

Here comes the **mother** of the bride!

19 weeks later, Meredith walks down the aisle 40 pounds lighter

By Meredith Grenier
DAILY BREEZE

Editor's note: This is the final installment in a series of columns following the progress of reporter Meredith Grenier as she slimmed down for her daughter's May 1 wedding.

This is the final chapter in my public weight-loss odyssey. Did I reach my goal of losing 30-plus pounds and 3-4 dress sizes in 19 weeks leading up to my daughter's wedding? Yes indeed. In fact, I exceeded the goal with a 40-pound drop to a fighting weight of 125. Is my figure perfect? Hardly. But at least I didn't deface the wedding pictures. The bride was able to hug me around an actual waist while presenting the ceremonial rose to the Mom. And I could squat down to kiss my 18-month-old granddaughter — an angel in pale lavender organza — before she floated down the aisle in the arms of her bridesmaid mother.

Was it delightful to be on the receiving end of compliments while wearing a short-skirted, periwinkle blue silk suit, even if it meant putting up with my brother irreverently calling me "Toots," and a male thirtysomething labeling me "a hottie," whatever that is? Of course, especially since getting into shape allows me to pursue a goal deeper than physical appearance — to have energy to be a better wife, mother and friend, and to try to make a positive difference in this world before my time on the planet is up.

As for a less altruistic glimpse at life as an honest-to-goodness size 6-8, I have to admit we installed a full-length mirror on our bedroom door for the first time. And shopping for clothes has taken on a sinful level of fun. Instead of rummaging through racks of size 14-16s just to find something that "doesn't make me look fat," I delftly check out the 6-8s, still astounded when they fit, sometimes with room to spare. And it's wonderful to have options other than black!

Has losing 40 pounds brought me boundless happiness as one would expect? To a degree, yes. But then, with my former extra weight, I always proclaimed I was chubby and happy, along with my well-padded, jovial sisters. On



Meredith Grenier, right, and her daughter, also named Meredith, pose at Neighborhood Church in Palos Verdes Estates prior to the May 1 wedding. Mom had no trouble fitting into her new suit.

the flip side, I rationalized that all those lovely skinny women surely must be miserable. I even managed to feel sorry for them. Hey, it's all about perspective. Do I have compassion for everyone who has weight to lose? You bet. I know being heavy is painful, and losing weight

isn't easy. But it's not brain surgery, either. I couldn't get a law degree in 100 years. But I can put my mind to sticking to a diet, exercising and lifting weights. It doesn't take a stratospheric IQ or great athletic prowess. It just takes determina-

WEIGHT LOSS/82



Steve Baldwin

Science finds too-good-to-be-true diet stories ... always are

Have you heard the latest? Eating pizza cuts your risk for cancer. Use butter, not margarine. (Actually, eating less of both is the way to go.) Lose weight and feel great by eating ... steak and bacon.

Chocolate contains antioxidants, so be sure to eat pounds of it. (Never mind all the calories and fat. Come to think of it, in the 1990s fat was the root of all dietary evil; now it's carbs that kill.)

What's next? Chill-cheese fries reduce your risk of heart attack?

At least once a week, I come across a new story about the latest nutritional breakthrough. Nutrition (mis)information is beginning to permeate our collective conscience, like a bad pop song you hear on the radio every time you tune in.

The media is partially to blame for this phenomenon, printing in bold headlines, "Chocolate Chip Cookies Prevent Diabetes." (Wouldn't it be great if it were true?)

Don't get me wrong. There are many good studies that deserve attention from media outlets. Reporting on well-designed, scientific studies is an important way to disseminate information.

However, there is a tendency for scientists to apply their findings to everyone, and just because a researcher makes a claim, doesn't mean it's applicable to everyone who reads it.

Other times, the journalist behind the camera or keyboard makes the mistake of taking a small bit of truth and applying it to our society as a whole.

Beware the single study syndrome

Consider a story carried by several media outlets last year. It was stated that the addictive quality of certain foods has caused the epidemic of obesity that our country now faces. This declaration was based on a single study, using — are you ready? — rats as the subjects.

The study raises questions, and maybe the need for further research. But should we change our behaviors based on a single study that didn't even test humans?

You can wade through the stories and headlines to find accurate information, and it doesn't take a Ph.D. in Nutritional Biochemistry to do so. Ask these questions when evaluating stories in the media about nutrition:

Is the report based on a single study? If so, it may not be applicable to the general public. Most experts agree that changing behaviors based on a single study is not a good idea. Good science involves looking at all the available data over a period of time before making a recommendation. Many studies that come to the same conclusion provide stronger evidence for making lifestyle changes.

Are the words "miracle" or "breakthrough" used in describing the study? If so, it's likely that the story is what it sounds like: too good to be true. Reputable scientists normally do not use this kind of language when describing findings.

Misleading 'infomercials'

Does the scientist cite a specific study in order to sell you something? Some "infomercials" have gotten very slick. My current favorite is a guy on the radio on weekend mornings, conducting an "interview" while selling vitamins that "cleanse your liver," "cure sexual dysfunction," and "give you more energy." If you don't listen carefully, it sounds very real.

Are they selling you a "quick fix"? There are no quick fixes when it comes to nutritional health. For instance, weight loss products may make unreasonable claims while highlighting extreme success stories that don't apply to most of us. Remember that we didn't gain the weight overnight, and we shouldn't expect to lose it that way either. Lifestyle change over a period of time is normally the best way to improve one's health while safely losing unwanted weight.

One recommendation that consistently holds true is that eating fruits and vegetables can help prevent or reduce risk for certain diseases including cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and birth defects. Studies have shown repeatedly that eating fruits and vegetables, along with regular exercise, is good practice.

So the next time you read a story with a headline like "Little Powdered Doughnuts: Cancer Miracle," you may want to think twice about the facts. And be sure to read it while eating an apple.

Steve Baldwin, MS, RD, is a nutrition network specialist with the Hawthorne School District's Nutrition Network Center. He can be reached at stbaldwin@hawthorne.k12.ca.us.

The results



Meredith Grenier went from 165 lbs. at the start of her weight-loss program ...

DIANNE KOVARTIC
DAILY BREEZE

	Before	After
Size:	14	6/8
Weight:	165 lbs.	125 lbs.
Measurements (in inches)		
Neck:	13½	11½
Upper arm:	14½	11½
Chest:	42¼	36
Waist at roll:	43	30
True waist:	41	28
Hips:	46	36
Buttocks:	45	35
Thigh:	25	20½
Calf:	15¾	14¼

Height: 5 ft., 3¼ inches



... to 125 lbs. after weeks of watching her diet and exercising with a personal trainer.

BRUCE HAZELTON
DAILY BREEZE