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# Eat yourself happy!

**EXCLUSIVE** By Ali Kirker  
www.thesundaypost.com

**JOANNE REID RODRIGUES** is a woman on a mission. She wants to turn us all from flab to fab, from chocolate-lovers to chia seed munchers, from fed-up to feeling fantastic.

Don't bet against her succeeding. Growing up in Glasgow, Joanne became a junk-food addicted, overweight teen. Ten to 15 bars of chocolate a day were part of her daily diet.

Moving to Jersey as a 15-year-old made things worse and she was well on her way to a lifetime of morbid obesity.

Everything changed after a moment of quiet acceptance of her plight.

Joanne's never looked back.

Not only did she lose weight — and keep it off — but slimming has become her mission and she's helped hundreds of people in both Jersey and America to lose their excess flab.

## Junk-food addict turned weight loss guru, Joanne's on a mission to cheer up and slim down Scotland

Joanne, 50, says she had a typical Scottish childhood.

"My problems started with eating a lot of sweets when I was a child. We all did in Scotland.

"When I was a baby my dad would dip my dummy in strawberry jam — all dads did in the 60s," she says.

"By the time I was a teenager I was about two stone overweight. Then I left Glasgow with my parents and sister and moved to Jersey.

The move just made Joanne's problem with food worse. Lonely, bored and missing her friends, food became her comfort.

"I was eating uncontrollably, ridiculous. I mean RIDICULOUS quantities of junk food," she says in her rapid-fire, capital-letters delivery.

"Chocolate, sweets, crisps, chips, you name it — if it was junk, I ate it," she says.

"I was obsessed and weighed myself at least 20 times a day. I'd do that old trick of moving the scales around the room, hoping I'd be lighter."

So far, so normal.

Comfort eating and becoming overweight isn't exactly an unusual story round these parts.

Stepping on the scales one day, though, Joanne resolved to change her life.

"I weighed myself and I was two pounds off 13 stone. I just had a moment of quiet acceptance.

"I saw myself getting bigger and people pitying me. You know, we aren't born 30 stone. People go through the process I was going through.

"And something made me think, 'Nah, I'm 5'1" and in the category for heavyweight boxers!'"

From that day, Joanne's never looked back.

She started by cutting out junk food and walking for exercise. Four and a half stone later, she was a new woman.

Telling people her weight loss secrets, she claims lots of people said they found her inspiring.

So she put a small ad in her local paper, booked a hall and wondered if anyone would turn up.

Twenty people did turn up and Joanne's business, Slimming Together, was born.

More than 25 years on, it's still going strong and has taken her to run classes and teach life coaching in Los Angeles.

Joanne along the way. As a child growing up in Glasgow's Dennistown, Lulu was a friend of the family.

She's actually quite like Lulu, with her can-do attitude and relentless energy. They even look alike.

"It's funny you should say that. A few years ago, I met up with her before one of her concerts, along with my sister Betti," she says.

"Lulu's misser came through and said, 'Ten minutes to stage — and make sure the real Lulu goes on,'" she hoots. "She's fantastic — so warm and positive."

Joanne herself is relentlessly upbeat. But her mum being diagnosed with Alzheimer's at just 51 had a huge effect.

"It was so sad, really like experiencing the death of a loved one.

"I remember once Mum saw Aneska Rice on TV doing some fundraising. She went over to the TV with her purse and offered Aneska money," she says.

"She couldn't understand why she was being ignored. I turned to look at my dad and his eyes were filled with tears.

"It really made me learn that life is precious."

Now Joanne's set her sights on shaping up Scotland.

But she insists it's not all about calorie counting and taking a bit more exercise.

Joanne believes a more whole-life, holistic approach is the key to weight loss — and there's often a reason for people becoming overweight.

"What's more, she believes that what you eat has a profound effect on your mood — and she tells me she cured her depression by eating her way out of it.

Really, Joanne? Are you actually telling me that you can cure depression by eating better?"

"I know you can. Diet has a massive impact on our moods and energy. I've done it," she says.

"We can eat ourselves into feeling depressed — and eat ourselves out of it. I know you can. I've worked with lots of people."

A quick look at the Mental Health Foundation website largely backs her up.

So what should you be eating if you feel depressed?

"We can eat ourselves into feeling depressed — and eat ourselves out of it. I know you can. I've worked with lots of people."

"Well, for instance, people talk about serotonin having a big effect on mood. Did you realise your body can make its own serotonin?" she says.

"Get rid of junk, processed food and alcohol. Eat vitamin B complex, which you can find in lentils, red kidney beans and walnuts."

She's on a roll.

"Tryptophan — in potatoes and bananas. And a wonderful thing called chia seeds. They're amazing, for years you could only get them in hardcore health stores but now you're starting to get them in supermarkets."

I'm not the healthiest of eaters. But I mention I eat a lot of almonds.

"Fantastic," she almost shouts. "So nutritious. If everyone was eating just a few handfuls of almonds every day it would give them so much nutrition."

"I'm sorry, I don't mean to give you a lesson on nutrition. But I'm just so passionate!"

She is indeed. But surely there isn't always a deep-seated reason for over-eating?

"I'm generally upbeat. But sometimes I just eat food. Because I'm greedy and I like it. I tell Joanne this.

"When do you overeat?" she asks.

Well, on a Friday night I've been known to scarf enough to feed a small army. And we're talking chocolate and crisps, not chia seeds.

"Killed," she shouts. "Barely of getting through another week. You're giving yourself something that makes you feel good in the short term."

"She could be right. Hugh Jackman isn't available, so Dairy Milk (was it?) is it possible to be fat and happy, Joanne?"

For the first time in our conversation, she's hesitant.

"Well, that's very much an individual thing, isn't it? It wasn't possible for me. I get the feeling she thinks not."

Joanne's so passionate about her message it's hard to imagine her ever giving up. But surely everyone does. So I ask if she ever throws caution to the wind and has a big pig out on 'bad' food.

Her answer totally floos me.

"I'll let you into a secret," she says. "On my 40th birthday, I decided I'd give up chocolate for a year. I didn't tell anyone."

"My 41st birthday came and I realised I didn't really love like chocolate. That was almost 11 years ago — and I haven't had chocolate since. I just don't miss it."

From 15 bars of chocolate a day to not even a square of Galaxy in 12 years.

Surely proof positive that if you set your mind to it, anyone can change their ways

**FOOD FACTS**

Almonds: A good source of riboflavin, magnesium and manganese. Low in cholesterol.



Bananas: Low in saturated fat. They are a good source of fibre, vitamin B6, vitamin B12 and potassium.



Chia seeds: A very good source of fibre and manganese, while very low in cholesterol.



**JOAN SAYS**  
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Joanne with her old friend (and look-alike!) Lulu

Joanne, top, has left the bad old days of chocolate and junk food addiction behind her.