

“I’m the FOAT!” my sister declared in a sibling text testing the waters to see if anyone wanted to join her in an upcoming relay marathon in our hometown. The FOAT? The use of all capital letters brought to mind the now-popular GOAT designator: Greatest of All Time. But FOAT?? “OK, I’ll bite. What is FOAT?” I inquired. “Fattest of All Time,” she replied. Ouch ... I resemble that remark!


I was a really active kid, riding my bike, climbing trees, and playing almost constant neighborhood games of kickball, wiffleball, basketball, and kick-the-can. Once I got to junior high and high school, I joined the volleyball, basketball, and swim teams, not to mention track and field where I placed 3rd in the city as a ninth grade shot putter.

My team participation in college was relegated to synchronized swimming for a year or two and occasional intramural excursions through my sorority. As a young adult now launched into the world, I still enjoyed intermittent bike rides, hikes, or church volleyball games but more “important” things began to take up my time—i.e. paying the bills.

It wasn’t long before the internet slowly crept in to take over my life: first with emails (remember how we used to be excited by getting email??), then online entertainment (a never ending temptation of distraction), and once Smartphones became an appendage, I was never without entertainment, distraction, or—I like to justifyingly argue—educational opportunities (I know, I know ... it’s debatable how truly educational all the rabbit holes I’m so fond of descending really are but I *do* learn a lot!).

Then came COVID. Like Hitler, COVID can be low hanging fruit, the easy go-to scapegoat for all things bad. “I would have LOVED to go for walks and get exercise but in the early days of the pandemic we were basically told not to leave our houses.” How convenient ... And I happened to have both of my hips replaced during those 3 years, surgeries done by a doctor whose school of thought on recovery was to rest, rest, rest – that’s the best way to help your hip heal. Music to my ears! Say no more! Even better, I’ve got the comfiest of comfy chairs that became my all-but-permanent spot during my waking hours. And, coincidentally or unfortunately, those three years came at a time of life for me where the effects of menopause had settled deeply into my reality—and my midriff!---namely, snail-paced metabolism.



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So here I am, on the eve of turning 58, the FOAT – the fattest (and most sedentary) I’ve ever been. What am I going to do about it?

Well, my 58th birthday also happens to be Fat Tuesday (can’t make this shit up!). I don’t know that my birthday has *ever* been on Fat Tuesday before. I’ve often used my birthday to take stock of my life and with that intentional opportunity overlapping with the day when I also often take time to mindfully consider how I might participate in Lent that year, it feels like a unique occasion ripe with possibility.

A few years ago I had an epiphany preparing for Lent. Up until that point, my understanding and practice of Lent had been to start on day one, Ash Wednesday, with drastically new behaviors. I would then struggle through the next 46 days trying to be this new person and often getting frustrated, grumpy, and resentful in the process, leading to a “Whew! Thank God THAT’S over!” attitude on Easter that would see me going back to the way I was on Fat Tuesday. Don’t get me wrong. The cold turkey approach is valid and apparently works for many people, but I don’t seem to be one of them.

So my epiphany was to take Lent in stages. Know at the beginning where I wanted to end up and then make *gradual* changes throughout the season so that my senses didn’t feel assaulted and I was more able and willing to transform into a different person, one who was hopefully healthier, both within as well as in her outward attitude and behavior toward others.

So, tomorrow, when I’m sitting down to map out my Lenten journey, that’s the framework I’ll be using. I’m excited by the potential. AND ... I’m excited by having the excuse of a FAT Tuesday birthday to revel with abandon in my FOATNESS with one final grand hurrah of a celebration!