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Writing Sample

from

B.A.L.A.N.C.E. Your Life, Balance the Scale

A Seven-Step Plan to Lose Weight and Find Happiness

By Jennifer Tuma-Young

TEN YEARS AGO, I LOST 120 POUNDS. But I didn't do it by dieting. Sure, I exercised and watched what I ate. But there was way more to it than that. I lost all that weight (and have kept it off for over 10 years) by making a far more fundamental change than just cutting down on calories. I changed myself from the inside out. I found balance. And once I balanced my life, my weight balanced itself.

During the years since, I have devoted my life to helping other women do the same thing. As a licensed life coach, author, blogger, weight-loss consultant, speaker, and go-to guest for media outlets such as The Rachael Ray Show, I have helped thousands of women lose weight and find happiness by learning how to balance their lives.

Take Donna, for example. When I met Donna she was exhausted, drained, and stressed out. She'd been trying to lose her "baby weight" for 12 years, and had been on every diet imaginable. Her calendar was booked day to night with housework, a part-time

job, carpooling, soccer games, and ballet practice. Her husband was working and traveling all the time, yet they were barely able to make ends meet. She rarely saw her friends. Although she used to pride herself on the way she looked, she hadn't worked out or had her nails done in years. She was out of shape, out of touch, and completely out of balance.

With my guidance, Donna found the balance in her life. She lowered her stress levels, increased her commitment to taking care of herself, whipped her finances into shape, and re-connected with friends. And guess what happened after all that came together? You've got it—she lost the weight she'd been unhappily carrying around for more than a decade.

Women who come to me for help hate the way they look and feel. They beat themselves up every time they eat a cookie. They are juggling a million responsibilities, but they still feel empty. They come from all different backgrounds and every age group, but they all tell the same story: They want to get in shape and feel better about themselves, but they are blocked by exhaustion, frustration, self-anger, and disappointment. They are totally out of balance.

To help women like these, I have spent years developing and fine-tuning a program that helps them lose weight and keep it off by restoring balance to their lives. Using my **B.A.L.A.N.C.E. Program**, I have guided and inspired thousands of women to find the same balanced sweet-spot that I was able to discover for myself.

Now, I'm reaching out to a larger audience. In this book, **B.A.L.A.N.C.E. YOUR LIFE, BALANCE THE SCALE**, my highly successful, highly rewarding **B.A.L.A.N.C.E.**

Program will give readers the tools, vision, step-by-step guidance, and inspiration they need to find balance and lose weight.

This is not a crazy diet book, and it's not a quick fix. Those don't work—believe me, I've tried them all. What works is finding balance—a goal that readers can achieve with my authentic, inspirational, and wonderfully effective B.A.L.A.N.C.E. Program.

My Story

I discovered the secrets to a balanced life by living a seriously unbalanced life.

Growing up, I was always fixated on my weight. I have been every size from 4 to 44, and have been called chubby, chunky, thick, heavy, and—my personal favorite—big-boned. When I went to college, I didn't gain the Freshman 10 like most other girls—I gained the Freshman 80. My weight just kept going up, up, up. Desperate to get in control, I became a diet-a-holic. I'd lose weight, feel good about myself, gain weight, beat myself up about it, try a crazy new diet, lose a few pounds, feel good, gain it back, get angry at myself.... You get the idea. It was depressing, although I always tried to hide how bummed I felt. It was a vicious cycle of yo-yo dieting, but no one really knew my internal struggles or how horrible I felt about myself.

Until, one day, while on an elevator at the local mall, I suddenly felt dizzy. Before I knew it, I had passed out. As soon as I came to, I rushed over to a nearby bakery and gobbled up some cookies and milk. Then I checked in with my doctor. After doing some bloodwork, he explained that I had fainted because my blood sugar was totally out of

whack. I was borderline diabetic, and if I didn't make some big changes pretty soon, I'd have type 2 diabetes. That really scared me—I was only 22 years old.

The first thing I did when he delivered this horrible news was to start beating myself up. Why did I let this happen? Why am I such a bad person? How could I have so little self-discipline? You wouldn't believe the things I said to myself. If I'd said them to a friend, she never would have forgiven me.

The funny thing was, with everything else in my life, I was always a really positive person. I'd drop everything to help someone. And I've always been a devoted, driven employee. But somehow, when it came to taking care of myself, I fell short. I loved and cared for and nurtured everyone but me.

I knew I had to do something. But what?

Shortly after my escalator incident, an inspirational quote my boss passed along the year prior flashed before my eyes, and suddenly it really hit home. (I love quotes.) After promoting me on my first day of work, he told me he knew I could handle a higher-level job because of my attitude. "Your attitude not your aptitude will determine your altitude," he said.

That stopped me cold. He was telling me that I did a great job at work because I had such a good attitude about it. So did that mean that I stunk at taking care of myself because I was so mean to myself?

BINGO! That was my problem. Unless I changed my attitude, I would never lose all that weight. Unless I started caring for myself, I would never find balance.

At that moment, I vowed to end the madness of dieting, feeling disappointed in myself, searching for answers in all the wrong places, and beating myself up when I

failed. I promised that from then on, I would accept, love, and take care of myself. Somehow, I would get back in balance.

Unfortunately, I had no idea how to do any of this. All I knew was that what I had been doing didn't work.

Finding B.A.L.A.N.C.E.

Vowing to find a balance breakthrough, I first knew I had to clear out my brain. I had done so many crazy diets, I had no clue what healthy even meant. I built up a wall of self-limiting beliefs, and even believed I was just a "big girl" who did not deserve to be healthy. I had dreams for my life but they were so clouded by draining thoughts. Being a pen and paper lover, little by little I dumped everything out of my mind and onto the page to be aware and make real changes.

Then, I started to do research. I cracked open books and spent hours online learning about balance, happiness, health. My brother Rich, who is one of the healthiest people I've ever met, committed to sharing his knowledge and experience with me. I learned about digestion and metabolism and nutrition. I started studying food labels and was astonished to see what junk I had been putting into my body for so many years.

I was tempted to jump into a radical diet, as I had in the past. (Cabbage soup, anyone?) But I knew that wasn't the answer for me. I didn't need a diet. I needed a whole new way of living. I set out to learn what my body needed and to give it the nutritious food and healthy exercise that would get me back in balance.

I cut way back on junk food and started eating things in as close to their natural state as possible. Instead of a glass of orange drink, I ate oranges. Instead of commercially produced bread that's full of additives, I ate bread from the local bakery. (Hey, I'm Italian—you can't expect me to give up bread.) If I didn't recognize the names of the ingredients on labels, I wouldn't eat the food. Think about it. Do you really want to put things like disodium inosinate (whatever that is!) in your body? I decided that for the new, balanced, cared-for me, the answer was no. I even came up with "Laundry Rules" to remind myself how to nurture my body.

I also started moving. This took me a while—I'm not the kind of person (like my brother) who loves to spend hours at the gym. But I pushed myself. My brother taught me how to work my muscles. I had always thought that I had to lose weight before I could start weight-training, or if I lifted weights I'd get all bulky. But I learned that working muscles with focus and attention actually speeds up weight loss—and you don't have to wait until you're thin to start doing it.

I heard about a gym called Curves, which promised a complete strength and cardio workout in 30 minutes. I loved the idea of a quick workout, so I gave it a try, and immediately started to feel better.

The changes in my body were amazing. As soon as I stopped dieting and started taking care of myself, the weight began to come off. My blood sugar went down. I felt energized. Nurtured by good food, exercise, self-care, and self-acceptance, my body took over and started doing what it was supposed to do.

I realized I didn't have to be chained to a scale and a lifetime of extreme diets. I didn't have to hate myself every time I had a bowl of ice cream. For the first time ever, I found my balance. And when I did, my weight took care of itself, and I lost 120 pounds.

***Inspirista* Passion**

I loved working out at Curves so much that I convinced my mother to chip in with me and buy a Curves franchise. A year later, I opened a second Curves. I left the pharmaceutical business, trained as a life coach, and launched the career I was always meant to have: Inspiring people to find happiness and balance.

I even created a name for myself and for the many women I met who inspire me: ***Inspirista***. An *Inspirista* has a passion for life, a contagious energy, and an unstoppable drive to inspire others to find balance and happiness.

At Curves, women come in and do a pre-designed workout. It's all figured out—part of what makes so great is that you don't have to think, you just have to do. But I saw that these women needed more. They were just like the old me—out of balance, full of self-criticism, and unable to climb out of the crazy diet trap. So I put together my own life-balance program and started teaching it at Curves. The response was amazing. Members signed up for it in droves. They invited friends and co-workers. Other Curves owners asked me to lead workshops at their locations. Corporations hired me to speak to their employees. I coached women one-on-one and in groups. They started losing weight. But more importantly, they found balance and happiness.

A videographer friend offered to make a DVD about my B.A.L.A.N.C.E. Program. I was gung-ho on the idea until I found out how much it actually *costs* to create a DVD. But David felt so strongly that this DVD should be made that he offered to produce it for free. “I want people like my Mom and my sister to hear what you have to say,” he told me. “They need to hear this!” The DVD is titled “Diets Don’t Work!” The feedback on it has been fabulous.

With all of these exciting things happening, I was on Cloud 9. Helping all these women find balance was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. But then, incredibly, something even more exciting happened. The Rachael Ray Show came calling. And before I knew it, I was appearing on the show regularly, promoting the Change Your Life Challenge, coaching viewers on how they could successfully get their weight in balance by getting their lives in balance. Word spread, and soon I was appearing on television and radio, writing articles, taking on spokesperson gigs, and blogging, in addition to speaking, giving workshops, and working one-on-one with clients.

Using everything I had learned over the years, I created my B.A.L.A.N.C.E. Program. Again and again, I saw it succeed where SO many diets had failed. But I’m still not satisfied—my *Inspirista* passion drives me to reach even more women. My ultimate mission is to create a multi-media, multi-product *Inspirista* brand that will guide millions of women to a happier, more balanced life. My first step was to write B.A.L.A.N.C.E. YOUR LIFE, BALANCE THE SCALE, which will get my B.A.L.A.N.C.E. Program to a larger audience than I could ever reach on a one-to-one basis.

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