

# — I N T R O D U C T I O N —

Welcome to the weird, wild, wonderful world of weight loss surgery! Whether you're just here for a brief visit to get the lay of the land, or you intend to make this your permanent home, we're here to answer your questions and show you around. We're the Welcome Wagon, of sorts.

In fact showing you around is exactly what this book is about. This book is for those of you who are considering having a weight loss procedure done, as well as for those of you who have already made the decision to have surgery and are at various stages in the process. We wrote this book for all the REAL people out there who need information on more than just the medical facts (although we provide that as well). This book is written BY REAL PEOPLE, FOR REAL PEOPLE.

We're not celebrities (except in our own minds...), and we don't have private chefs to cook our meals for us, personal trainers to help us work out, or live celebrity jet-set lifestyles. We don't have therapists on speed dial, plastic surgeons on retainer, or an endless supply of time and money to shop for clothes every time we lose weight. We're the working stiffs who have to do this by ourselves, and work it all in around spouses, kids, jobs, school, chores, friends, and everything else. We're the people who have real life to deal with every day, while we try to find a way to just have a "life," let alone a happy and healthy one.

The purpose of this book is to tell it like it is. In a way, it's sort of a glimpse into a "day-in-the-life" of two ordinary women from Michigan. We're not sugarcoating anything, and we leave it to you to decide whether you want to experience the same things we do or not. We're not going to tell you that with weight loss surgery you can "have it all!" Maybe you will, maybe you won't. But then maybe you'll hit the lottery tonight too.... Some people have this surgery and do end up looking like stars, models, and "celeb-utantes." For the other 99.9% of us, however, here's what life is like on a daily basis: sometimes funny, sometimes a little painful, but always totally real.

We're not going to tell you our life histories in this book, nor use it as a forum for working through all of our personal pain and angst from years gone by. This book isn't about how ripped off and hard-done-by we were, it's about what you can really expect if you make the decision to change your life through weight loss surgery. It's about how we came to the decision to do so, and what we've experienced since making that decision.

Our intent is to provide you with useful and practical information about the types of surgeries being done today, the risks and benefits of them, and about what you might experience as a result of having surgery to help you lose weight. If you haven't yet made the decision, then our purpose here is to give you as much useful and applicable information as we can to help you decide whether this is the right direction for you, and if it is, to give you the information necessary to help you find a surgeon who will take good and proper care of you.

To assist you with that, we've included for your consideration the good, the bad, the yukky, and the strange. We've tried not to oversimplify anything, while still making it easy to understand. Some of you have already learned a bit about weight loss surgery, while others are learning about it for the first time. If you're in the advanced group, please be patient for the sake of the beginners. Hopefully the stories will be helpful, or at least keep you amused.

*You* read the information and the stories, and *you* determine what weight to give them in making your decision (no pun intended). In fact, while you're reading we suggest that you make a pro/con list to help you make your decision. No one can make this decision for you, and no one knows what's scary or appealing to you, but you. So, as you read along, if something either strikes you as a very negative aspect of surgery, or a very positive aspect of surgery, write it down on your decision list for later reference.

Similarly, if you have questions that arise as you read, and you can't find the answers in the book, make a list of questions as you think of them, and tuck them in the back of the book. You can then take the book, your decision list, and your notes to a physician ('cause we will tell you how to find a good one!), and efficiently get the answers to all your questions and concerns.

Speaking of what you can't find in this book, you won't find recipes, or exercise routines, insurance information, or tax benefits. For information on those issues, we suggest (in respective order), consulting your mother or aunt, the guy in the tight t-shirt and shorts at the gym, the human resource person at your job, and an accountant that gives a free consultation to new clients. In that vein, and as we tell the college students we teach, Julie is *a* lawyer, but she's not *your* lawyer, so please don't send email with legal questions.

What you will find in this book is information on what to do if you start to lose your hair after surgery (see Chapter Six), experiences that are particular only to men (see Chapter Ten), tips and tricks from people who've been down the path before you, a heads-up on things to avoid, and a really serious discussion about whether or not you should even read this book. We've assembled some pretty awesome people to talk to you about the technical stuff, and we made sure to pick people who have a good sense of humor so you won't be bored.

We tried to keep the book on an upbeat note, but there are certain topics or stories that just require a more serious tone. We do not intend to make light of the serious nature of having surgery, nor do we intend to treat lightly the issues with which bariatric patients must deal. What we do intend, however, is to drive home the fact that you have to keep your sense of humor, something in which we wholeheartedly believe.

As for the layout of the book, since there is more than one voice being communicated in each chapter, we had to pick a head spokesperson for each one. So, when you are reading along, the first name that appears in the list of authors for that chapter is who's doing the talking for the group – unless we explicitly tell you otherwise. (Just like a lawyer to have a loophole built in....) The other authors have contributed their

thoughts, ideas, and information, but realistically, only one person can talk at a time. You'll note that a majority of the time it's Julie speaking. How fitting that we should choose a lawyer/college professor to be our mouthpiece.

Because all of us are prone to using big, obscure, or technical words, for your convenient reference we've included a glossary of terms in the back of the book. (We realize there's just never a dictionary around when you need one....) To keep the page count down, and thus the cost of the book, we only printed the most important terms in the book glossary. A more comprehensive glossary is available, however, for free download on our web site which is listed in the front of the book. Also, if you'd like more information on certain topics, we've provided a list of web sites and other sources for you, again we've included the most important ones and put the rest on the web site for you to download at no charge.

We've included all the research sources used to write this book, but many of the other resources we would like to have published were just going to drive up the cost of the book. We didn't want to do that because we know you have other, more important things on which to spend your money. So check out the web site, because there's a number of great things there to see, read, download, or print for free. Call it our little gift to you.

Well, that's about it for all the stuff we think you might need to know before you take your wild ride through the world of weight loss surgery. We hope you find it informative, helpful, insightful, and a little fun. Keep smiling, and remember you are not alone. You have the power to change your life by whatever means necessary.