

# An Extraordinary Man Takes on an Extraordinary Challenge

Understanding the Pleasure Trap finally opened the door to weight-loss success.

by Jonathan Fah

**M**y name is Jonathan Fah. I am the husband of a wonderful woman and a father of four young children. I always imagined that I would get to witness my children reaching each milestone in their lives alongside my wife as I got older. In reality, that is all it was—imagined. I wasn't likely to see my children reach high school graduation, let alone get married and have children of their own. At 38 years old, I was over 500 pounds. (I definitely never imagined that!) I was a ticking time bomb. Every time I walked up a flight of steps, my heart rate would skyrocket. At any moment I could have suffered from a heart attack or stroke, and no one would have been surprised. Some probably would have questioned how it didn't happen sooner.

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I struggled with being overweight my entire life. In grade school, I had to wrestle older kids because kids my own age were not within 15% of my weight. By the time I turned 14, I was over 250 pounds. In high school, I was active in sports like football and

wrestling, but weighed in at over 300 pounds by graduation. After high school, the roller coaster of weight loss and regain began.

Over the years, I tried almost every diet I heard about. I read all of the books you were supposed to read. I bought all the gadgets that were designed to make weight loss quick and easy. I went to the doctors and took their "miracle" weight loss drugs. With each attempt, I would experience mild to moderate success, followed by catastrophic failure where I gained all the weight back—plus a few more pounds, for good measure.

In 2014, after over a decade of ups and downs, I gave up. I had fallen for the promises of one last diet and, again, failed. I had seen great success, losing over 100 pounds, but I could not sustain the diet. I felt like I was so close to my goals, but I let them slip away. I felt broken. Why were diets that boasted so many success stories not working for me? Why was I unable to push myself away from the table or drive past the fast food restaurants without stopping? Was I just destined to be fat?

Over the next few years, I didn't concern myself with healthy eating or weight loss. When asked if I would consider dieting again, I would respond, "I already am. Because I am going to die-eating." I was convinced that I had no willpower or self-control. It seemed pointless to try to lose weight, only to gain it all back again. I had given up on the idea that I could lose weight on my own and began to think that surgical intervention would be the only solution. Weight loss surgery, in my mind, was the last resort. I knew that with my health conditions, I would have no trouble



getting approved for the surgery, but it felt extreme. I did not want to go down that road.

In 2018, I started hearing about water fasting. I learned that people were able to go long periods of time without eating and were losing incredible amounts of weight. It felt like an easy option for me, and I quickly started to experiment with fasting. I soon found that I was able to go without food much longer than I thought possible. Eventually, I pushed myself to complete a 30-day water fast and lost an incredible amount of weight very quickly. After the fast, though, I found that I gained the weight back pretty quickly, too. I added water fasting to my lengthy list of diet fails.

For the next two years, my weight continued to increase steadily, from the low 400s until I next stepped on a scale in March of 2020 and learned that for the first time, I had ballooned to over 500 pounds. I was shocked—not shocked enough to do anything about it, though. The world had just gone into lockdown, and I was thinking positive; at least if we ran out of food, I knew that I could live off of my stored fat for a good long while.

Over time, though, the toll of being 500+ pounds started to become too much for me, both physically and emotionally. I had awful



and wellness for three years. I had never sustained a diet for longer than nine months, and sustainability needed to be a key component if I was going to succeed.

Over the years, I had been eating the diet of a 600-pound person, occasionally switching to the diet of a 90-pound person when I was trying to lose weight. I had never learned how to eat like a healthy person. I needed to figure out how a healthy version of myself should eat and then eat that way until I became that person. Approaching my weight loss in this way was going to take time, not only to lose the weight, but time to learn to maintain a consistent, healthy diet. I was not looking for a fast fix; I was looking to put in the work and save my own life.

The second goal of my weight loss challenge was to lose 300 pounds. Doing so would take me from being considered morbidly obese to overweight on the body mass index, a category I'd never really considered reaching before. If I truly wanted to get healthy for my family, a 50- to 100-pound weight loss would not be enough. I needed to go all the way.

The last goal was to create an accountability platform for myself. So often in the past, I would start a diet in my head. I would wake up thinking, "Today's the day," then never tell anyone my plans. I knew if I told someone, I would feel guilty when I failed. The problem with this way of thinking is that I was still failing someone every day—myself. By letting others know your plans, you create a support network that is far stronger than you are alone.

With these goals in mind, I created a Youtube channel called "Fah Dieting." On November 1, 2020, I stepped onto the scale, registering a starting weight of 519.8 pounds. I kicked off my challenge with a water fast. Because of my past experience with fasting, I felt that this would be a great way to jumpstart the challenge by shedding some of the most excessive weight on my body. This time was going to be different; this time I was going to research the best diet to eat when I was done. It wasn't fasting that had failed me in the past, it was my failure to have a plan for eating afterward.

Over the course of the first few weeks, I scoured the internet, watched videos, and explored many diet options. It was during this time that I came across a video on the TrueNorth Health Center. I had been experimenting with water fasting but had not heard of TNHC previously. I learned that

they performed medically supervised water fasts and had been doing so for many years with thousands of patients. So, I decided to look into what diet they recommend to their patients after fasting. That's when I learned about eating a whole-food, plant-based, SOS-free diet. This piqued my interest, because it was so different from anything else I was hearing about. I picked up *The Pleasure Trap*, the book that was written by Dr. Alan Goldhamer, the doctor who runs TNHC, and Dr. Doug Lisle. Little did I know that this would be the key that would unlock the secret to my successful and sustainable weight loss.

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I am just a regular person, but I currently find myself doing something extraordinary. I am conquering my obesity. What I have learned is that I do not have a disorder. The food I ate was disordered. Nowhere in nature can you find an XXL Grilled Stuffed Beef Burrito. That is 880 calories in the palm of your hand. Everything I consumed was processed and designed by scientists to be exactly what my mind craved. We do not live in the environment that our ancestors did. Our bodies are not adapted to the new food environment. The very physiology that used to keep us alive is now making us fat.

Since starting this challenge, I have reached some huge milestones. The combination of my 40-day extended water fast and my new plant-based diet allowed me to shed my first 100 pounds in 50 days. Within the first year, I was able to lose an additional 100 pounds. At over 1,000 days into my challenge, I am half the man I used to be, weighing in at under 260 pounds.

I still have more weight to lose before I reach my initial goal. By continuing to learn from plant-based doctors, advocates, and resources like the NHA, I'm confident that I will lose the weight. These resources have helped educate me in a way of life that I never considered. By eating this way, I don't have to imagine a future life. I get to LIVE in this one, where I'll actually get to walk down the aisle with my daughters. Where I'll really get to see my son become a father. Where I'll truly get to grow old with my wife. 🌱

swelling in my calves and ankles, and it would hurt to get out of bed in the morning. Walking long distances would wipe me out for days afterward. What hurt the most, though, was the emotional toll the weight had on my life. My kids were getting older, and I wasn't able to be active with them like I wanted. I wasn't helping my wife as much as I should have been to raise our children and to manage household tasks. I was being selfish with my eating habits. I was choosing junk food over being present with my family. I was choosing junk food over our future. It needed to end. I needed to change.

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So, in October of 2020, I started to develop my weight loss challenge. I had three main goals when I started the challenge. The first goal was to focus on my health