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It's the morning of my birthday, a fresh coating of snow outlines the branches of each tree. The temperatures dropped from the 60's down to the 30s. The wind is picking up. It's going to be a blustery day. Whatever plans I may have had are cancelled due to the worsening weather. I guess at my age, an age that I don't even want to admit to, it doesn't much matter if there is a celebration or if it's "business as usual." I don't want to be old. I'm longing for my youth. I suppose that happens to most of us. We don't have much choice. There are people who embrace their wrinkles as a badge of wisdom, but I'm not there yet.



©Robin AF Olson. Me, at 2. I was never a skinny kid.

On my last birthday I weighed 50 lbs more than I do right now. 50. POUNDS. I still can't believe it's true, but looking back on photos of me, I can see it is. My moon-shaped face is being replaced by one that has a jawline and now, a lot more wrinkles, the price of "deflating" I suppose. Most of my clothes don't fit me any more. I purged some of them because it was a foolhardy to try to wear pants that only fell off if I slipped them on. It feels like someone played a prank on me. I went to sleep and the next morning all my clothes felt like a tent. I used to wake up in the morning and wish I could magically lose 50 lbs. There was no magic, but the dreamy feeling still lingers.

I've dropped 4 sizes and very soon I will never have to shop in the "**Women's**" department (a term I loathe) or the "**Plus**" section (it's disgusting that there's a separate area for these clothes. It's just fat-shaming and you know and I know the plus-size girls have to shop in the dark corner of the store, not out in front).



©Robin AF Olson. The ever-familiar round face. I was 16 in this photo. After going away to college I really started to pack on the pounds.

Maybe part of my journey was inspired by sheer anger. Anger at the media for still making it ok to make fat people feel they don't belong, of course because we're lazy (*are you kidding me?*) and unhealthy, that we all must fit into an ever-changing height to weight ratio. **We have to do this and do that. Don't eat this, but eat that. No. Let's change it and don't eat the other thing we said was good because it's bad. Let's just all go insane worrying about what we're eating, drinking, if we're sitting or running because whatever we do we're just not good enough as we are. I think that's a crime of the century and a waste of someone's life-to fret and fuss and feel unworthy or ashamed of their body.** I wish we could all just look at each other as we look at ourselves and love each other and respect each other for our different shapes and sizes. It's been said much better by others, but if we could only take away stigma of all kinds and be open and accepting of each other, wow, what a world it would be.

I lost the weight because I had two big health scares last July; diabetes type 2 and heart troubles. I don't have diabetes now and though the heart issues aren't sorted out, I usually feel a lot better day to day. I gave myself a gift through a lot of sacrifice and continuing day to day struggles, but it's worth it. My health is not simply a personal thing, I have to be in good shape to care for my own cats and the cats who are in my rescue. I can't assume someone else will step in and take over if I can't. I could continue down the path of spaghetti and meatballs many times a week (*partially to save money*) or eat much better (*spend a lot more on food*), cut carbs down to the nubs and kick sugar and processed foods in the ass.



©2014 Robin AF Olson. Super-sized me at Toy Fair in 2014.

Again my anger flared. **FUCK YOU** to the food companies for putting **SUGAR** in pretty much everything, like chicken broth. Why the **HELL** does chicken broth need sugar added to it? It's chicken and water and spices. And **FUCK YOU** food companies for **LYING** to the public about what you put into the food, how you know those additives make us yearn for more. You make it cheap (*fast food*) and use lousy ingredients that we'll love to eat more and more of because it hits our taste buds just right because you have labs and food scientists making sure of it.

It's a joke, but a painful one; who **CAN** eat just one potato chip? Well, that's the whole idea. You can't.

They want you to eat and eat and eat so they can make a buck. Then someone else wants you to not eat and not eat and exercise so you can stop being a fat pig, but how can you break being addicted to sugar, fats, all the other secret goodies in food? If we're so fat, we're getting sick (*as I did*), then how can we fight back? We can't. We're too tired from the mid-day slump. We're too caffeinated up from not sleeping well because we need a C-pap machine to sleep.



©2005 Robin AF Olson. My dad committed suicide a few years before this birthday, I went through a divorce and a year later my mother would be gone. Lots of reasons why I gained, but I own my choices. I could have not taken out my pain on myself.

It's not adorable that there are a zillion combinations of Oreo cookie. It's not good for any of us to believe that anything that says "*all natural*" is better and worth the cost. **Arsenic is natural** and so are a whole host of other things that are either poison or that screw up our metabolism and push us into taking acid pump inhibitors (*by the way DO NOT DO THAT you need the acid and produce LESS as you age...look it up!*).

For me, losing weight was terrifying because I feared 1: I could not do it, 2: I could not stick with it, 3: If I did lose weight I couldn't keep it off because hardly anyone who loses **CAN** keep it off and 4: I feared the effects of diabetes on my body (*amputations, neuropathy, macular degeneration and more*). It was not easy to lose weight and I had to re-tool my life and re-learn to cook. I doubt it's easy for anyone, but I was lucky that I had already cut out most processed foods and no fast food, a long time ago.

In a way I'm just like my cats. I had to cut all the junk out of their food, ditch the dry and get them onto a fresh diet with wholesome ingredients. Most of them slimmed down, increased in their energy and zest for life and stopped getting IBD, pancreatitis, diabetes and other disorders. I'm giving them a better future and I guess I finally felt like I deserved the same.



©2016 Robin AF Olson. *Me and Duck at Toy Fair 2016.*

I feel a lot better. I'm happier. I sleep better. I have energy all day. In all these months I only once felt like I had to have a nap. Am I perfect about my eating habits? No. Do I expect to be? No. What I expect is that I will take it one day at a time for the rest of my life. That's it. If I eat something on the bad list then I will go for a walk afterwards, but I find that less and less I'm even interested in eating those things. I recognize the addiction to carbs and sweets is a powerful one, but I'm trying to acknowledge it, but not let it rule over me. I'm not a bad person if I eat a cookie and I certainly felt a lifetime of guilt over doing just that.



©2013 Robin AF Olson. *If looks could kill.*

So on the morning of my birthday I know I will not have a cake or candles to blow out. I might have a scone with high tea or allow myself a few finger sandwiches on white (*gasp!*) bread, too. **After I eat those things, when I start to feel a brain fog, a stomach ache and tired, I'll remind myself that those things are what's keeping me from my next birthday and maybe one day I'll learn, but I'll also go back to eating well as soon as I can.**

And to everyone out there who is overweight, I love you as you are. If you want to lose weight, you can. If you don't want to, then don't. You have the power to give that to yourself, but you have to find motivation to stick to it and you most importantly have to FORGIVE YOURSELF when you have a misstep and not use it as an excuse to give up. Just start again and get back on track and again if needed. Keep at it. It does get easier AND in truth, better food tastes a lot better. You'll find you feel gross if you don't eat well.



©2016 Robin AF Olson. *The new, older me.*

We're all just a skin bag full of chemicals and what works for me, may not be the best thing for you. Talk with your doctor, but also do some research, ask friends, ask another doctor or someone who works holistically. **Don't look to a pill to fix whatever ails. It's on the plate in front of you. Put the right things on it and just like our cats, with good nutrition we can do a great deal to correct many of the medical issues we face and give us a much brighter future.**

Happy Birthday to me. I made it another year.

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