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Autobiography & Memoir

The Dog Diet, A Memoir: What My Dog Taught Me About Shedding Pounds, Licking Stress and Getting a New Leash on Life
Patti Lawson
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"Bridget Jones had nothing on me," writes the author. Twice daily trips to not one, but three separate scales; journals packed with the dietary make-up of every morsel consumed and every bit of energy expended in exercise; a basement that looked like an exercise equipment rummage sale … this was what Lawson's life revolved around. That is, until a sudden whim in the midst of what she calls her "winter of discontent" found her taking home a curly-haired bundle of doggy energy.

By the end of those first few months of sleepless nights and all-consuming care that are common to parents of newborns and puppies, Lawson found she had gained not only a companion, but a new figure and mind-set as well. The old practice of munching in front of the TV, in the car, and in bed was abandoned when Sadie would pounce on anything that resembled something good to eat. Lawson had to resort to eating foods that were silent and lacking in odor, completely unappealing to her dog, or approved for consumption by both human and canine. It turned out that the foods that fell into these categories were also healthy ones. Without even realizing it, she had developed the first diet plan that ever worked for her.

A trial lawyer and writer of the "Dogs … Diets … Dating" column for the *Charleston Sunday Gazette-Mail*, Lawson blends memoir with self-help by providing a shopping list, sample menus, and recipes for some of her favorite Dog Diet dishes, like a tempting dessert called Chocolate Java Ricotta Supreme. Her biggest realization, however, was that "getting rid of a heavy body involved much more than what I did or didn't put in my mouth." Caring for Sadie made it easy to fit exercise into her day. In addition to walking her dog, she did squats while scooping dry food from its container, used cans of wet dog food as weights for bicep curls, and toned her triceps with a little leash work. Sadie taught Lawson to lighten up emotionally as well. Following her dog's example, she learned to start her day on a positive

note, let go of grudges, and truly enjoy the little things in life like good tea in a china cup.

This diet is admittedly unscientific, and more emphasis should be put on the need to consult a vet before feeding dogs human foods, but there is much to be gained from Lawson's experiences and her creative approach to shifting from yo-yo dieter to someone whose very lifestyle lends itself to a healthier body and mind. "No longer did I need the comfort of food," she writes; "Sadie was my comfort, and she was completely calorie free."