

Cinderella and the Fraction

By Mary McDevitt

The tale of Cinderella and how a glass slipper led to marrying the handsome Prince is a well-known one. But do you think she really lived "happily ever after"? No way! The life of a princess is not what it's cracked up to be.

Poor Cinderella. Her position required that she attend every ball and dinner party held at the neighboring castles. All that food! Yes, you guessed it. Our Cinderella put on quite a few pounds.

As the date of her first wedding anniversary neared, Cinderella grew concerned. She knew she'd never fit into the glass slippers. "I'll join TOPS!" she declared aloud to herself. And she did.

Cinderella was a very enthusiastic TOPS member the first week. She read all the TOPS material, watched what she ate, drank lots of water, and ran laps around the castle. By meeting day, she had lost 4 pounds.

The second week included three banquets. She blew her food plan at the very first one, so she got upset and slacked off the rest of the week. On meeting day, she dressed in her lightest-weight clothes and left her heavy crown and jewels in their cases. She skipped breakfast too. Still the scales showed a gain.

When the phone rang later at the castle, Cinderella knew who it would be. She was right: the wicked stepsisters--on a conference call. "How'd your weigh-in go, Sis?" one asked in a syrupy voice. When Cinderella admitted she'd recorded a gain, the sisters' piercing shrieks of laughter caused Cinderella to move the phone receiver away from her ear. The next sound was a dial tone. They'd hung up.

Poor Cinder's torture wasn't over. Her next phone call came from her wicked stepmother, "I hear you've gained again, dear," she crooned. "What a shame. And what will you wear to the ball this week? You've already worn your largest gown twice in a row." Before Cinderella could reply, her stepmother snickered with glee and hung up.

Well, our Cinderella is no wimp. "I'll show them!" she said to herself. "Next week I'll lose 2 pounds."

Cinderella worked hard all week. Weigh-in revealed a 1 1/2-pound loss. She was glad to announce a loss at roll call, but Cinderella was not quite happy with herself.

Actually, she was feeling disappointed because she had not reached the 2-pound goal she had set.

Depressed and feeling down on herself, Cinderella found it very hard to stick to her food and exercise program the following week. The result: a small gain.

Poor Cinder. She was sitting in the castle feeling very discouraged, when POP! her Fairy Godmother appeared out of nowhere.

"Snap out of it, Cinder! You're not using your head, dear," declared the fairy. "You didn't gain 20 pounds in 2 months, so how do you expect to lose it in 2 months? You are setting yourself up for defeat by expecting too much too fast."

Cinderella nodded thoughtfully, replying, "I think I know that, but I just need it to sink in better." Fairy Godmother nodded too, then whipped out her magic wand in one swift movement. Waving the glittering wand over Cinder's head, she chanted, "You will now be entranced by the fraction $\frac{1}{2}$. You will enthusiastically aim for a $\frac{1}{2}$ -pound loss each week. You will not concentrate on your long-term goal--just $\frac{1}{2}$ pound per week." She deftly returned the wand to a sleek holster at her hip and added, "After all, dear, if you take care of your short-term goal, the long-term goal will take care of itself. Ta, ta!" Then twirling on the toes of her purple high-top shoes, the fairy disappeared in a puff of pink smoke.

Cinderella felt a new excitement that week. When the weight recorder told her she was $\frac{3}{4}$ -pound lighter, Cinderella was thrilled. She had done better than she had expected, and she felt very good about herself. She felt confident--and happy.

The next week, Cinderella lost $\frac{1}{2}$ pound; the following week, $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. Her next goal was to lose $\frac{1}{2}$ pound and win the charm for losing 4 weeks in a row.

Cinderella succeeded in winning her charm, and her spirits and confidence were better than ever. The stepmother and stepsisters became so jealous of Cinderella's slimming waistline and improved self-esteem that they decided to join TOPS, too.

Something amazing happened. Cinderella noticed that her stepmother and stepsisters were becoming friendlier and happier as the weeks passed.

One day when Cinderella stood behind her stepmother in the weigh-in line, her stepmother turned and said, "Guess what, Cinderella. Now that my lovely daughters and I have slimmed our waists, we've tossed out our old tight corsets. You know, I think those uncomfortable things may have caused us to act a little ornery."

Cinderella just smiled and said, "By the way, what are you wearing to the ball this week?"

Note from the author:

What if we all adopted Cinderella's goal of losing 1/2 pound per week? That would equal a 26-pound loss per year--plus another 10 pounds you may have gained during the year without TOPS.

One pound of fat equals 3,500 calories. A 1/2-pound weekly weight loss means consuming just 250 fewer calories per day. 250 calories equals just 3 sugar cookies or 1 piece of frosted layer cake, or 1 1/2 ounces of peanuts. Or burn off some extra calories with more exercise.

Convince yourself that you will be happy to lose just 1/2 pound per week. You will find that, just like Cinderella, you will be experiencing success more often, you will be more confident, and you will sometimes lose more than 1/2 pound per week.