

Meet Joe the Peacock

Fark's Crayon Monkey might help with your healthy resolutions

By Kim Thomas

Fark.com's self-described "crayon monkey," Joe Peacock, is famous for telling it like it is. Having lost over 100 pounds and now able to lift 720lbs, his story of inspiration is not sugar-coated, he delivers the truth about turning fat into muscle in no uncertain terms. At his website, joethepeacock.com (*The Journal of Joe The Peacock*), read his Rule #4 for Girls who go to the gym:

#4. Wear appropriately fitting workout clothing. ... It's one thing to wear loose-fitting workout-specific clothing and spandex. It's another thing entirely to wear those clothes one size too small because you think they tighten your flab and make you look like J-Lo from the back. They don't. If your ass and legs look like a chewed wad of bubblegum out of spandex, they look that way IN spandex."

Peacock, who one book reviewer calls "Cyberspace's answer to David Sedaris," is certainly not one to gild the lily, but he is passionate about the plight of obesity. He himself had to do battle in the calorie and couch potato war, but a wake-up call involving a family member a few years ago spurred him to start working out and educating himself about nutrition. His story of weight loss and fitness is now one of success and inspiration, especially for the most jaded dieter ... because, we've all heard these weight loss *BIGGEST LOSER* success stories before, right?

Peacock's site, *The Journal of Joe the Peacock*, dispenses of polite niceties. He points out how we rationalize our reluctance to commit to a proper diet and exercise program, because we don't really want to lose weight. He also gives concrete advice, recommending ways to eliminate the evil elixir, high fructose corn syrup from the diet (it's in everything from bread to toothpaste). He recommends getting a big calendar and a red Sharpie and marking days off the calendar with a big red X to indicate every day that you workout.

His link is free. He's not selling anything. With just one click, you can access his very specific information not only on how you can begin an exercise regimen, but more importantly, points out just why we don't want to begin a gym membership or exercise regimen.

Although his information is sometimes a bitter pill, his message is tempered with an edgy sense of humor that simply cannot be ignored, as he illuminates how, and more importantly, why we rationalize away our need to diet and exercise. Accordingly, if you're looking for someone to han-

Peacock is blunt, "On my wedding day, I weighed in at 370 lbs. Yesterday, I weighed in at 258lbs. The real story is in the body fat percentages, though. At my heaviest, I was about 41% body fat, today I'm 14%, and still losing. That's really the biggest point I make to anyone and everyone looking to get in shape — there are a few key metrics, and body weight only matters when you start trying to reduce the amount of weight you're carrying over long distances (like with cycling or running). The real story is in body fat percentage and the ability to run 1, 2 or 3 miles without

"Bodies can and do get stronger without actually building mass, as the muscle begins to use its full potential. But to go beyond the potential of the muscle one currently has requires building that muscle to be larger, hence strength-building regimes and protein-heavy, testosterone-stimulating stuff."

When asked why women would be interested in testosterone, he replied, "Testosterone is essential for anyone looking to build strength and power, because it is a key component of using protein in muscle repair. If a woman desires larger physique, then yes, they'll want to supplement testos-



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dle you with kid gloves about such a personal topic as Fitness, you will need to find another bird, because Joe doesn't beat around the proverbial bush.

stopping. Pull-ups. Situps. Pushups. The ability to move your own body efficiently and strongly across a distance."

terone (and NOTHING over the counter will actually help this in a woman, they will have to visit a hormone clinic for

legal supplementation). Most every woman I've ever met doesn't really want this, they want tone and shape — so proper diet (calorie-wise) and exercise are really the keys there."

"Mentally Incontinent"

The Fark.com designer has published several books of collected stories from his site, *Mentally Incontinent*, which a Barnes & Noble reviewer describes as "raucous recollections from a man with a serious blabber-control problem. ... In *Mentally Incontinent*, Joe delivers a batch of hilarious and brand-new stories. A natural storyteller and a self-proclaimed magnet for weirdness, Joe Peacock has emerged from the bowels of the Internet with some interesting tales to tell."

Seems interesting things happen to Peacock, whose path to publishing began when he would often amuse his friends with epic emails about the happenings in his life, i.e., when his date tossed her cookies on him during his first sexual experience, his misadventures with a stalker, and his frustrated attempts to convince his mom that he's not gay. He started collecting those stories in 2002 on his website, mentallyincontinent.com. With the help of suggestions from his avid readers, edits were made and he soon found his writing legs. He gleaned the best stories from his collection and published them in 2005. Peacock then sold books by holding impromptu readings across the country.

From his advice to guys and girls using a gym to his basic recommendations for getting started, Peacock cuts through all the tofu and lets you know what is important and perhaps more importantly what is not. ("Stop worrying about how you look at the gym. Nobody cares.")

Goodbye Coke. Goodbye candy. Goodbye cake, ice cream, snacks, french fries, and just about everything in your life that makes you a gooey blob. It's not magic; it's not a special diet you read about in magazines or the big fad going around the office. It's just simple — keep your proteins high,

Photo by Virginia Hall



my first full marathon on January 10th in Disneyworld."

One way Peacock marks his progress is by remembering his wedding in 2002 and a sign from God' moment in 2007 when a relative's obesity crisis "made me look at what my and my wife's lives would be like if I kept eating like an ex-

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—Fark.com founder Drew Curtis on Joe's transformation



Fark.com Founder Drew Curtis

and your calories below your expended calories for the day (BMR + exercise), and boom — you're going to gain muscle and lose fat.

When asked what exactly his role is at fark.com, he explained, "I'm the Crayon Monkey. Basically I make subjectively pretty things for the site. I've been working full-time for Fark since 2008, and part time since 2006." The Decatur, Georgia native's experience involves a transition of sorts. "This year, I quit playing football and moved away from power/strength training and into endurance training. I ran my first half marathon on Thanksgiving day, and am running

athlete and never working out. I made a decision to change my life — no crash diets, no fad workouts, just a complete life overhaul which included at least one hour a day for myself, which was at the gym. I chose to take up professional football, pursuing that until the Arena Football League folded at the end of 2008. While doctors have always told me I should eat better and exercise more, it was never an 'or else' directive — but my doctor has since told me that I've added at least 20 years to my life expectancy simply by eating better and working out. She's not entirely thrilled about the marathoning, but notes there are far worse sports, like street luge or dodgeball."

Peacock considers everyone's journey to be subjective, "but one thing I will say is that regardless of how painful, annoying, frustrating, or just plain uncomfortable you might view the prospect of exercise and proper diet, TRUST ME — once you get into the swing of things, you'll be super glad you did. Everyone in my life I've spoken with about either beginning or continuing a program of regular exercise — regardless of how recreational or athletic — and eating right has been far better for it, both emotionally and physically. It

makes you care so much more about yourself, your time and your outlook on life."

If you don't know where to start and like things simple, Peacock says, "if I had one specific piece of advice to give, it'd be to eliminate ALL sugar drinks from your diet — never, ever drink your calories, unless it's a meal replacement / smoothie. And completely eliminate corn syrup from your diet. Check the labels — even breads have corn syrup. Just plain dump it."

Regarding working out and exercise, anyone anywhere can begin right now by heading out the front door and walking for 10, 20, or 30 minutes, then gradually moving up to run-walking (run for 2 minutes, walk for one), then moving up to just pure running. Don't worry about miles or speed, just do the time. If you're curious about powerlifting, bodybuilding or more specific fitness goals, a trainer at a gym will be some help, and there are tons of great resources on the web."

Peacock's wife was also a motivator. "I hadn't bought new clothes in a few years — I just made do with what I had, since 'baggy' wasn't a horrible look on me. One day, my wife finally told me that, due to the extremely oversized pants and shirts, I looked like a 32-year-old wannabe suburban gangster. My belt had six brand new notches cut into it — it wrapped around me one and a half times. She marched me into the closet, filled three yard bags with my old stuff, and then took me shopping. I retired eight pairs of pants, sized between 48 and 44, and replaced them with all new, size 38 jeans."

Don't Stop Believing

Fark founder Drew Curtis emphasizes the difference in Joe since he began his journey to good health. "Well, for one thing he can dead-lift 400 lbs+, which is awesome, because whenever he's over, my wife has him move furniture around. He also looks about 10 years younger. Most people are unaware that the main feature that makes people look old is weight."

Curtis says "I used to do a lot of long-distance running. The way you get good at that is simple: don't stop. Back off on the workout if you don't feel like doing it that day, but do go, no matter what. If you stop, it's over. Joe put me on a workout last August, up until then I figured playing soccer four times a week was enough. Turns out it wasn't, in just the past 4 months I've seen a huge difference in how well I play — and this is all from upper body workout stuff."

"The other motivation I have is I'm going to be 37 next month, and once you hit your late 30s you start losing muscle mass just sitting around, among other things. Stuff isn't going to fix itself, I have to help it."

The first weeks of the New Year have passed, and many of us have probably already broken our resolutions about weight loss, and we may have come to the proverbial fork in the road. Hopefully, reading Peacock's story can help put us all on the right nutritional and exercise path. See you at the gym! ■

Excerpt from Joe Peacock's Online Beginner's Guide to Working Out:

"I don't believe in wasting people's time, so I'll go ahead and give away the ending. Here are the points I'll be making:

- * You will not work out regularly and eat right until you care enough about yourself to take care of yourself. There are no shortcuts.
- * To lose fat, you must burn more calories than you consume every single day.
- * Although cardiovascular exercise (running, jogging, walking, skipping, the StairMaster, and others) are great ways to burn calories one day at a time, building muscle is the only way to raise your metabolism permanently. The more muscle you have, the more calories you burn 24/7.
- * To build muscle, you must destroy and then rebuild muscle.
- * Working out is not just for muscleheads and jocks. It's a special, devoted block of time each day for you to focus solely on yourself. You are worth it.

"You work 50 hours a week. You know you should probably work out for 30 minutes a day, or at the very least, take a nightly walk around the neighborhood ... But you just can't find the time. Fast food and restaurants make eating a more efficient process, and with the kids' soccer practice and work piling up, it's just so hard to eat right and find time for the gym ... especially since you don't know much about how gyms work. And even if you did, you can't afford one ...

And that's okay. That's not a bad thing, you're doing what you need to do to make it through your daily life. But you need to realize something. And it's very uncomfortable to admit this to yourself (TRUST ME, I know) ... But it's true:

You don't want to lose weight. You don't want to get stronger. You don't want to change.

'But Joe!' You're mentally screaming. 'Of COURSE I do! I'm overweight! No one wants to be overweight!' I didn't say you want to be overweight. I said 'You don't want to lose weight.'

'Joe, I'm barely 120 lbs, and all my life I've been called scrawny! I don't want to be scrawny.'

I didn't say you want to be scrawny. I said 'You don't want to get stronger.'

It's simple. We humans want. In fact, desire is really the only thing we actually do on this planet, if you think about it. We want love, we want money, we want a nice car, we want a nice house ... And occasionally, we take it upon ourselves to actually go and acquire the things we want. Some of us are lazier than others, and take what come to us ... but for the most part, I believe that every person on this planet has, at some point or another, REALLY wanted something — and then went out and got it. A promotion at work, or a nice watch, or perhaps a date from a really cute girl or boy.

At some point in your life, you've wanted something so badly, you went and got it. So, if you really, really wanted to lose weight or get stronger, you'd do it.

This is not an insult. It's just the truth. And I know, because I went through it myself. The truth is, saying you want something isn't the same as actually wanting it. When you actually DO want something, you make it happen. And in order to make it happen, you go through phases of acquisition, each phase leading to the next, until you finally have what it is you want.

It is my theory that you don't actually want to change your life because you don't know how to actually change it. You compare where you are now with where you want to be, decide the difference is too great, and give up before you even start. You can't see the forest for the trees, so to speak ... You have probably seen incredibly fit people, and wonder how it is that they became so incredibly fit.. And then you begin imagining horrible tortures visited upon your person by gigantic clanging machines over a period of months and years, causing you to sweat and feel pain and oh my god, isn't Xbox so much more fun? Besides, "Who Wants To Make A Deal Or No Deal — Extreme Makeover Edition" is on. And I just opened this carton of ice cream.

So, I hope to remove that barrier. I hope to give you all sorts of information that is beneficial to your quest to lose weight or get in shape or bulk up. I hope to share with you all of the intel that I've gathered for myself (and discussed with trainers and other former unhealthy folks). I hope to obliterate myths, shatter misconceptions, and guide you to a place where you can actually see each step in the process as it leads up to the next ... Finally bringing you to the light at the end of the tunnel.

But, at the end of it all, you're the one who's going to have to get up out of your chair, put the laptop down, walk out the front door, and make it happen for yourself. Every day. From now on. I can't want it for you. You have to want it for yourself." ■



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