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'HAVING BEEN SLIM in my 20s, I started putting on weight through my 30s and 40s. But everything came to a head in October 2009. I was my heaviest ever, 11 stone 5 pounds, and a size 14 to 16. I was also finally diagnosed as having coeliac disease, a condition where gluten, the protein in wheat and other cereals, triggers an immune reaction. I'd been told it was IBS in my 20s, but this development meant I had to avoid certain foods.

Around the same time, I met therapists Martin and Marion Shirran and decided to sign up for their Gastric Mind Band Method, which uses hypnosis and other mind techniques to help you lose weight. The combination of hypnotherapy, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) accesses your subconscious to help you make changes according to the underlying causes of your being overweight. I hate exercise, had been following low-carbohydrate diets without any real success and was scared of surgery, so it sounded easy!

In March 2010 I flew to Spain for the four-day treatment. The first session, which lasted four hours, included hypnotherapy and explored my background and my relationship with food. It also pinpointed unhealthy habits. I hadn't really considered, for example, that my cup of tea, with three heaped teaspoons of sugar and two sweeteners, could increase my risk of diabetes and heart disease.

The second three-hour session left me feeling exhilarated at the changes I could now make – such as having smaller portion sizes, ditching the convenience foods and cooking more healthily with fresh ingredients. I felt I had a new attitude to food and was incredibly positive. Session three was really intense and emotional and took me back to my childhood. I don't remember much about what happened, but I cried a lot.

In the final session, I had the imaginary op. I was shown a real gastric band and talked through the procedure of having it fitted. Then I watched a DVD of a very gory gastric band operation before I was hypnotised. Marian pricked my hand with [CONTINUED OVER PAGE]

