

Local Author Says Goodbye to Cookies, Hello to New Life

By Martin Wilbur

Marcia Meislin's business card contains perhaps the most important message of her life: "I never give up. Neither should you!"

It would have been easy for Meislin to quit pursuing the one thing she hadn't been able to overcome. From as young as she can remember, Meislin had been seriously overweight, eventually reaching 300 pounds as an adult.

Despite considerable professional success, starting out in retail training and working her way up to become an executive coach, public speaker and author, she would lose as much as half her weight before gaining much of it back.

"I was able to accomplish anything I set out to do except this," said Meislin, 59, a Greenburgh resident, who owns a consultant firm. "I couldn't lose weight and keep it off. I could lose weight, I couldn't keep it off."

Finally, about 15 years ago, after myriad diets, exercise programs, therapy sessions and even two failed weight loss surgeries, Meislin learned she was addicted to certain foods, and needed to abstain from the foods that would trigger an eating binge. Among other things, that meant sugary snacks, especially her beloved rainbow cookies, were out. The only food she'll eat that contains sugar is fruit.



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Greenburgh resident Marcia Meislin, author of "The Goodbye Cookie," recounts her story of overcoming obesity and food addiction in her new book. She will be at The Village Bookstore in Pleasantville on Sunday.

Meislin has written a new book about her lifelong battle with obesity in "The Goodbye Cookie: A Memoir About Never Giving Up." It details her food addictions and her attempt to shift the focus away from the numbers on the scale to the underlying problems of her unhealthy

relationship with food, when she used it whether to celebrate triumphs or to drown her sorrows.

On Sunday afternoon, Meislin will appear at The Village Bookstore in Pleasantville from 3 to 5 p.m. for a reading and signing.

"The way I look at it was one day--and I wish I could tell you what the moment was but I actually can't--one day the lightening bolt went off, the light switch went on and I wanted to be healthy," Meislin recalled. "I gave up fighting with the world and their attitudes toward weight and overweight women. I stopped fighting my mother, who had died, but I was fighting her in my head, and I just stopped fighting and I said 'I want to be healthy.'"

She also became more spiritual. She grew up mainly in Rockland County with a very strong Jewish background, but she always thought that God had more important work to do and couldn't help her.

For Meislin, now at about 150 pounds, her excessive weight also conspired to isolate her over the years. While many feel self-conscious, being unable to fit in a roller coaster as a teenager or wear certain clothes can have a debilitating effect.

Although she married--ironically, her husband of 31 years, Steve, is an endocrinologist--and has two grown

children, no one was able to help her. The worst may have been when she returned for her second weight loss surgery.

"The surgeon said to me, 'I can only operate on your stomach, I can't operate on your head,'" Meislin remembered. "So I just went full steam into my recovery. What changed for me is I no longer believed there were things I could eat in moderation."

Meislin's journey has been long and hard. It took her about five years to reach her current weight, which she has maintained for about a decade. Meislin, who is asthmatic, is grateful for the new lease on life, especially before serious health problems set in.

For anyone with self-esteem issues, the LGBT community or youngsters who don't feel they conform, Meislin's message is never to give up. You will find like-minded people and your niche. The same was true for her, just with weight.

"You are not the number on the scale," Meislin said. "You are so much more than the number on the scale, you are so much more than your jean size. You need to cultivate all that beauty inside and that's what life is about."

The Village Bookstore is located at 10 Washington Ave. in Pleasantville. For more information, visit www.marciameislin.com.