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— Sumner Brooks, MPH, RDN, LD, author of *Savvy Girl: A Guide to Eating*



## A Journey to Food & Body Freedom

6 Essential Steps to Ditching the Diets &  
Nourishing Your Body From the Inside Out

Katy Weber

# Because you are worth it!

## Raise your hand if...

- You're really good with your diet for a few days, then inexplicably sabotage your own efforts
- You fear having certain foods in the house because you feel you lack the self-control to avoid them
- You feel like everyone but you has this whole eating thing figured out and you want to scream, "*What is wrong with me?!*"

**Guess what. You are not alone!** In *Worth It*, Katy Weber shares her own history with yo-yo dieting and binge eating, how she finally broke free, and the 6 essential steps that brought her to food and body freedom. It's time to change your perspective about your body, your health, and your self-worth.

"This book reads like a juicy memoir with self-help benefits. If you're still struggling with dieting, you will definitely see yourself in this book ... and hopefully, a path to another way of living."

Isabel Foxen Duke, anti-diet coach and emotional-eating expert

"*Worth It* is 130 pages of recovery, truth, and evidence-based expertise about how and why overcoming chronic dieting will provide you with liberation in your life. ... This is a fantastic read for anyone who struggles with eating and body image."

Sumner Brooks, MPS, RDN, LD, author of *Savvy Girl: A Guide to Eating*

"I needed this book more than I ever knew. ... *Worth It* is a testament to what happens when you face your biggest fear and let yourself go. Beauty. Relief. True fullness and self love."

Lauree Ostrofsky, author of *Simply Leap* and *I'm Scared & Doing It Anyway*

"*Worth It* is a powerful read for anyone, but if you are a mother it is a must read now!"

Peggy Belles, author of *Peace in Pieces: A Memoir Told Through Poetry*



**Katy Weber** is a certified health coach who works closely with those who are ready to normalize their relationship with food and their body, and break free from the dieting and binge-eating cycle for good. She lives in Rosendale, New York, with her husband, two kids, a dog and two cats.

Find out more at  
**[www.worthitwithkaty.com](http://www.worthitwithkaty.com)**

Author photograph by Keith Ferris

SELF HELP/MEMOIR

\$14.95



# Worth It: A Journey to Food & Body Freedom

6 Essential Steps to Ditching the Diets &  
Nourishing Your Body from the Inside Out

*Katy Weber*

Praise for ***Worth It: A Journey to  
Food & Body Freedom***

“Katy weaves a relatable personal narrative about her own relationship with food and weight with digestible summaries of some critical aspects of the non-diet approach. Referencing some of the greatest thought leaders in this space — including Linda Bacon, Ellyn Satter, and others — this book reads like a juicy memoir with self-help benefits. If you’re still struggling with dieting, you will definitely see yourself in this book ... and hopefully, a path to another way of living.”

— Isabel Foxen Duke, anti-diet coach  
and emotional-eating expert

“*Worth It* is 130 pages of recovery, truth, and evidence-based expertise about how and why overcoming chronic dieting will provide you with liberation in your life. The author has done an exceptional job at inviting you in to her experiences and weaving in facts throughout the entire book about the dangers of weight-focus and how to move toward freedom from dieting. She brings a valuable and credible approach to how you can overcome disordered thinking about food, movement and your body. This is a fantastic read for anyone who struggles with eating and body image.”

— Sumner Brooks, MPS, RDN, LD,  
author of *Savvy Girl: A Guide to Eating*

"I needed this book more than I ever knew. When it comes to what we eat, what we weigh and how we look, Katy Weber boldly exposes what most women think in our heads but are too afraid to say out loud. In sharing it here, those thoughts finally feel less daunting. *Worth It* is a testament to what happens when you face your biggest fear and let yourself go. Beauty. Relief. True fullness and self love."

— Lauree Ostrofsky, author of *Simply Leap*  
and *I'm Scared & Doing It Anyway*

"*Worth It* is a revolutionary and refreshingly honest guide to reclaim true health and wellness, and it has nothing to do with a certain size or weight! This book exposes the insanity of the diet industry, while giving the reader an immediate and practical action plan based on self love and care. *Worth It* is a powerful read for anyone, but if you are a mother, it is a must read now!"

— Peggy Belles, author of *Peace in Pieces:  
A Memoir Told Through Poetry*

## Praise for **Worth It with Katy**

"I cannot say enough great things about Worth It with Katy! It's so tempting to 'go on a diet,' but after years and years of that failing again and again, I finally tried something new — Katy saved my sanity and my health!"

— *Sheila*

"Katy offers the perspective of someone who has 'been there' but has achieved what many of us have been trained to believe is unobtainable."

— *Sara*

"What Katy offers is not a weight loss program, it's a judgment loss program. She teaches you how to stop judging yourself so that you can live a life you love, free of weight drama."

— *Julie*

"Katy offers light and humor at the end of a long, dark tunnel we call 'DIET,' which should become a four-letter word ... "

— *Charlotte*

"Katy is real, honest, no-nonsense and also approachable and funny. You'll like yourself more after working with her."

— *Lauree*

“Katy is a fantastic coach! I highly recommend working with her to overcome the stress and anxiety of dieting. She really helped me change my mindset — even though I had convinced myself that I was focusing on a ‘wellness lifestyle,’ I was still tracking calories, negotiating with myself over what I should or shouldn’t eat and getting angry at myself for cheating or going off plan. That’s just exhausting and lead to constant feelings of failure. Working with Katy helped me reshape my thinking around food and exercise. Breaking the cycle with dieting doesn’t mean giving up on yourself — once I shifted my mindset and took the pressure off, I actually started to lose some weight, enjoy my food more and enjoy working out.”

— *Maureen*

“Katy is a fantastic coach. She is smart, gives great advice, is compassionate and understanding. She helps me set small manageable goals to work towards my larger goal. I feel like she can relate to my concerns and challenges and she celebrates my successes.”

— *Daisy*

For more support beyond the book,  
visit **worthitwithkaty.com**.

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*For Anna*



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Introduction:

*My Story*



Every Saturday morning for nearly five years, I went to a Weight Watchers meeting — first as a member, then as a lifetime member, and then as a leader.

Each week, I'd step on the scale. I'd remove my shoes, my jewelry, my watch. I'd make sure I hadn't eaten anything that morning. I would always empty my bladder. I wore the lightest clothes I could find (I weighed them at home ahead of time).

During the meetings, we would strategize how to get through family barbecues, or how to research menus online before going to restaurants. We would debate whether bananas really should be 0 points. We'd share tips, like using oil spray on roasted vegetables to keep the point value low, or drinking a big glass of water before a meal so you feel less hungry, or putting your fork down between bites to slow down your eating. We'd build imaginary sandwiches with the fewest points we could. We'd laugh. And

cry. I'd hand out bravo stickers. We'd always leave feeling hopeful about our future.

We'd congratulate each other on our wins.

"I baked cookies for my daughter's class and didn't eat a single one!"

"For Valentine's Day, I told my husband to get me fruit instead of chocolates!"

"I lost this week, even though I ate a dessert 3 days ago!"

We'd commiserate.

"I don't know what's wrong. I did everything right this week, but I'm up today."

"Wait, when did a slice of pizza become 7 points?!"

"God, I miss french fries."

We'd confess our sins.

"I was making my son a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and I tasted a bit of peanut butter on my finger. Next thing I knew, I'd eaten half the jar!"

"After my weekly weigh-ins, I go out for a big splurge."

It was our church. Some of us came every week, and some came only during the holidays.

My husband once asked me what the meetings were like. I said, "Picture a cross between AA and Mary Kay."





So, how exactly does a Weight Watchers leader become an anti-diet crusader?

There was no magic flash of insight, no movie-worthy moment where mid-meeting I swept the fat-free snacks off the table, smashed the scales and threw open the meeting room door, raising my fist in the air.

In reality, the process was agonizingly slow and not exactly voluntary. There was lots of crying. And cursing. And hiding under the covers.

This is definitely not a weight loss book, so I'm sorry if that's what you were hoping for. This is also not a book that's going to give you any hard and fast answers, or frankly promise you anything.

Still with me? Great. This book is about me and my 28-year struggle with yo-yo dieting, binge eating and body shame. This book is about that pit of frustration and food obsession and body hatred that way too many of us are way too familiar with. This book is about how I fell into that pit, and how I finally began to crawl out. This book isn't about finding peace and freedom, but it is about looking for it.



I wasn't a fat kid. I wasn't skinny, either. I never had a

problem with my body. I wasn't picked on with that casual cruelty only children can really master. But I was tall. I always stood in the back row of my class pictures, which I thought sucked. But if you'd asked me then, I would have just said, "I'm average."

Until the 5th grade. My French teacher had the brilliant idea of teaching our class about kilograms by having each of us stand on a scale and calculate our weight ... IN FRONT OF THE WHOLE CLASS. And guess who weighed the most of all the girls? Yep. Right there, right then, in the most public of humiliations, I was irrevocably confirmed as "the heaviest girl." Even my 10-year-old brain instinctively knew that this was *the worst possible thing in the world*.

That day changed everything. From then on I would never again look at myself and not think about my size. There was something wrong with me. My body was unlovable. I should be ashamed.

At 14, puberty hit me like a freight train. My already "too large" body sprouted more horrifying curves. I went on my first official diet: Slim Fast. You never forget your first. Chalky brown shakes for breakfast and lunch, followed by a sensible dinner. It didn't last long, but it marked the beginning of the next 28 years of one diet or another. In my mind, my body had betrayed me and I had to do whatever I could to shrink.

I became a diet connoisseur. Low cal, low carb, no carb, low fat, high protein, high fat, low protein, gly-

cemic index, Atkins, South Beach, The Zone, Whole 30, paleo, French Women Don't Get Fat. I'd give anything a shot. And each time, the results were the same. Lose a few pounds. Hooray! Feel great, lighten up a little, loosen the reins. Gain some back. Shit. Gotta tighten the reins, gotta do better. Gotta be better. Not coming off. Aw, fuck it. Give up. Eat everything in sight. Gain back the weight. Gain back more. Resume being a miserable diet failure.

At the age of 20, I stumbled onto my first dramatic weight loss. It was the Fit for Life diet, created in the 1980s by California couple Harvey and Marilyn Diamond, and the rules were bizarre. Only fruit before noon. After that, it was "all you could eat" vegetables. There were also limited carbs and proteins, but you could *never eat them at the same time*. This basically meant I could choose between croutons and cheese on my salads. I could handle that.

I lost so much weight that I got my first introduction into the world of diet-related compliments.

"You look amazing!"

"How did you do it?!"

"So healthy!"

"You must feel great!"

Those compliments felt SO GOOD. But they also came with the implicit understanding that a) I had achieved something remarkable and was now deserving of envy and praise, and b) If I look amazing NOW, guess how I didn't look before?

Well, that builds pressure. A lot of pressure. I'm amazing now, and I wasn't amazing before. Clearly, I need to stay amazing. I NEED TO STAY AMAZING. Pressure, of course, demands relief. And I found it in a new level of secret shame: binge eating.

I lived alone, so binging was easy. I was the picture of health in front of others, but alone? Up late, cramming for tests or furiously typing out essays at 4 a.m.? Easy. It started small. A little something. A reward for being good. For working hard. But it would snowball. I'd spin out. Stuffed. Uncomfortable. Depressed. Ashamed. I gained my Fit for Life weight back pretty quick. The compliments tapered off, and there I was, same old me, same old non-amazing self.

Eventually I picked myself up by the bootstraps and started a new diet. Every time it was the same. "I've got this," I'd say. "This one's for life! I'm making real, lasting changes! I'm going to be thin! I'm going to look amazing! I'm going to BE amazing! I'd found the magic bullet! The secret to happiness! I can't believe the rest of the world doesn't know about this." Yada yada. It was seductive.

The compliments would return, confirming for me yet again that I was only deserving of praise when I was actively losing weight.

Each diet was like a torrid love affair. They always began with passion and optimism. But then, the

bloom would fade. I'd relax and start to crave old habits — "bad foods," off menu, not on the plan. Then the internal struggle. I'd try so hard to be good and avoid the cravings, but instead I'd obsess over them. Then I'd promise, I'd SWEAR to myself, "It's just this once!" Get it out of my system. Get right back on track.

I was constantly trying not to fall off the wagon, clinging to it by my fingernails. But inevitably I'd fall off, and when I did, I'd fall hard. I'd fall with pleasure. With relief. Then came self-loathing. Guilt. Resignation. Depression.

"I have no will power."

"I gotta get my shit together."

"I'll start fresh Monday."

That was my 20s and early 30s. By the time I hit 36, I was resigned to a life of yo-yo dieting. Weight loss. Yay! Weight gain. Fuck. And I believed it was all my fault. I just lacked discipline. I had no self-control. *C'est la vie.*

I wasn't unhappy. I liked my life. I had a wonderful husband, 2 beautiful children, a decent career. But there was always a nagging belief that no matter how good things were, they'd be better if I lost weight. If I could just be thin, then I would REALLY be happy.



Enter Weight Watchers.

I had recently had my 2nd child, and my life felt overwhelming and out of control. It didn't help that my stubborn baby weight wasn't going anywhere. I ran into an old friend who'd lost an enormous amount of weight on the program. She was radiant. I was proud of her. She was proud of herself. I joined the very next day. I'd never paid for a weight loss program before, but I wanted what she had.

And I got it! It worked. Oh man, it worked! With my allotted daily points, I dropped pounds fast. I set a random goal weight for myself, smack dab in the middle of my "normal" BMI range, and I hit it in just 8 months. I had arrived. I had done it. I was finally thin. I was euphoric.

This wasn't a diet, I told myself. This was a lifestyle. This was MY lifestyle. I had finally learned the truth. This was the key to happiness. And now that I was in the club, I was never, ever, EVER going back! Sound familiar? ...

First, the good: There was the praise. I got noticed. Noticed by, like, everyone. The change was dramatic. There were ooohs. There were aaahs. I felt invincible. The compliments became such a constant fixture that if someone saw me and didn't immediately say, "You look amazing!", I'd wonder what the hell was wrong — either with them or with me.

I proudly posted “before and after” photos on Facebook. I evangelized the program, shouting from the rooftops: “Weight Watchers is amazing. I’m happier! A better mom! A better person!” I was reborn. I shed my former life, my former insecurities and, of course, all my former clothes.

I was also terrified. I’d been on this road before, and it always ended the same way. This time had to be different. So I became a Weight Watchers leader. I figured standing in front of members each week, not to mention the mandatory monthly weigh-ins, would have to keep me accountable.

But it was more than just accountability. I honestly felt the program was the greatest thing that had ever happened to me. I had earned the dream. I was finally thin! I was a superwoman! And I genuinely wanted to help others get there, too. I wanted to let them in on the secret, expand the club, help this group of desperate members reach their ultimate dream. I wouldn’t — I couldn’t! — let them down.

Well, it only took a month. Despite the weekly weigh-ins, obsessive point-counting, and preaching from the pulpit, the weight creep started. I could feel myself losing resolve. Same cycle. Same me. I’d be “good” for a day or two, maybe even three. Then I’d trip up. An indulgence. Then the regret and the chastising. And then the vow: I’ll start fresh in the morning.

But the scoldings and the vows weren't enough. The magic was gone. My determination had flagged. My weight crept up. Restrict. Binge. Repeat.

Over those years, my eating grew more and more extreme. I'd wake with resolve and eat as little as possible throughout the day. Sometimes I'd skip dinner entirely, because in the back of my head I knew what was coming. I knew that at night, when the kids were asleep, I'd head to the kitchen and the flood gates would open. I'd eat thousands of calories, feeling completely incapable of stopping. So I increased my exercise. Gotta burn it off! Gotta make it up! Gotta keep this train on the tracks!

The nighttime eating only got worse. And more frequent. And each pound re-gained brought more stress. I was a failure. Everyone was so proud of me, and I was letting them down. I was letting myself down. Everyone must pity me now. And what about my members?! I'm such a hypocrite. I tout the program every Saturday, but I'm wildly off plan in my own life.

I was losing my hold on the new, amazing me. And as far as I was concerned, there was no bigger failure than returning to my old body.

Three years. For three years I slogged through this diet/binge cycle. Healthy, small portions while everyone was watching. Thousand-calorie mega binges every night. I was stressed, I was ashamed, I was miserable. And I was still gaining weight.



Then, on a New Year's Eve, I waited for my husband to go to bed and I rang in the new year with an epic binge to end all binges. After all, New Year's Day is the ultimate fresh start, right?

The next day, I woke up and immediately stepped on the scale to assess the damage. Horror. Shame. Vows. God, I was so tired of it all. I decided then that I had to cure myself of this binge eating once and for all. If I could just stop binge eating, I knew I would be thin again.

• • •

I started listening to podcasts, reading blogs, and researching as much as I could about binge eating and its root causes. Everything I came across pointed to the same conclusion: Your binge eating isn't the problem, it's a symptom of another problem. Dieting.

Oh crap. You can't be serious. If I really want to end binge eating, I have to stop dieting? How the hell am I supposed to stop dieting? And how the hell am I going to lose weight if I'm not dieting?

Where did this notion come from? It's left out of diet literature. Weight Watchers never even hinted at it. After decades of restricting and binge eating, this was the very first time it had ever occurred to me that restrictive eating habits might be the cause of out-of-control eating. I had never made this connection before. No adult ever suggested this to me

when I was growing up. No physician had ever mentioned this. This was completely novel information to me, and it was pretty shattering.

This was definitely NOT the answer I wanted. This did not fit into my plan. I did not want to believe it.

But I also knew it made perfect sense. If I wanted to cure myself of binge eating, I needed to stop restricting my food. I needed to feed myself enough that I wouldn't need to overcompensate with binges.

I was terrified. Eat whatever I want? Surely I'd gain a ton of weight. It felt wrong. It felt like giving up. It felt chaotic and irresponsible. It felt *unhealthy*.

So I conjured up a foolproof plan. I'd eat as much as I wanted, but I'd limit the types of food I ate. I figured I could feed myself AND lose weight if I only ate non-processed, grass-fed, organic, pasture-raised, sprouted grain, sanctimonious, morally superior food. Sugar became Satan.

And it worked! Well, sorta. I had a few good months. Things were looking up, binge eating was under control, weight went down. But it didn't last. It couldn't last. Why? *Because I was still restricting my food.* Sure, it wasn't the amount this time, but restriction is restriction. And every meal, every choice, every non-GMO, locally sourced, hand-picked leaf of kale I cooked had the same old underlying motivation. Weight loss. Weight loss. Weight loss. And soon the binges came back. The cycle reset.



One evening, as I sat at dinner with my family and I was the only one eating my grass-fed burger without a bun, I looked over at my 8-year-old daughter. Man, I love this girl. When I look at her, I'm so proud of her. And I think, When she looks at me, what does she see? She sees my sad bunless burger. She sees mommy eats differently than she and the boys. What message am I sending her? Am I teaching her about health? Am I teaching her about self-care? About confidence? Or am I teaching her what I'd learned, whether I meant to or not: that thinness is the goal above all else. You have to fight for it at all costs. And you have to fight for it every day, forever.

Did I really want this path for her — a lifetime of dieting and feeling like her body wasn't good enough? That she wasn't good enough? Did I want her to obsess about thinness, to believe weight loss would make her happier when I knew this wasn't the case? Did I want her to feel somehow deficient if she was taller and larger than her friends? Did I want her to spend even a fraction of a minute longing to be anything other than her perfect self? No. No. No. A thousand times no.

I was done. Done weighing my portions. Done politely declining things I loved. Done feeling constantly anxious around food and forever fearing the next binge. It was just too much. I knew what I wanted for my daughter. It was easy. Food and body

freedom. So how come I couldn't want that for myself? Turns out I could. Turns out I did.



When you've spent your whole life obsessing about what you eat, it is very, VERY hard to intentionally stop. But I did it. All foods were allowed. Nothing was off the table. Seconds? Sure. Snack? Why not? I ate when I felt like it. I indulged my cravings. I listened to my hunger. I felt like I was cheating.

This was all wildly new to me. Yes, I felt like I'd broken out of my chains, but I also felt like I'd given up on myself. A nagging voice told me, "A dream has died. A better version of you *has died*." Because for me, self-care was always synonymous with weight loss. And if I give up on one, I would clearly be giving up on the other.

I quit Weight Watchers. I quit restricting. I started to really eat. I put aside my fear of weight gain and gave myself permission to enjoy. Enjoy myself. Enjoy food. Enjoy my body, at any size.

It was crazy at first. I ate everything in sight. I fed every craving. I ate lots of ice cream and chocolate. I ate burgers (with buns) and fries. I'd been restricting myself for 28 years, and dammit I was hungry! Did I gain weight? Most definitely. I had to. My clothes got tight. I felt huge. I cried. A lot. But I knew what I needed, and I made it through.

That was hard. I feared I was making a huge mistake. But I pushed on, not because I knew what I was doing was right, but because anything else seemed wrong.

Slowly, something magical started to happen. I was changing. I was tuning in. I was understanding my body's hunger cues for the first time since, well, ever. And soon I stopped eating everything in sight. Endless ice cream can actually become tedious. Who knew, right? And chocolate? Even beautiful, luxurious, near-perfect chocolate can lose its appeal when you know it's available anytime you want it. The pendulum, which had swung furiously in both directions for so many years, had started to settle. And I felt it — a stillness, a peace. I had stopped restricting. I had stopped binging. I was free.



Diets have a basic promise. Lose weight. Feel great. Get congratulated. Get complimented. You've done a good job. You're a good person. Your confidence soars.

But nobody talks about what comes next. How our bodies fight back. How maintaining is harder than losing. How you start to feel betrayed. What's wrong with me? I'm trying so hard to be good and yet I'm a failure. I have no will power. I'm a disgrace.

The weight slowly comes back. The compliments cease, and their silence is even louder. You hear

the judgment in the quiet. “So sad for her.” “She couldn’t keep it up.” “She gave up.” “She looks terrible.” “She must be so unhealthy.” It’s pain. It’s shame. Your confidence is in the toilet.

So, new vows. New diets. Yada yada. Rinse. Repeat.

It’s exhausting. It’s demoralizing. But it’s also comfortable. It’s all we know. It may be a vicious cycle, but we don’t know what else to do. Leaping off that cliff? Now, that’s truly terrifying. Terrifying and lonely, and every second is a second of self-doubt.

Dieting is an addiction. And breaking any addiction takes guts beyond measure. It was hard to face my inner critic. It was hard to silence that voice shouting “Get your act together!” and “Get the body you’ve always wanted, the body you’ve always deserved.”

I still have doubts. Diet culture is a hurricane that swirls around every aspect of modern life — in schools, at work, at the supermarket, on television, in movies, at the gym. I constantly feel the pull. Do I have what it takes to withstand it? There are days I simply can’t, and so I stay home and cry. There are people I avoid because I hear their thoughts, and their thoughts are not kind. A part of me cries out over and over, “STOP THIS. YOU ARE MAKING A HUGE MISTAKE. GO BACK TO WHERE IT’S SAFE.” Sometimes I wonder if I’ll ever feel proud of my body again.

But then, my daughter.

I imagine saying to her all the things I so easily say to myself. I imagine her thinking she's not enough just as she is. I wonder how long till she doubts her own self-worth? Till she feels envious of the thinnest girl in the room. I wonder if it's already too late.

She needs to know she's perfect as she is. She doesn't need to change. She is loved. She is accepted. She is enough. And that belief must start with me. I will be brave for her.

I think back to my younger self. Adolescent me, fighting my body. Wanting to be thin. Wanting to be accepted.

But that acceptance I craved? It wasn't from others. It was from myself. I know that now. I never accepted myself. I never gave myself a chance. That ends now, too. I'm saying no. No to the voices, the demons, the self-loathing. The shame. I'm untangling a lifetime of negative self-image and self-criticism. I'm saying no to fear, and I'm moving forward the only way I know how.

• • •

So, let's get to it. The chapters that follow are divided into six themes. Each was an essential step for me in my own recovery from the diet-binge cycle and my quest for food and body freedom.

I wrote this book for me. I wanted to remind my-

self of how far I've come, and how there's no turning back. I don't always know if I'm doing the right thing, but for now doing anything else feels wrong. I've chosen to put my trust in that gut feeling, simply because I'm out of options and I need to keep going.

I wrote this book for you, wherever you are on your journey. It's slow and it's hard. It's really hard. And if you feel scared and frustrated, know that you're not alone. You'll get through this.

And I wrote this book for our daughters. When I look at them and think of their future and all that they will accomplish regardless of the size of their bodies, I know that this journey is worth it.