



Jon Benson's Hook System: *The Avatar's Diary*TM

ENTRY 1: MY LIFE SO FAR

Dear Diary,

My name is Brenda. I put this picture of me on this page to mark the day I started this diary.



As of today, I'm 53 years old. I'm a mother of 3 wonderful children, and I've been happily married for 27 years. Life here in Boise, Idaho is enjoyable, but now that Cindy is expecting her second child, Chris is about to start his career as a dental assistant, and Sally has finally picked a major (she's going to be a vet), the house is more lonely than usual.

Life is pretty good I guess, but I want to be more than just "an empty-nester mom". I really want to find a sustainable plan that will help me lose the 55 pounds I've put on during my child-rearing years. And I've come to a decision: I'm willing to make whatever changes I need to to my diet in order to do it.

I know, I know...I've tried to achieve this before...and I failed. And I feel like a loser to be honest...and I feel ashamed. I feel ugly - and that hurts to say. Let-down. Worn-down. Uncomfortable all the time. Drained of energy. But here lately I've grown committed...almost desperate.

It's been a series of events. I suppose my primary motivation is to recapture Dan's attention and affection, but I REFUSE to become some kind of "supermom" or live in a gym to achieve my goals. Watching Dan over the past few years pull away from me has been gut-wrenching. We barely make love anymore. I've caught him eyeing Sally's friends - and I suppose I can't blame him. They are young, beautiful, toned...as I used to be. But when he told me the other day, "Brenda, I love you, but I'm just not attracted to you anymore...and I'm willing to work through it with a therapist, but I don't see how it will change."

That was awful for me. There has to be a better way.

So why did I come to this decision? Simple: I'm sick and tired of walking around with a child's weight hanging off my body all day long. That brings me all kinds of hell, like achy joints, clothes that I can't even dream of squeezing into any more, and all these nagging health ailments that keep creeping up. Just the other day, the doctor told me I was prediabetic, and my cholesterol is through the roof. He wants me on meds.

And if it keeps going, I could end up divorced and dying alone – truly my greatest fear. I fear the kids were the only reason he stayed. And it's true: I'm not sexy anymore. I let myself go. He works out 3 days a week, and I love him for that. But I turned to food for comfort when Sally left home.

That's not true: it was long before that. The pain of watching my kids leave the house, even though I'm proud as hell of them, really drove me to drown my sorrows in food.

If this continues, I won't make it to 70.

And I can't go there...I won't go there.

ENTRY 2: WHY NOW?

I guess I've been interested in weight loss ever since I gained my "Freshman 15" back in college. People ask me what my experience with losing weight and going on diet after diet has been like. Well, it's been moments of joy punctuated by months and years of agony.

The moment I start rolling, I do something to sabotage myself. I remember one time I had lost like 30 pounds. My tummy was flat again! I felt sexy, even if I did still need to lose about 20 or so pounds. Dan responded too. He and I made love almost every night. That was my cardio!

I took Dan's honest but hurtful conversation with me - worst of all, it happened when I wanted to be intimate with him - to get more motivated and interested in searching for answers to these awful, ugly rolls of fat around my tummy and the cottage cheese thighs I see in the bathroom mirror every morning. That's no way to say "Good Morning, Brenda". I want to smash that mirror!

Here lately I've been saying out loud more than once, "That's it Brenda. You're fat. You're old. You're everything you feared and hated in your own mother, and more. And like her, you'll lose your hubby to a younger, more exciting woman any day now!"

I know, that's really negative, but that's how I feel.

Not only that...I feel guilty. I especially feel guilty about my total lack of willpower when anything sweet comes my way...or when I turn on the news and see all the war and violence in the world...all the chaos. Food comforts me.

It's not all bad though. I feel optimistic when I hear about some new diet that appeals to my "need it now" nature.

I've been reading Woman's World and Shape lately. They give me a bit of hope and inspiration from time to time.

It reminds me of one of my favorite movies: Shallow Hal. It's a silly movie that I got into because I love Anthony Robbins' stuff so much. I didn't think I'd ever like it. But seeing someone loved and rejected due to physical traits? It gives me hope that Dan will fall in love with me again. Maybe he needs Tony to zap him!

In fact, I've adopted a "mantra" of sorts. I'll frame it on my wall during this journey: "Love yourself first, and feed yourself after".

ENTRY 3: WHAT I WANT & WHY

I've figured it out!

I know at least a few of the things I want out of my weight loss plan.

I want a plan that allows me to lose the weight and keep it off without starving myself...which will also help me:

- Burn away some of this stubborn thigh fat
- Reduce my tummy size so I can fit back into those sexy dresses I used to wear out with Dan all the time
- Wear a bikini - even if it's just in the backyard pool. It's not for anyone but me!

Now, it can't just be any old plan. This plan has to fit my expectations:

It has to allow me to eat flexibly while still enjoying what I'm eating.

It has to be a legitimate way to lose weight without supplements or jeopardizing my health or crash dieting. No scammy crap!

It has to come with a lot of hand-holding because I can't do this on my own.

I need to see results within the first week, otherwise I lose motivation.

I can't be something that makes me go to a gym with a bunch of guys, do endless hours of cardio, or count grams or calories or anything like that.

As silly as it sounds now, my ultimate dream is to walk into a bar where I've asked Dan to meet me. He hasn't seen me for a month - I don't know why, but that's what I envision. And I walk in and his jaw hits the floor in AWE! He gives me the biggest kiss I've had in years, and whisks me out of the bar and into the nearest hotel room.

Just writing it feels weird! But I know I'll have achieved that dream when I look at myself in that damn bathroom mirror and say, "Wow Brenda...you may not be perfect, but you sure need to feel proud!"

And this can't just be for me. And it won't. I've figured out that all my kids will benefit from me achieving this, and here's how: When Sally went off to college, she came home with a Freshman 30. I asked her what was up in a loving way. She said, "Mom, I learned how to eat watching you and dad."

When I realized that Dan was rarely around for anything but dinner, I knew she

was referring more to me and to him. She wasn't eating grilled chicken like Dan eats all the time. In fact, she was eating the same junk as I was.

Also Dan...after all, Dan is miserable right now. Well, maybe not miserable, but certainly unfulfilled. I want us to rekindle that desire we once had, and while we both have to work at it, I have to do my part.

And I'll be able to help others too. For example, I can see myself sharing how I lost the weight at my next Bible class with the girls. I could help a lot of other people if I can manage to help myself...

I'm excited to start!

ENTRY 4: A LIVING HELL

THIS would be a living hell for me!

If I decided to start on a new diet plan, and if I had to one day hang my head in failure and say to all those around me, "Well, chalk up ANOTHER failed weight loss attempt...pass the ice cream", THAT would be like hell for me.

Hearing the words, "I told you so."

I'd have to recruit help from others. I can see myself calling my friends and asking for shoulders to cry on. As much as they love me, they would probably cheer me up by telling me all the "right" things...like "you're beautiful enough as you are" and all that. They think I'm doing this JUST for Dan. I'm not. I'm doing it for my LIFE. But I can hear them say that, and more.

I think I'd rather die. I can see how that would unfold now:

I'd call up Alina. I'd say, "We have to talk" and I'd be in tears. She'd come over...all 130 lean pounds of her. I'd spill my guts, and she'd say, "Brenda, you just need to _____" ...some workout techno mumbo-jumbo! And I'd get really confused and just want to stop even more.

Or Cassie - she's 80 pounds overweight, so she'd be like, "Hey girl, you and I, pizza...right now! Let's just learn to accept the fact we're just fat women, okay?"

And in the end? The worst: I accept my "fate" as a "genetically fat woman", even though I know I'm not. I'm not even 60 pounds overweight, and I used to run track. I know I'm not "born" fat, but that's what I may end up believing if I keep running into these roadblocks.

I'm scared to start today. I need to get more clarity!

ENTRY 5: THE HIDDEN CONVERSATION

There's a "hidden conversation" I have with myself. I have for years. It goes like this:

"Brenda, at the end of the day, you really just want to be **desired again.**"

I secretly want to feel lusted after and loved at the same time by my husband again. More than anything. And it sounds silly as I write it. But it's true.

Why is that?

For starters, we used to have that physical spark. And I used to MOVE like it too. I would bounce from room to room. I would fast-walk everywhere I go. Nothing hurt all the time like almost everything does now.

I also like a certain amount of control...and this would help me feel more in control by allowing ME to call the sexual shots for a change. For ME to dictate and get the intimacy I want, when I want it. Not to be a bitch, but I would LOVE to feel like a bratty, hot, totally sex-crazed and sexually-CRAVED 25-year-old again...even if it's just for a few minutes.

Deep down, I really LONG to look and feel as sexy as I am in my imagination. Would this help? Yeah, I think so!

But there are a few things standing in my way:

- I have no idea what to eat or how to eat. Everything I've tried has failed.
- I don't have the desire to get into Crossfit or the "gym thing"
- I think I'm addicted to sugar

Can I overcome them? With the right help, I think so.

ENTRY 6: THE FEARS LIST

This is my FEARS LIST. Oh my, I'd feel crushed if any of these happened as a result of my (GOAL):

What if I find out six weeks into the diet that Dan is leaving me anyway?
What if I feel guilty over spending so much time on myself...am I vain?
What if I feel stupid trying to learn a new way of eating, like "what is keto"?
What if I feel external pressures like "Brenda, let's go out to our favorite Italian restaurant", and I cave in?
What if I don't get support from Dan or the kids or any of my friends?
What if I hear my supporters say: "Really. A DIET...again?!?" Ouch!
What if I get scammed into something that isn't legit?
What if this costs my family time and money?
What if I end up feeling overwhelmed?
What if my confidence disappears the moment I start?
What if I'm just stuck at this body weight because I've messed up my metabolism on all these failed diets in the past?

Sure, some of those things could go wrong and have important negative consequences...

But: it could get even worse.

What if I grow old and have to look back and say, "I never tried"? What if I'm stuck in this life as I am right now?

Am I REALLY ready to get rid of this tummy for good? It's almost like an old friend in a way.

Here's the "sign from above" I think I'd need to start: Some ad or maybe God himself saying, "BRENDA, THERE'S A DIET THAT IS SUPER EASY TO TURN INTO A LIFESTYLE!"

If I were to see THAT, I would jump into gear...even with all these fears and concerns.

ENTRY 7: I REMEMBER WHEN...

I remember when I tried dieting before.

I tried **Jenny Craig**. What a bummer that was. The food was pricey, and tasted like shoe leather.

Then I tried **a Peloton bike**. To say that sucked would be an understatement. They don't tell you that those seats are for small, tight asses...not a big fat butt like mine! And I could barely get past the first few sessions without dying from boredom. Even if it works, I hated it.

My last attempt was that **vegan juice fast** I did. I think this let me down because there's a reason humans eat meat! My energy was shot, and I was hungry minutes after each nasty glass. Never again!

A lot of this is my fault. It stems from some really bad ideas I've had for ages when it comes to weight loss, like **"Oh, you'll never taste another key lime pie or slice of pizza again!"**... and **"The only people who are thin were born thin...no diet can really succeed!"**

Whatever plan I find will have to steer clear of that nonsense.

ENTRY 8: MY LIFE AFTER

I have clarity now!

The ideal diet plan for me: one that would crush all my Fears List items and give me the confidence I need to dive in. Here goes:

One that teaches me how to eat for short-term weight loss and long-term sustainability in a way I can understand.

One that walks me through how to prep my meals without spending hours a day in the kitchen - the most complicated part of dieting for me.

I'd have to see my tummy start to flatten by at least a few weeks.

I'd want to see me fit back into that one pair of jeans I have that I love by at least day 30.

I'd expect to see the first 30 pounds gone and my energy really improve by no later than 90 days. That's reasonable.

AND:

- Some way I haven't thought of to get in the exercise I need without buying a gym membership I know I'd never use
- A fun way to pull Dan into the mix so we can do this together, and I'm not stuck cooking totally separate meals
- Something that allows me to indulge here and there
- Something that isn't a "religion" or dogmatic
- A plan that has a track record of helping specifically women like me - not the "forever 21" trainer crowd

Give me THAT, and I can really see a different life for me.

For starters, I would feel like I recaptured my youth. Sure I'm not 25 again, but I can sure be as TRIM as I was at 25...and probably have the ENERGY I had too!

My typical day would go something like this:

I woke up this morning and I hopped out of bed. I knew my breakfast would be delicious, and even more delicious than that: my tummy is even flatter than it was yesterday!

I'm looking forward to my exercise today. I never thought I'd say that! But now that I'm down 35 pounds and rolling, I feel like I can do anything.

Dan wants to make love tonight - he texted me saying, "Don't plan or wear anything. I'll be home early." How hot is that!

Dan would look at me and say, "I married up! How lucky can one man be?"

My kids would say, "Mom, you look like you could be our SISTER! We're so proud of you!"

And I'd say to myself: "Brenda...you did it. You proved to yourself and to the world that you're not "forever fat" - in fact, you're forever healthy, beautiful, and on top of the world!"

Now, that's a life worth living for!