

Chapter Ten

— N O G I R L S A L L O W E D ! —

Randal S. Baker M.D., F.A.C.S.

Julie M. Janeway

Karen J. Sparks

More and more men are having this surgery these days, and we thought it was about time to bring the issues that men deal with out into the light. The vast majority of information lurking around out there deals with women who are choosing to have the surgery, and so this chapter is dedicated to the guys and the difficulties they encounter by virtue of the fact they were born male (and no, that is not a character flaw). This is not a new millennium version of the “he-man woman-haters club,” but let’s just say you have to have a “Y” chromosome to join.

We interviewed a number of male weight loss surgery patients, both from my practice and from other medical institutions as well. Some recently had their surgery, and some were as far as two years out. Some were young, and some were older, some married and some single. They shared their experiences, their stories, their insights, and their lives with us, and we appreciate that immensely. The story of what men experience as weight loss patients has never really been studied or told, and we’re proud to be one of the first to draw attention to the special needs of male bariatric patients, and bring this knowledge to the general public.

The men we talked to were not afraid to tell us that they were afraid. Some had a fear of dying from the procedure, but they also had a fear of dying without it. All but one had a fear of having a big open incision scar, and that one fellow didn’t really have the fear because he was never given the option for a laparoscopic procedure by his surgeon. He was a candidate, but it was never even discussed or offered.

Others had very real fears of dealing with dumping syndrome, and strangely not one of them really had it. They also feared the procedure not working and the weight staying put. That fear was the hardest to work through before going into surgery, and most said they didn’t really get rid of it until they’d lost about fifty pounds. We believe one of our interviewees, Scott, said it best: “I couldn’t try it on to see if it was going to fit!”

To Scott, as to many of the other men we talked to, the fear of the drastic life change was daunting, at best. They feared not knowing what they would be able to eat (or drink!), and they feared things just being “different.” It’s a well known fact that men fear change more than women (as a general rule), and these men were no exception.

Almost all said they had to deal with fears about other complications as well, and for the men who had their surgeries at a non-multidisciplinary practice, the fears of complications were amplified because complications like pulmonary embolism, hernia, gallbladder disease, leaks, and obstructions were never defined nor discussed.