

# THE JOY HALF-DIET



Written by  
**Ivan Brown**  
Illustrations by Jon Klassen

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**ISBN 978-1-7771637-2-3**

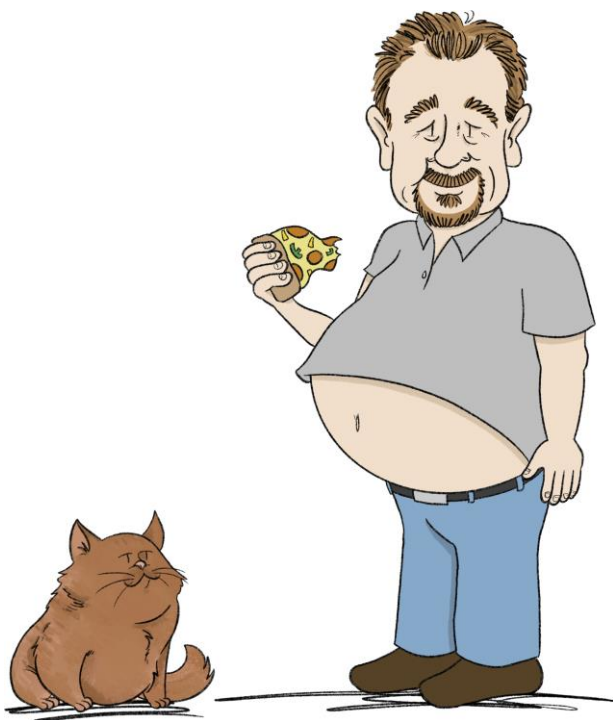
**To order:** [thejoyhalfdiet.ca](http://thejoyhalfdiet.ca) (Canada and bulk orders only)  
[amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

Cover design, layout design, and all illustrations by Jon Klassen  
<https://www.imjonklassen.com/>

Second impression 2022

Printed and bound in Toronto, Canada by Threesixty Creative  
[threesixtycreative@icloud.com](mailto:threesixtycreative@icloud.com)

To myself and all my pudgy friends.

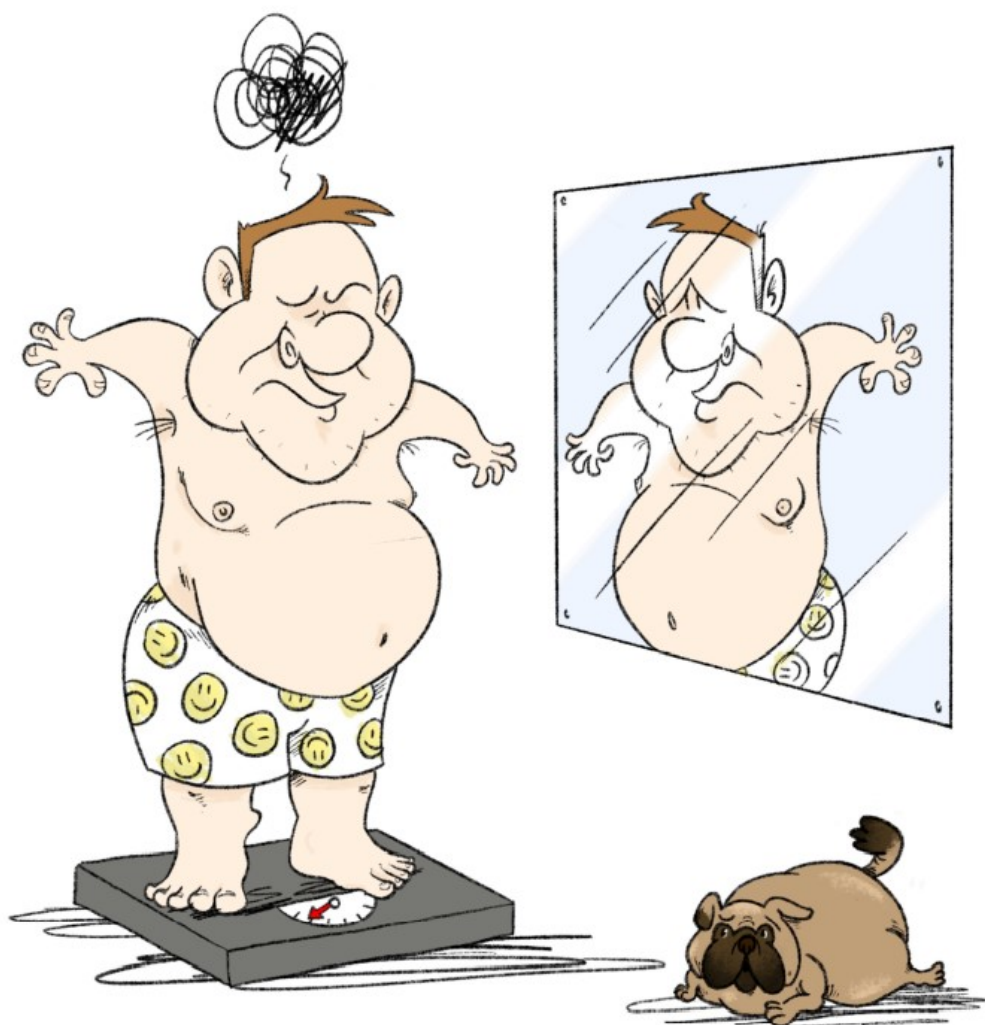


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# CHAPTER 1

## TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND... LET'S GET STARTED

What? You are fat?

No? Ok, let's say you are only chubby. Yeah, we could go with chubby. Still not quite comfortable? Could we settle on pudgy? Alright. Pudgy it is.

Although I might be winking.

Now, let's take a look in the mirror. Oh dear. Oh dear, dear, dear, dear, dear. Is that really how you look? Yikes. Is this really how you want to look? Stop shaking your head so vigorously. You will strain your neck. You in a neck brace will not be a pretty sight.

Next, step on the scales. Whoa!! Those scales can't be right! But they probably are. Maybe we should revise pudgy to chubby. Or more. No, on second thought, we don't want to go there. Let's stay with pudgy. It is more friendly (wink, wink).

**Write this down on a piece of paper:**

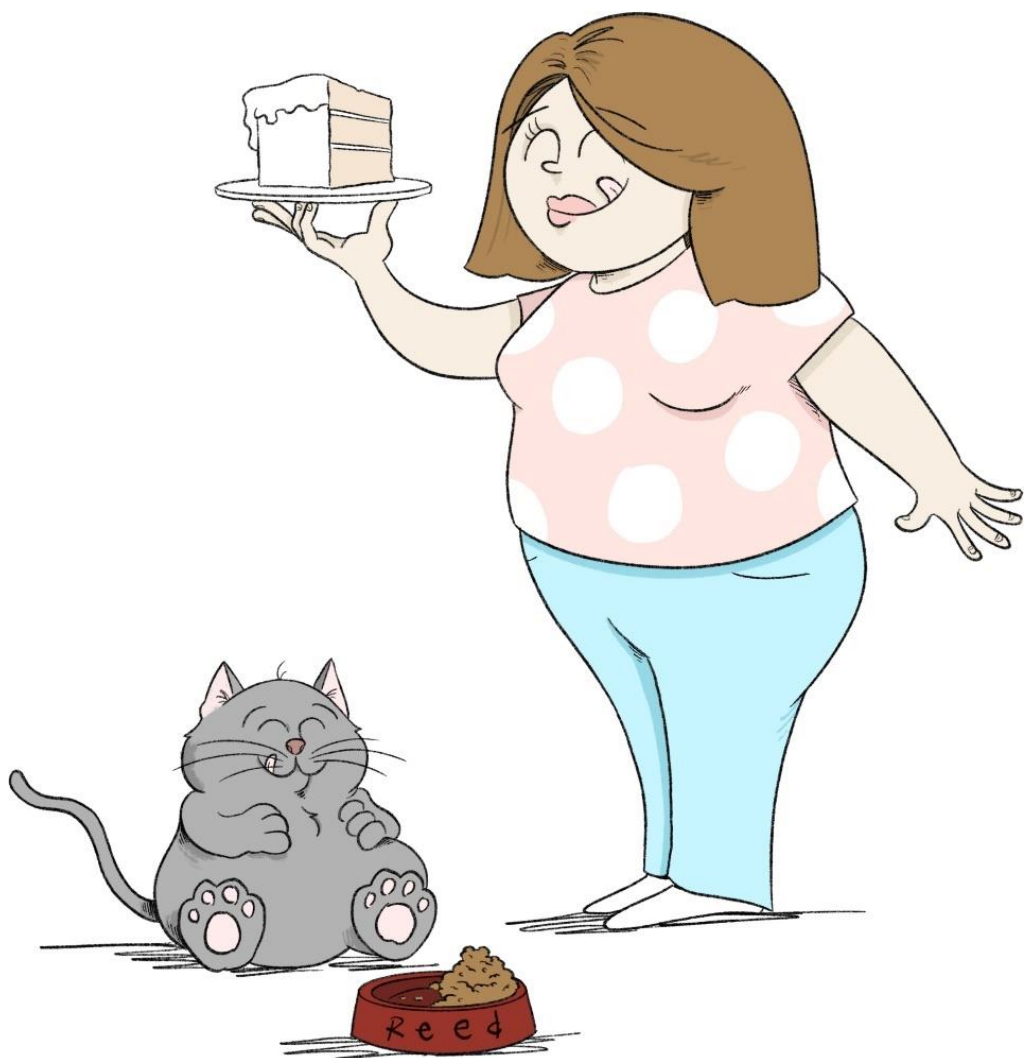
**How much I weigh today** \_\_\_\_\_

Really? Yeeees... Be honest, totally honest. Yes you CAN be honest. But just in case anyone might find the paper you write your weight on, hide it. If they ever discover where you hid it, lie. Lie through your teeth. Say, "Oh great. You found it. This is for my fat friend who is desperate to ..."  
But you know the drill already.

**How much I will weigh a year from now** \_\_\_\_\_

Be realistic. When I started, I weighed in at 224 pounds. I was really quite pudgy. I set my goal for 199. Twenty-five pounds off in one year. Not realistic. I lost 16, but not 25. Set a reasonable goal.

You know how lazy you can be.



## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT IS THE JOY HALF-DIET?

I once knew a woman named Joy — I wonder if she might be crass enough to want me to acknowledge her for using her name\* — who taught me how to lose weight.

Here is Joy's secret: **JUST EAT HALF**

That is the secret, and it really worked for Joy. It would have worked totally for me too if I were not such a food cheat and sneaked the odd extra chicken thigh from time to time. Ok, I really meant chocolate bar, not chicken thigh, you know that, but you get the point: I cheated a bit, and I am still trying to figure out if this is a sin or not. Probably yes, but I prefer to believe no.

Now that I have told you the secret to the JOY Half-Diet, I am thinking this book is going to be kind of short if I only have two chapters of one page each, so what to do? Well, here's my idea. We already firmly established in chapter 1 that you are lazy, as am I, so I will add some easy things that help move the weight loss thing along faster. I know how impatient you can be to read anything more than a few lines, so I will keep the chapters short and sweet.

But first ... back to the "Just Eat Half" thing.

It is very simple: eat whatever you are used to eating, but always just eat half. Don't give up anything. If you usually have two pieces of toast with butter and jam, just have one piece with butter and jam. If you normally eat two sandwiches for lunch, just eat one. Put your dinner on the plate and put half of it in a bowl to save in the fridge for your lunch tomorrow. Take that piece of cake, but just half as big. When you just eat half, you feel pretty much satisfied. Weird, but it works.

That's the JOY Half-Diet.

\* To avoid this, I will pretend I made Joy up, and I was actually only referring to happiness. I'm sure I would believe that. But if there is a real Joy — you know how honest and generous I am — I would happily mail her, by express post, a hand-made certificate, colored with my own hands. If I could only remember her last name, which I cannot.



## CHAPTER 3

### DO I HAVE TO HALF\* EVERYTHING?

**No.**

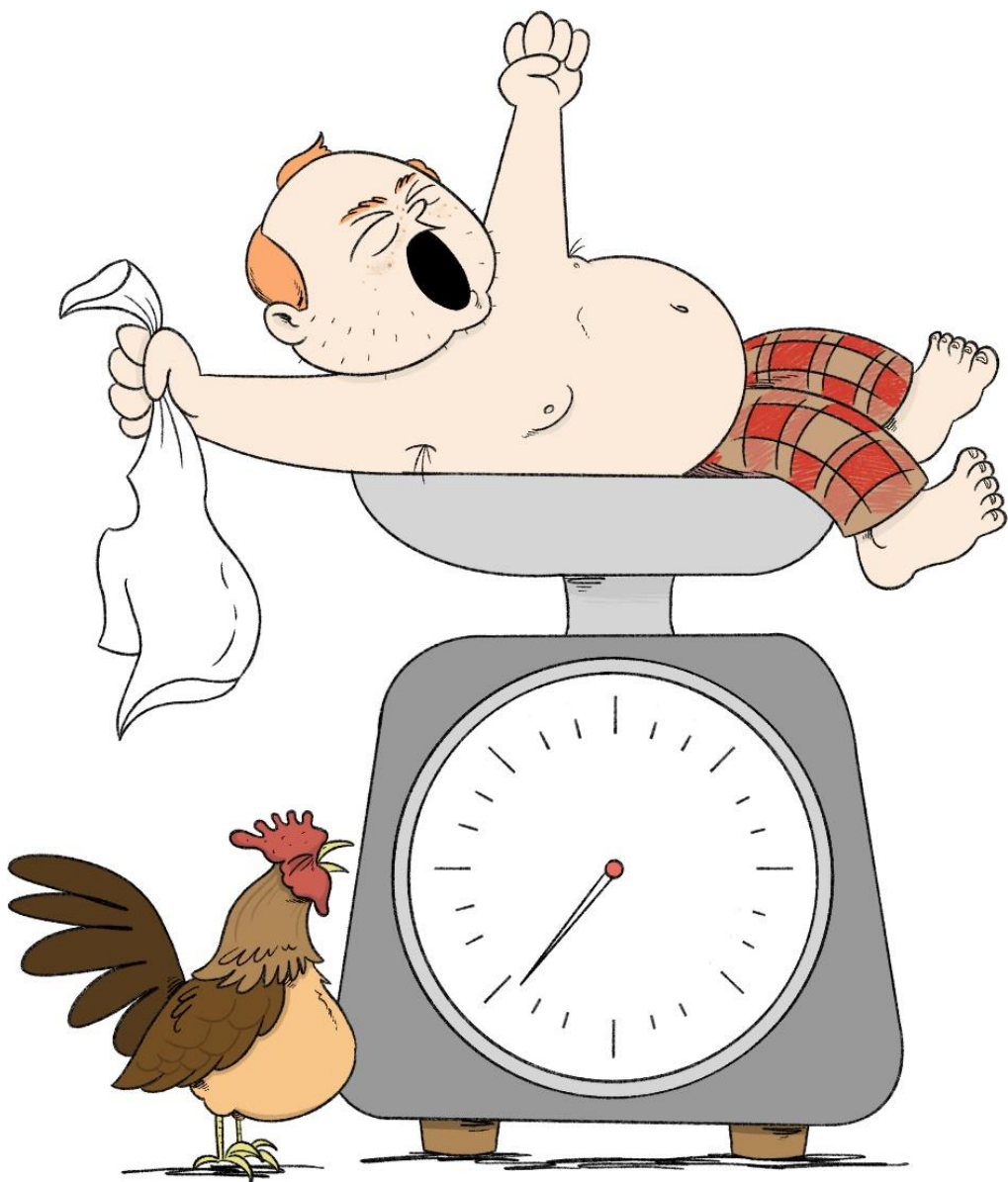
Choose a few things you are not willing to compromise on. Here is my list:

1. My morning orange juice. I always drink orange juice in the morning. Take that away from me and I will be a downy-frowy.
2. My morning coffee. For many years, I have enjoyed two mugs of coffee in the morning — WITH coffee cream! Take that away from me and I am as cranky-wanky as a squawking seagull that only ate half a fish for breakfast. Whaaat, you say? Well, maybe that bird is on the JOY Half-Diet, so give it a break and leave it alone. Take another sip of coffee.
3. My afternoon cocktail. I have to confess that, before dinner, I do enjoy a little glass of wine or a beer or a screwdriver or a scotch ... well, you get the point. Hey, look at that. My afternoon cocktail isn't on my "just drink half" list!
4. Potato chips. Oh, I suppose you sanctimoniously think this is optional. Go away, please! It's not optional for me. I have always loved potato chips, so ... IF I skimp on lunch a bit, I can substitute a small bowl of potato chips. Stop judging. That's me, and I am not especially proud, but a little proud.

Make your list of the things you are not willing to compromise on.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Really? 5? Aren't you being just a bit piggy?

\* I know. I know. My elementary school teacher, Mrs. McMillan, would be tut-tutting that I didn't use the verb form, which is halve. But I haven't heard anyone say halve in the past 47 years, so I am going with half as a verb. Go home, grammatic fanatics. Oops. I meant grammatical fanatics.



# CHAPTER 4

## WEIGH YOURSELF EVERY MORNING

You know you don't trust your bathroom scales, so get out your credit card and order some good new scales. Mine set me back \$89, but I have more than made up for the distress of this cost by ordering ONLY HALF (thaaaaanks, Jooodoooy) in restaurants, coffee shops, and fast-food joints, as well as (sigh) on pizza deliveries and Uber Eats. Bottom line: buy the scales. They pay for themselves.

My scales provide the choice of reading my weight in kilograms or pounds. The obvious advantage of using the kg option is that it is way less, so just looking at the lower number automatically makes you think you are ever so thin. This is enormously encouraging. But it is kind of hard to lose a kilogram, because I think it is around 2.2 pounds, so I opted for pounds. They come off faster and that is all I care about.

My scales also give a weight reading in tenths of a pound. Get scales that do this. Trust me. When you weight 217.6 one day and 217.4 the next day, you will realize how important this is. A loss of 0.2 of a pound is cause for celebration, and you need to express your joy by eating a breath mint or sucking on an orange-flavored vitamin C tablet. If your scales didn't show in tenths, you would still be standing there sad-faced.

### How and When to Weigh Yourself

Always weigh yourself at the same time and in the same condition every day. I get out of bed in the morning, do not even take one sip of water, do "something"\* in the bathroom, then shed my PJs and weigh myself stark naked. Winter pyjamas can add 0.9 of a pound, and a full bladder can add 0.7. Don't let them control you.

If it is your habit to jump right in the shower first thing, weigh yourself after you dry yourself. Oddly, you will weigh less than before your shower. I have no idea why, really, but my unscientific guess is that it is just a bit of dehydration. It still totally counts.

\*"something" = pee



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **WALK EVERY DAY**

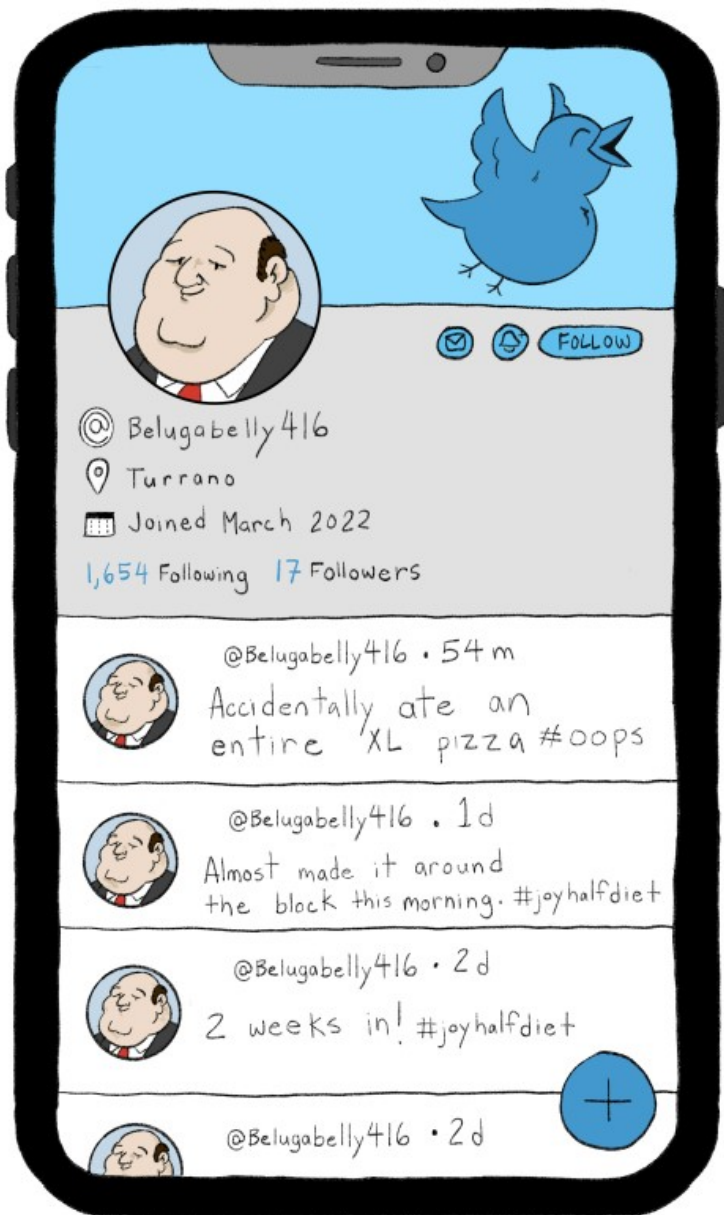
Jogging, and aerobics, and working out endlessly at the gym are all wonderful things to do, so they say, but frankly I am actually too lazy to do any of those things for more than one day in a row. But I am not too lazy to walk. For the most part.

Oh yes, I need incentives to walk. My lazy feet won't just start moving on their own. Here's how I trick them into action:

1. I make a chart and put it on the fridge with a fridge magnet. After I go for my walk, I check off that I have done it for the day. If I miss a day, I have to put an IOU for \$5 in a jar. Once a month the jar gets emptied by a very strict and mean friend who has vowed solemnly to pocket the IOUs no matter how much I protest, beg, and sob, and to spend them on totally fat-filled junk food for himself. Works nicely for him. Grrr for me.
2. I go for my walk just before one of the things I listed in chapter 2, usually the cocktail or potato chips. They are then my reward for going for the walk. Yay.
3. I pick 6 different routes around my neighborhood so that I can't whine that I am bored with the same one every day.
4. I give myself Sundays off — not for religious purposes, oh no, but for lazy purposes.
5. I give myself a different task every day to do on my walk. Pick out my favorite house on the route. Or the nicest garden. Or count how many dogs I meet. Or some such thing. If I get tired of my silly games, I put on my headphones and listen to a talking book. There is nothing like a good boring book to make you walk faster.

#### **How Far Should I Walk Daily (except Sundays)?**

My routes all take about 30 minutes. That is about 5,000 steps, according to the little gadget on my phone that measures steps. I'm sure it is totally accurate. I suppose I could walk a little longer, but my glass of wine is waiting for me at home, and it would verge on tragic to disappoint it.



## CHAPTER 6

### TELL EVERYBODY WHAT YOU ARE DOING

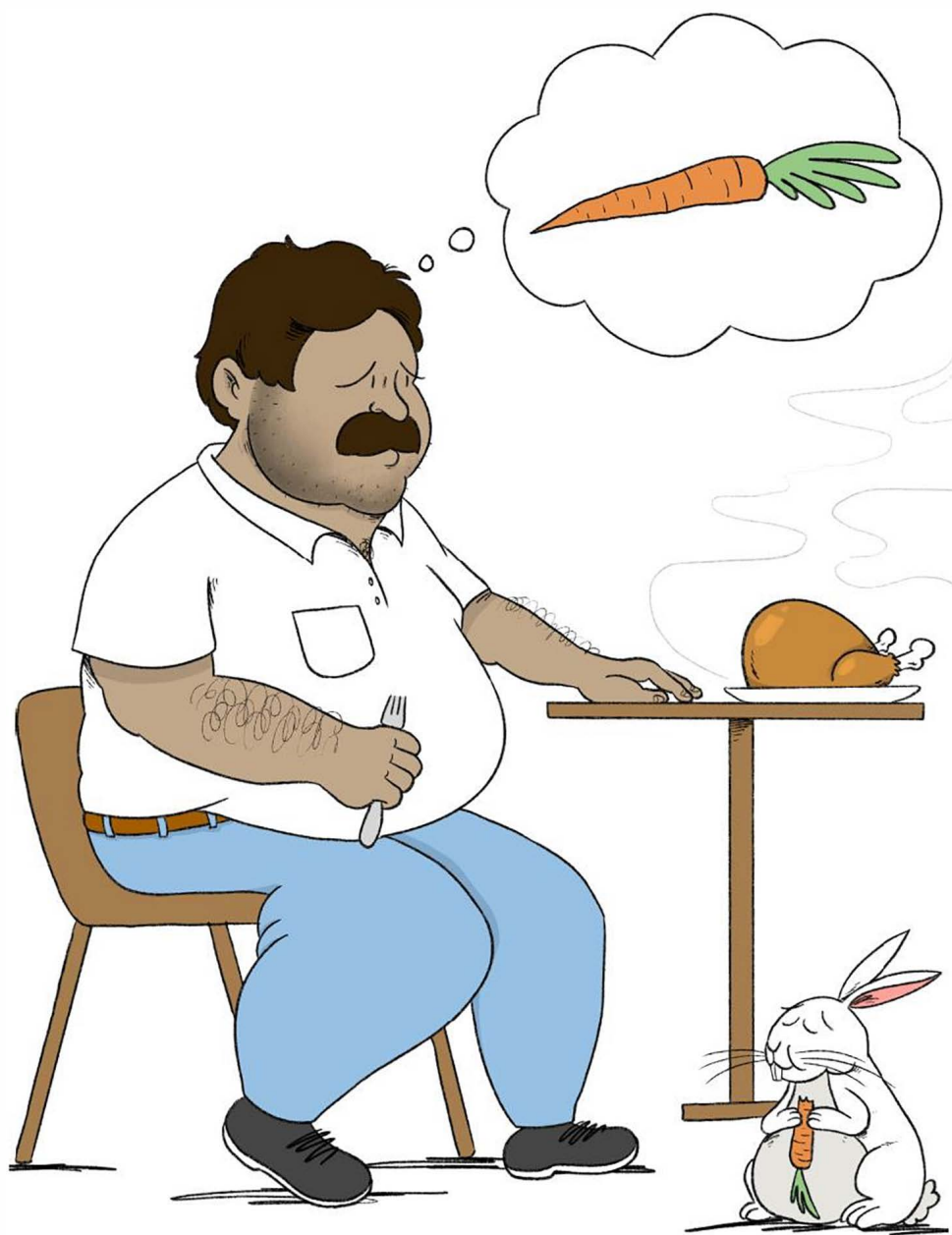
Always tell everybody you meet about your diet. You need the pressure of ridicule from them if you stray. Ok, when you stray.

Oh, I know. Start to blather on about your JOY Half-Diet, and the faces of every one of your friends and family and neighbors and people you hardly even know will immediately cloud over. If your story should extend to 30 seconds, their eyes will have permanently wandered to passers-by, or they will have found an itch on the side of their leg that they are ever so happy to scratch. If your story survives to 2 minutes, they will have blatantly started texting SOS messages to friends to rescue them. People you thought loved you will shun you, and neighbors who greeted you with friendly smiles for years will rush to the other side of the street when they see you coming. Mere nodding acquaintances at the gym will run and hide in the dressing room to escape you. Not that you are ever in the gym of course.

But you do need to keep telling them anyway. And, as usual, I have a couple of helpful hints to make it work better.

1. Anticipate what your listener — and I do use that term loosely, because you know they are only half-listening at best — is feeling about your diet: bewilderment, jealousy, annoyance, sadness, disgust, and above, all, pity. Try to neutralize these feelings right off by appealing to their generosity. Ok, no, you know that won't work. Just bribe them: "I will pay for your lunch, including tip, if you can just look stone-faced for 3 minutes and let me talk about the JOY Half-Diet." It will be a true test of friendship and loyalty.
2. Boast the opposite. Even your best friends do not like it when you are accomplishing your goals. Make them understand that you are failing miserably. They will be so happy. Your friends, your family, and even your mere acquaintances will love you tenderly for failing. They will lean forward across the table and smile at you with loving pity. And you will be silently smiling over your plate half-filled with its half-steak sandwich and thanking me for this advice:

**Always boast about how bad you are at dieting.**



## CHAPTER 7

### WHEN SHOULD I HALF-EAT?

Aha! You thought the answer was going to be “exactly a half-hour after you are half-hungry” but no. Here’s the answer:

An *hour* after your usual eating times.

If you usually eat your breakfast at 8am, wait until 9am, even if you have to do it on the bus on your way to work. Your fellow riders will gaze at you with envy, their eyes filling with tears of awe as they whisper to their companions, “I think she is on the JOY Half-Diet! Look at how beautifully she nibbles at her half-donut!”

If you typically eat your two sandwiches at noon, wait until 1pm to enjoy your lone sandwich. Have your usual half-snacks in the afternoon, or anytime, but delay your half dinner for an hour so you won’t be too hungry later on. You know what a little piglet you can be standing in front of the open fridge door just before bedtime!

What? You find waiting an hour, then an hour, then an hour, a bit much for your unreliable self-control? Wait! I have my ways...

1. I imagine myself eating the food my pet is eating.
2. I glug-glug-glug down a full glass of water. Or two. Or three. It fills me up temporarily, and by the time I get out of the bathroom, wow, look at that, it’s time to eat.
3. I distract myself by pondering how sad my life has been up to now, then I list 14 ways to improve it, which I won’t do.
4. I distract myself even more by listing friends and relatives I don’t actually care to see, really, then make a second list of 14 excuses I will use to avoid seeing them. I will do this.

**Good choices for half-snacks:** celery, carrots, peppers, crackers.

**Less than ideal choices for half-snacks:** a bowlful of trifle, a large piece of chocolate layer cake with chocolate cream icing, three butter tarts topped with whipped cream, a banana split with four scoops of ice cream dripping with strawberry syrup and nuts.



## CHAPTER 8

### WHAT IF I GO UP AND DOWN?

You will, but do not fret. Overly.

Your body can have a bit of a mind of its own and, argue with it as you will surely do, you will always lose the argument. Sometimes, it just seems to be saving up for a rainy day, and at other times it lets loose like there is no tomorrow. I still can't figure out why. So, I just let it do what it wants. Up a pound, down a pound, all for no apparent reason. Fine. I will not make a big deal of it and put up a fight. I am much too nice for that, as you well know already.

But I do have my little trick: I take a weekly average. I just add up my weights for the week, divide by 7, and voila! A weekly average. I even forego the temptation to be my usual lazy self and just do a mental estimate. No, instead I calculate precisely, and I even round off nicely to two decimal points just to please my elementary school teacher, Mrs. McMillan.

Now ... if the weekly average goes up ... **TIME TO FRET!**

So, what should you do if it does go up? Should you spend a few days eating less than half? I suppose you could eat one third only, but this amount of nourishment might be too little to sustain your obviously vigorous lifestyle. Maybe we could settle on halfway between one third and half, which, according to my calculator, would be 41.66666%. I don't know about you, but I am a little afraid that I would get bogged down trying to slice up my toast to accurately reflect those last three or four sixes. It might be easier if I were to write it as  $41\frac{2}{3}\%$ , but do we really want to get bogged down in vulgar fractions\* when we are celebrating the JOY Half-Diet?

And what if you go down too much? Can you just gobble down a couple of cream-filled donuts and call it even-steven? Yes. Once again, you will note how generous of spirit I can be, especially when I am a little jealous that you over-hit your target and I (again) did not meet mine.

\*I openly confess I stole this joke from W.S. Gilbert, of Gilbert & Sullivan fame. But I will make some modest effort not to make blatant fun of your sisters and your cousins, and your sisters and your cousins, and your aunts.



## **CHAPTER 9**

### **BUT I LIKE PARTIES AND CELEBRATIONS**

Somebody is going to have a birthday. Somebody is going to have an anniversary of some sort. Some friend is going to invite you to a little party to selfishly celebrate their promotion at work. There will be lots of food there. Should ... I ... ?

Yes. Go.

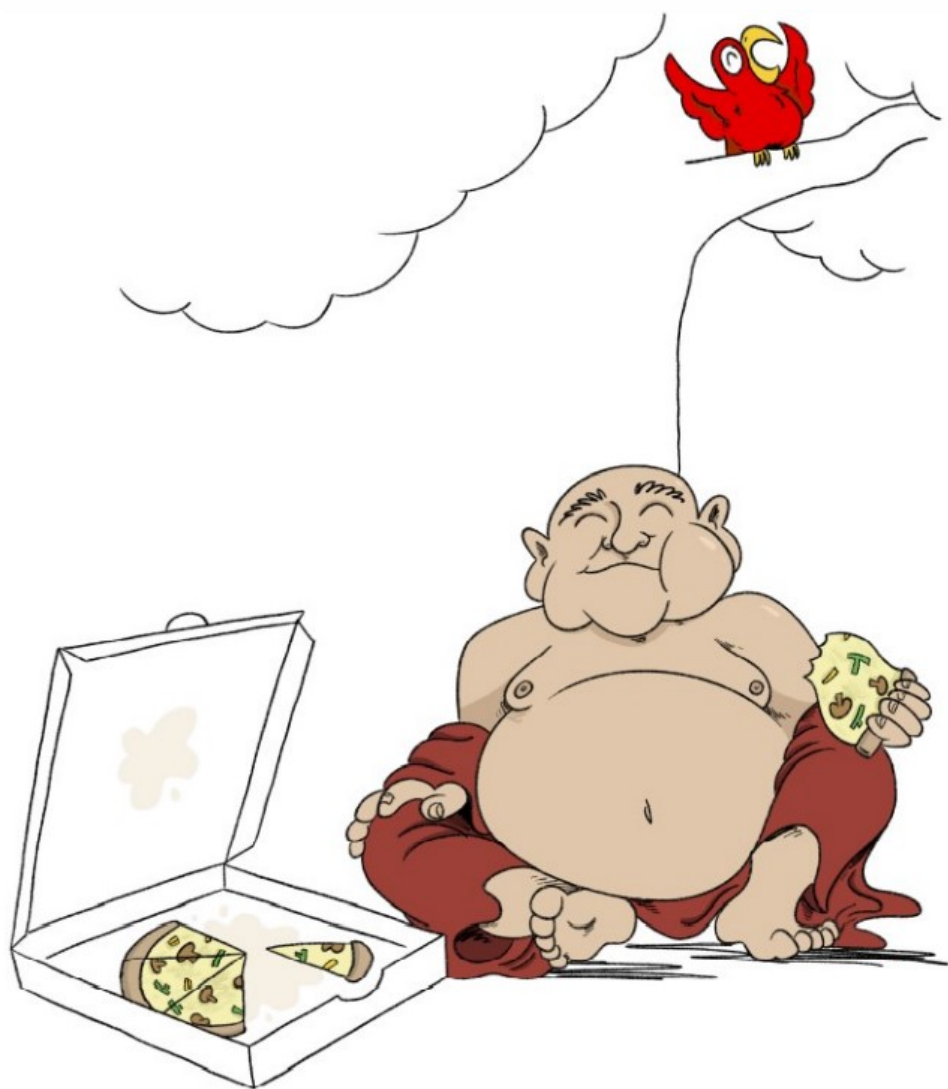
You can't stop parties or celebrations and, as long as that Marian doesn't come, they can be fun. So just suck in your belly and go. You need to be happy. But more importantly, you need everyone to oooh and aaah over how great you look. Best, though, to ignore their subtext: how bad you have always looked up to now.

Wedding receptions can be managed. You can easily combine a bit of exercise and not eating too much (and skipping that horrible piece of wedding cake altogether) by jumping up time after time and leading the happy guests in spirited rounds of the Chicken Dance and YMCA. Such fun!

Fiftieth wedding anniversaries are ok too. Most of the Dear Couple's friends have been well trained to bring food to such events, but they are at the advanced stage of life where their cooking and baking just can't be trusted even one little bit. Remember the party where Great-Aunt Shirley brought a rhubarb pie, but she had stirred in laundry detergent instead of white sugar? Yes, very safe because you know you are not going to eat a thing.

But if your social life involves a healthy dose of funeral receptions, you will have to sacrifice. No matter how much you have vowed to celebrate a life well lived, there is just no way to avoid gobbling down all those egg salad sandwiches and chocolate-laden squares when you are laying a sympathetic hand on the arms of those who dearly loved the deceased. Or at least had heard of him.

And dinner parties? Just go to half of them. They are basically all the same anyway: drink, eat, make fun of people, go home.



## CHAPTER 10

### CAN I TAKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE?

If you were to ask the many international diet experts this question, every single one would, without a doubt, do that little head-jerk thing that means “Huh?” When they regain their ability to speak again, the answer would most definitely simply be: “Noooooooo ...”

But where they say no, I say yes. That is how positive and generous a person I am. But you know that already.

I will certainly let you take a leave of absence — on two conditions:

1. You have to set a firm timeline. I took a leave of absence over the summer months because there are just too many picnics and barbeques, and it breaks my heart to eat half a hamburger and secretly set the other half on a flat stone in the corner of the garden for the stray cats to squabble over in the middle of the night. Two months. When that was over, I was back to “just eat half” again. No excuses. Follow this.
2. You have to maintain your weight. Your leave of absence is a holiday from losing weight, but it doesn’t mean you can gain. Oh no. Keep weighing yourself and walking and all the other things. If you pig out on a big piece of cake and ice cream at a picnic and your weight goes — shall we say — “up a bit” ease off right away and go back down. That’s the deal with a leave of absence.

Besides the summer, or the winter, or the spring, or the fall, what other reasons might you have for taking a leave of absence?

Mandatory:

- Being ill
- Being pregnant or breast-feeding
- Bereavement

Optional:

- Vacation time, which you alone have selfishly booked, so ...
- Holiday seasons that you only half-enjoy anyway, right?
- Cranky Granny Linda visiting for a week. Ok, this might be mandatory.



## CHAPTER 11

### SO WHAT HAPPENS IF I REACH MY GOAL?

What do you mean if?

*IF?* Really?

You mean when. Be optimistic. We all know your friends — and certainly your family — have absolutely no faith in you ever reaching your goal, but won't it be fun to see their faces fall when you do? Besides, you will never sit down to that whole piece of lemon pie in the future unless you have a little faith in yourself.

So when you reach your goal, all you have to do is maintain. Keep weighing, walking, etc. etc. and do not return to your pig-pig-pig style of eating. But the easy part is ahead of you: just maintain.

Also, when you reach your goal, celebrate for a day like a drunken penguin dancing about on a tiny ice floe. You deserve it. Then, plan a nice meal out at an expensive dining room. Invite all your favorite friends and relatives, but make it clear that they all have to chip in and pay your share of the meal (including tip). Even when [say the names of your own cheapskate friends and relative here] try to get out of paying their share and yours, insist.

Here is the other part of the deal: they all have to eat half portions, and you get to eat full portions! Yes! Fair is fair. To top off the meal, order a large piece of orange mousse cake, then stuff huge bites of it into your mouth while you carefully cut small chocolate brownies in half and tell them how delicious their two bites will be. And bonus! The pitiful look on Aunt Dorothy's face will make all those months of being on the JOY Half-Diet well worth the effort.

Of course, you know you have pigged out unduly on your glorious night out and will have to go on half portions for a couple of days again. But that's ok. It is not forever. Just to maintain your goal. Maintain, maintain, maintain.

For now, be happy. You reached your goal. Let the JOY flow.



## **CHAPTER 12**

### **BOTTOM LINE**

If you only remember one thing from this book,  
remember these three words:

**JUST**

**EAT**

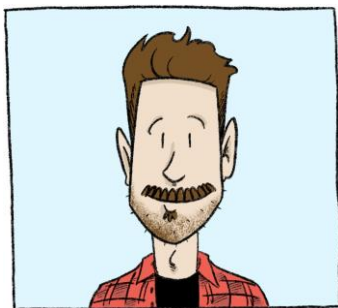
**HALF**

## About the author



**Ivan Brown** is a retired professor with a long list of totally humorless academic publications. But now, he turns his attention to his true writing love: silliness, with a sort-of serious message. He is ever so hopeful that this will be the first of, well, at least a few — if he is not too lazy to write them! Currently, he is writing *Travel Tales*, a series of amusing (and sometimes touching) things that happened to him during his many world travels. Ivan Brown lives in Toronto, Canada.

## About the illustrator



**Jon Klassen** is a Canadian illustrator and cartoonist. Born and raised in rural southwestern Ontario, Jon works pre-dominantly in illustrating children's books and cartoons. He lives and works in Toronto, Canada with his cat, Reed.

[www.imjonklassen.com](http://www.imjonklassen.com)



**THE JOY HALF-DIET** is a funny, short book with a serious message that challenges you to toss your old dieting ideas straight out the window and just go with three words of advice.

The author knows how lazy you are and what a food cheater you are – as he is, although he lost 16 pounds in spite of his laziness and cheating ways.

This tongue-in-cheek advice is a delightful read, and you will get as much kick out of the brilliant comic illustrations as from the text itself!

ISBN 9781777163723

