





I even introduced Kelly to the joys of ice cream.

rabbit pellets), turkey breast from the deli. And a package of Oreos.

“How’d that get in there?” Mike asked.

I shrugged.

He glared, challenging me to put them back.

“They’re, uh ... for Andy.” I held firm.

I snatched the full grocery bag from the checkout counter and headed toward the door, a corner of the blue and white cookie package poking out of the top. “Baby steps,” I muttered under my breath.

The next day I waited in the pantry with a sturdy kitchen trash bag gaping open, its recesses ready to consume our undesirables. “This book says you should get rid of all the bad food in your kitchen,” I explained as Mike arrived to help. I emptied a canister of white, starchy pasta into the trash.

“Doesn’t the book say anything about starving children somewhere?” Mike surveyed the box of cheesy potato mix I was tossing.

“I’ll give away everything I can. One bag will go to the food pantry, and you can take some of the goodies to share with the guys at work. But the opened stuff has to go.”

“How about if we eat all this food first, and then start dieting later?”

“Today *is* later. You know what Judy told me last week?” My cousin had been going to nutritional counseling since her heart attack and was feeling stronger. “She said, it’s better the food goes to waste than to waist.” I motioned around my midsection.

“Aha.”

I retrieved an open bag of flour and stuffed it into the trash.

“What was wrong with that?” asked Mike.

“It’s white,” I said. “Apparently we should avoid white food.”

“All white food?”

“I dunno. Maybe. Let’s see, white flour, white

bread, white sugar, white potatoes ...” I read from my new nutritional book.

“Baloney.” Mike waved his hand dismissively.

“No, baloney’s not white,” I said, “but we probably can’t eat it anyway.”

Given the food usually kept in my house, it was a wonder my kids weren’t overweight, but Kate was a trim size six, and Andy was tall, fit and active in sports. Kelly and I were the ones who had blimped out – and, truth be told, Mike had added some weight to his middle over the years, too.

I tossed away open bags of potato chips, crackers, cookies, and a half loaf of soft, white bread. “We’re supposed to stick to whole grains. You know, wheat or whatever. Not just any wheat though, it has to be whole wheat. Some breads just put in a part of the wheat and call it 100 per cent wheat bread, but that doesn’t mean it’s whole grain. It’s only made from a part of the grain. It’s kind of confusing. And you know enriched white flour? That sounds like something positive – enriched – but apparently it’s not ideal. It means they’ve just taken out the healthy ingredients and added back in some vitamins. Better to have healthy stuff the way it comes naturally. That’s what this book says, anyway.”

“Huh,” Mike said, “well it’s worth a try.”

He joined in, scouring the counter top for other offenders. “I guess this candy from Christmas has to go.” Before I could intervene, he chucked it into the bag. “And what about these Oreos?” he added.

“They’re for Andy,” I grumbled.



Mike glanced at the bathroom scale in the middle of the living room. Kelly walked by, giving it a wide berth.

“Kelly has to be weighed;” I said, crouching to scoop her up, “we need to keep track.” Wriggling like an autumn leaf in the wind, Kelly slipped from my grip and scooted off to her

Dieting with my dog

favorite hiding place behind the coffee table. Another one of Kelly's endearing qualities – if you wanted her to do something, it was generally the last thing she was inclined to consider doing.

Mike cornered her against the couch and I lifted her. My arms nearly gave out. She was heavier than I thought. I set her on the scale, but with four paws to maneuver onto one small square, something was always hanging off. When I let go enough to get an accurate reading, she took off again.

"How are we going to do this?" Mike chuckled.

I thought of an old Chinese folk tale I'd read for one of my research projects. The villagers had no scale large enough to weigh an enormous elephant, and all the wise men spent many hours trying to come up with a solution. In the end, the emperor's young son saved the day. He suggested putting the elephant in a large boat on the water, and marking where the hull of the ship met the surface of the water. When that was done, the elephant was unloaded and bricks were added, until the weight of the bricks lowered the boat to the same level. When the bricks were weighed, the young boy explained, they would equal the weight of the elephant.

"Where could we get a boat for Kelly?" I asked.

"What?"

"Never mind. I guess I'll just hold her, and deduct my weight."

I chased her around the room, picked her up and stepped onto the scale. Mike helped read the numbers since I couldn't see past Kelly's huge, furry body in front of me.

"Hurry!" I groaned as she struggled in my arms.

Eventually, the calculations were complete. I jotted down her weight; up another pound since the visit to the vet.

Kelly bolted out of the room to avoid a repeat performance. "Getting on a scale isn't *that* traumatic," I sighed.

"It is for *some* girls, dear," Mike responded.



If Kelly's reaction to being weighed seemed extreme, she was even more averse to her new food plan. I opened the pantry bin and scooped out her meal – a new, high quality weight management dog food. This time I measured it: a half cup. The few little kernels that were her allocation pattered into her bowl. Kelly stared at me, waiting for the rest.

"That's it, girl," I said.

By the time I had put away the scoop, Kelly's bowl was empty again.

While I prepared dinner, she followed me around the kitchen, waiting for something delicious to appear from the magic refrigerator.

"No," I said. She cocked her head, perked her ears and fixed me with her big eyes. *The puppy dog face, not fair!*

I selected some of the new veggies we'd bought at the market. "You can have one of these." I tossed Kelly a baby carrot. She sniffed it and left it where it lay on the floor.

I hadn't previously put much thought into what I cooked for my family; just whatever was easy and tasted good. Now, I tried to give some thought to the nutritional value of each item I would serve. I placed skinless chicken in a baking dish, sprinkled on some seasoning, and slid the dish in the oven. With luck it wouldn't taste awful. I turned to the task of making a salad.

"What's for dinner?" Andy asked. He mainly appeared from his room to eat meals, strew dirty socks, and watch college basketball on television.

"Chicken."

"Can I have pizza?" He looked at me. Another puppy dog face. Saving me from caving in, my cell phone chirped and I flipped it open. Kate's cheerful voice greeted me, telling me all about an exciting project at the web design company

"Maybe if I put just the one paw on the scale, no one will notice ..."

