

TILL POUNDS DO US PART

How my weight gain strained my wedding vows

By Theresa O'Rourke

MY ANTIQUE WEDDING BAND, with its square diamonds and Art Deco milgraining, hugs my finger just as it did the day I got married.

It's the only thing that still fits.

Since getting hitched five years ago, I've packed 25 pounds onto my 5'3" frame, reaching 165 pounds and trading my size 8s for 12s.

I never thought I'd really "let myself go" (my blood boils at that phrase), but I have lost touch with my old self. Since getting married, I've exercised less and drank more—mostly to soothe the demands of my job, but also to hush the bouts of thunderous monotony that come with marriage. Kill a bottle of wine with dinner a few times a week and the calories add up.

My jeans and shirts had become increasingly snugger, but it wasn't until the zipper on my favorite dress wouldn't budge that I was forced to confront my new size. I was mortified, especially when I saw a slab of back fat in the mirror.

I had recently read a new study published in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science* that found that marriages are happier when the wife is the skinnier party—and it made me question how my weight gain was affecting my own marriage.



"In bed, my husband must have felt every bit of me—and that made me supremely uncomfortable."

When we think of "the fat wife," we envision a woman one cupcake-binge away from *The Biggest Loser*. That's not me. Much of my fat has settled in the "right" places (my breasts and hips). But what if it hadn't? What if I'd gained 50 pounds? Or 100? Would I be testing the vow of "for better or worse"?

In bed, my husband, rock-star lean at 155 pounds, must have felt every bit of me—and that made me supremely uncomfortable. I felt big, bulky, unsexy.

One thing neither of us were happy about: my new wardrobe. The clingy

clothes that once defined me now hung like artifacts in my closet. When I complained that we didn't have sex as often, my husband nodded to my yoga pants and said, "Babe, you still turn me on. But I need something more to get me going." His blunt comment really hurt—because he was right.

I wondered whether my husband could spot my deflated self-esteem as easily as my love handles. On our honeymoon, I'd sprinted bare-assed through our Jamaican villa. Now, after showering, instead of walking around in a >>

“My husband’s reaction to the photo of my skinnier self triggered the most honest talk we’ve ever had.”

>> towel like a normal person, I change in the bathroom.

Recently, while planning our anniversary, my husband suggested Mexico. “I haven’t seen you in a bathing suit in years,” he said. My brain’s insecure circuits lit up. “How about Rome?” I asked. “I want museums, landmarks, and walking tours!” I actually wanted none of those things. What I craved was the security of nubby sweaters.

We compromised on Sedona. It’s a shame, because I would have loved to dig my toes into white sand.

We’ve made a habit of dancing around the subject of my fuller body. But one rainy afternoon, my husband

and I were cleaning, and he found an old photo of me wearing a sheer Cavalli blouse and skinny jeans. “Damn, you were hot,” he gushed. “If you looked like this, we’d have 10 kids by now.”

His reaction to that photo triggered the most honest talk we’ve ever had. He apologized immediately, and I knew he didn’t mean to be cruel. There on the floor, surrounded by all our stuff, I told him I didn’t feel like myself anymore. “I did this,” he said. “I’m so lazy, and I made you lazy.” It had impacted many things, he insisted—even my career as an editor, which was stuck in neutral. True, the heavier me felt sluggish, less confident, and less

eager to pursue job opportunities.

For every way we enriched each other’s lives, we had caught each other’s bad habits, too, like a cold. And we knew that without care, we would just keep needlessly passing them around.

That care had to begin with me.

I decided to start at the gym—once a source of stress relief for me—with my first boxing class. The trainer handed me gloves. “You should take off that ring,” he said, pointing at my left hand. “You don’t want to break it.”

No, I didn’t. And with that, I tucked it away, slipped on my gloves, and planted a mean left hook squarely on the bag. ■

QUICKIES SEX NEWS, BITES, AND TRENDS

This Is Your Brain Post-Breakup

Getting dumped actually feels like physical pain, says research published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States*. Study authors rounded up people who had been broken up with six months prior and placed them in a brain scanner. They applied high heat to the subjects’ forearms and later instructed them to gaze at a photo of the person who broke their heart. Results showed that emotional pain activates the same area of the brain that processes physical pain—and that the brain can’t differentiate the two. No wonder they say love hurts.



The One-Night Stand Myth

Ask most women and they’ll say that if you want to land a relationship, you shouldn’t have sex too soon. But it’s not that simple. A new study conducted by the University of Iowa found that although people who avoid one-night stands have better relationships overall, when scientists controlled for people who had no interest in a relationship, that difference vanished. “In other words, if a man enters a one-night stand with no interest in dating, it’s unlikely that he’ll see the woman again,” says study author Anthony Paik. “But if two people looking for love wind up sleeping together on a first date, whether or not the relationship takes off has little to do with the fact that they had sex so soon.”



Lips Don’t Lie

Can’t orgasm easily? Take a look in the mirror. Surprising research published in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* found that women with pronounced tubercles (that tiny spot in the middle of your upper lip that puffs out slightly)

report that they are more likely to have vaginal orgasms—as opposed to clitoral ones—than women with a flatter upper lip. Although researchers can’t really explain the link, it may have all gone down in the womb. Some of the pathways that create the tubercle might be linked to the same pathways that involve vaginal orgasm, according to scientists at the University of the West of Scotland.