

“4 Ounce Hugs”

By Wendy Simons

We are now in the middle of the holiday season, and many of us are bemoaning the fact that we have added a few pounds. We most likely will commit to a New Year’s resolution to go back to the gym, cut our calories and work toward removing the extra poundage that we have acquired. Some of us will be successful for a few months, others will surrender and give up on the effort. However, I want to share an idea and a challenge to those who might be up for a new approach of losing weight.

A number of years ago, I cared for an older lady, Millie, who overheard me say I’d really like to lose weight. She tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Honey, I’d like to gain weight, so quit complaining.” (The truth of the situation was she did not have the best appetite, didn’t eat well and was most unhappy with the fact she was alone, getting old, had nothing to look forward to and had to live in a facility.) An odd thought popped into my head regarding this weight subject, but before I share the thought, let me give you some background.

I have always believed life tries to maintain equilibrium. You can’t really lose something, it just goes somewhere else. Could it be the same with weight? When I go to the gym, I seem to pick up some of the weight others are trying to lose in spite of my efforts to the contrary.

Now back to Millie. I turned to her and offered a solution for both of us. I suggested that for me to lose weight I had to “put it somewhere” and that if she was willing to receive it, I could give her “4 ounce hugs” each time I saw her. She thought this was ridiculous, but agreed to give it a try. Over the next 4 months, each day I saw her, I would give her that “4 oz. hug”, but the rule was, she had to wrap her arms around me to receive it. After four months, would you like to guess what happened? I lost 16 pounds..... and Millie gained 16 pounds!

So now I offer this thought to all who would like to lose weight. Consider visiting a care facility where some of our frailest, most lonely seniors reside. Rather than one hour at the gym, how about one hour at that facility, giving “4 oz hugs” to a few of the most lonely and needy. (You really only need to do this one day a week.) Conduct this experiment for 4 months and request weights be taken. Perhaps you could find a place to put those extra pounds.

Why did this work with Millie? I believe she felt so unloved, abandoned and disinterested in life, that she had lost her appetite. With hugs, something to look forward to and the humor of the situation, she gained back her interest and appetite and truly ate better. And, most likely I lost because..... who knows why.....a different commitment level, perhaps. Or, did those “4 oz hugs” truly transfer to maintain life’s equilibrium?

