

# Body, Mind and Spirit

What's in your pantry?

It's relatively obvious when we need to call a personal trainer. Much more mysterious is how we acquire the extra weight most of us pick up through the years. When I decided to regain my health and lose weight, I instinctively knew that I would have to revisit and break the patterns created when I was young to maintain the weight loss. There is an undeniable emotional component worthy of fearless examination. More than 80 percent of fourth-grade girls have been on a fad diet, according to one statistic I found, and I was no exception. I also hid a full-blown eating disorder for a number of years by feigning veganism in my 20s. Since then it's been undereating or overeating, citing lack of time, my girlfriend, society and even God for the reasons I haven't been able to feed myself properly. Balance is a precarious act for all of us, but we are all ultimately responsible for what we put into our mouths, regardless of the circumstances. Yes, it's a struggle for those who profess fitness, too.

If weight loss and the maintenance of your ideal weight are your goals (which it is for 95 percent of my clients), your overall success will exponentiate if you "clean up" your diet by making moderate changes and eating fewer calories. It's that simple; I kid you not.

I am limited to a narrow scope of practice when it comes to nutritional advice. I had been actively seeking a sexual minority dietitian or nutritionist to network with when my friend Larry called to proud-



**Dear Ethel**  
BY MARIA CALLAHAN

ly announce that someone gayer than me had taught his HMO's nutrition class the previous night. Deeply doubting this information, I went straight to Bob Wilson's Web site and found my rival: a dapper-looking man with a rainbow bow tie. We were indeed neck and neck. Having maintained a 250-pound weight loss for more than 34 years, this self-described "mother with a beard" has devoted his life to helping other people achieve a healthy balance of body, mind and spirit. Wilson tells of how his own mother, a "vibrant woman," was prescribed speed in the '50s for weight loss. After becoming addicted to speed, other addictions ensued and contributed to her death at the young age of 50.

Wilson, a registered dietetic technician, teaches and coaches 40 to 60 people a week, many of whom are scheduled for bypass surgery. He says: "There is always a simple answer to a complex problem, and

it's always wrong. Changing the size of a person's stomach will not change the hungers they are seeking to fill."

Raised in the Foursquare Church, Wilson refused to live in the closet. Wary of being judged "a fat, gay abomination" by his church when he arrived with a partner, he converted to Buddhism, which has been an "answer to a prayer," as is his 18-year participation in 12-step principles. For exercise, Wilson and Jon Dickman, his partner of 10 years, love to hike, garden and use his lush yard for frequent metaphors about how our life can blossom as we speak.

"Gardens require maintenance and patience," Wilson says. "Our bad habits are like a garden that needs weeding. We're in charge of directing the changes."

Wilson has been writing a book, but in the age of quick fixes, he realizes that a balanced approach to health and fitness isn't popular with publishers: "It's a journey towards increasing health and fitness, not a race. It's an investment in you."

As I was driving away from our interview I realized that, twice now, my bearded mother has managed to send me off with large containers of salad.

DEAR ETHEL:

*I need to lose a major amount of weight quickly, and I am considering Ruen-Y bypass surgery. What do I need to know prior to surgery?*



Dietetic technician Bob Wilson coaches clients on how to solve complex health challenges with sound nutrition.

That your life will be radically different post-surgery. You will have very little energy for quite a while. You will lose fat and muscle and gain excess skin. You will likely experience Dumping Syndrome. (It is what it sounds like, folks.) There is a good possibility that you'll never be able to eat the foods you love again. You will need to take vitamins for the rest of your life, as your stomach is unable to help you absorb nutrients. There are serious side effects from this surgery that are truly irreversible.

Please see a nutritionist, counselor and physical therapist before this surgery and explore all other options. 10

For more information about BOB WILSON visit [www.balancedweightmanagement.com](http://www.balancedweightmanagement.com).

Information in this column should not be used in place of advice from a licensed health care professional. If you have a health or fitness question, e-mail DEAR ETHEL at [maricallahan@gmail.com](mailto:maricallahan@gmail.com) or visit [www.mariacallahan.net](http://www.mariacallahan.net).

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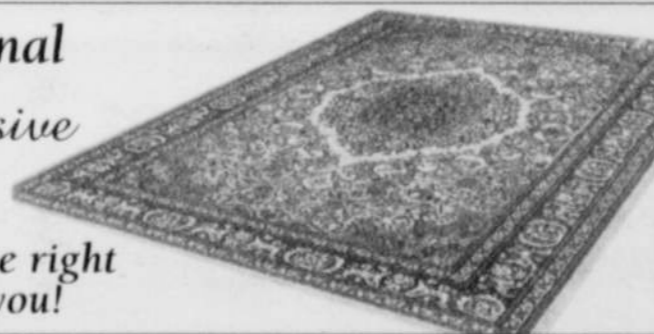
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