkins. Not just one week, two weeks, or even a month. For the next 10 weeks in a row (yes, two and a half months!), I did not lose a single pound, not a one.

At first, it really didn't bother me much because I had expected my weight to stall eventually and I had already done much better than I could have ever expected. But I certainly didn't expect the stall to last as long as it did. This is when the mental aspect of losing weight comes into play and unfortunately can derail the efforts of so many people who would otherwise do well in their weight loss had they just stuck with it just a little longer. Sound familiar?

Thankfully, though, my faith and inner determination kept me from so easily giving up on this worthy endeavor despite my bleak circumstances. It was my first real challenge of livin' la vida low-carb and it forced to me deal with reality face-to-face. Was I going to give up on it now despite my early success or would I allow it to be my catalyst for a renewed motivation to continue on? Obviously, based on my eventual success I chose the latter. But because many people have so easily given up at the first sign of difficulty in their weight loss, I will share with you ten ways that I was able to persevere in my weight loss to reach my goal weight and keep it off for good in Chapter 9.

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Finally, in Chapter 10, I discuss the importance of transforming the "diet" aspect of low-carb into a real commitment to do it for the rest of your life. Too many other diets have failed to help people maintain their weight loss because they have not shown people how to permanently change their eating habits. They give you a temporary way to lose weight, but they don't show you how you can keep that weight off for good.

That is why I don't like using the term "diet" to describe livin' la vida low-carb. Eating this way is not just a temporary way to lose weight, but rather a lifelong journey to keep the weight off forever. Discover the lessons I learned about making this lifestyle change permanent as I share with you some of my experiences I have been through since losing all that weight.

So there you have it. Those are the ten life-changing characteristics that have helped me take off 180 pounds, dropping my total cholesterol to 140 from over 300 including raising my good cholesterol from 30 to 70, lowering my triglycerides from 200 to 50, watching my resting heart rate fall from 85 to 50, increasing my exercise from virtually none to 10-15 hours per week, going from a size 62 pant size to a size 40, shrinking my shirt size to a loose XL from a tight 5XL, and seeing many other areas of my health get significantly better as a result of livin' la vida low-carb.

By the way, remember the radio weight loss contest? I was the eventual winner, but there's a story behind it that's too funny not to share. It turns out that three of the other contestants decided to drop out of the contest long before the weigh-in date in November, which left me to face D.R., the 619-pound contestant who had lost significantly more than 100 pounds himself during the contest based on his periodic updates on the radio show. But, on the day of the weigh-in, he was hospitalized for a health-related issue and could not make it to the radio station for the weigh-in.

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Therefore, technically, I won the weight loss contest by default because nobody else showed up. But most people believe I would have probably won the contest anyway since I had lost about a third of my overall body weight from the time the contest started. In order for D.R. to have beaten me, he would have had to lose well over 200 pounds during the contest period. While that was not impossible for him to do since he was such a big guy, it wasn't very likely. It was definitely an immensely fun experience for me and I am thankful for the opportunity I was given to participate. Thanks so much, Ralph! I don't know if I could have done this without your contest to keep me accountable.

As you begin reading in the following pages about the ten key points to my weight loss success, I want you to think about something for just a moment. Imagine the 180 pounds that I lost was a bunch of sacks of potatoes. Now that's a whole lot of spuds, isn't it?! For just a moment now, close your eyes and think about how much weight you need to lose. Go ahead, close your eyes and see them for yourself. Can you visualize those potatoes (no, not to eat them!)? That's your weight crying out to you and begging to come off of your body. The time has come for you to begin the process of livin' la vida low-carb.

You will have the same ability to lose weight as I did if you apply these simple principles that you are about to read to your own life. There is absolutely nothing standing in your way of losing 10, 25, 50, 100 or even 200 pounds and keeping it off forever if that is what you want and need to do. But now it's in your hands. If you've read this far into the book already, then you must be serious about finally doing it. So get out there and start livin' la vida low-carb today!

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