

by **Beth Daigle**

illustration by **Ken Bonin**



The Last 5 Pounds



Ever since having children, I've struggled to lose those stubborn, last 5 (maybe 8) pounds. I realize this is not a big deal, but whether you want to lose 5 pounds or 50, it's frustrating when you can't. Over the years, I've calorie counted, reduced sugar consumption, cut carbs and banned alcohol — only to find that the scale wouldn't budge. When I was younger, I could drop 5 pounds in less than a week, but after I turned 40, everything changed. For the most part, I accepted my new normal, until recently, when a particularly indulgent few months prompted me to get back on a healthy track.

I don't like to use the word "diet," especially with two beautiful daughters in the house. As I've always told them, a balanced, healthy lifestyle should be our goal, not unsustainable fad diets. However, at this point in my life, I was in need of structure and a plan.

Just as I began thinking about this, I realized I wasn't alone. Many of my friends were already on the diet train and talking about their plans of attack. Some involved elaborate meal strategies ... too much work. Some involved pills and shakes ... not for me. Others were so regimented I knew I could never keep up. Not until my sister mentioned the program she was following successfully, did I think: OK, this might work for me. To be clear, I am in no way promoting any one diet, because I believe that everyone is different, and what works for me, or someone else, may not work for you. If you are serious about losing weight, a check-in with your doctor is always a wise starting point.

My sister told me about the Dukan Diet, which is essentially the French version of Atkins. It immediately caught my attention because I admire French/European living and believe it to be generally healthier. This plan encourages a lot of lean protein with a slow progression toward the inclusion of vegetables, fruits and other more balanced foods. I was never hungry on this plan, but my taste buds were far from tantalized. Despite that, I reached my goal for the first time in 15 years. My energy level was up and I felt accomplished. I realize the weight may not stay off forever, but I was satisfied knowing that I still had some control over my body.

I liked this eating plan right away because it was simple. If it hadn't been, I would have quit. The trick to making a diet work for you is recognizing your limitations and finding a plan that makes sense for your personality and style of living. If you are overly ambitious or commit to a diet that doesn't suit you, failure undoubtedly will follow and you'll be left discouraged. Take the time to find a plan that encourages smart and healthy choices that you can reasonably live with. If you hate to be in the kitchen, and your diet has you preparing every meal at home, then be honest with yourself and know that it is not the diet for you.

I learned a lot about my body and metabolism while losing my "last 5 pounds." I know for sure that sugar is my biggest enemy, and that the more protein I eat, the less hungry I feel. I also know that I need to step up my daily exercise/activity level significantly in order to achieve the quickest results.

The holidays are behind us now. If you're in the market for a diet, you're sure to be flooded with options. Choose wisely and, above all, know thyself. mvm