

Slimming Smartly

Introduction

Slimming Smartly is a chamber larp about slimming groups – commercial organizations that organize local gatherings for people who are seeking to lose weight. Examples are WeightWatchers and Slimming World. The organization appoints a group leader who, over a series of regular meetings, provides guidance around weight loss, and fosters mutual support within the group to help people on their journey. That's what the advertising brochures say about them, at least.

This larp looks also at the potential harms in slimming groups. The groups embody and reinforce social prejudices around body type and body image – patriarchal norms, as typically almost all members are female-bodied. The organizations are commercially driven and funded by membership and by the sale of diet books, slimming foods, etc – so they have an active financial interest in members never gaining their ideal weight, but instead remaining dependent on the group. And, relatedly, the weight loss strategies advocated are not always those that are likely to have long-term success – cycles of weight loss, 'relapse', and renewed attendance at the group are not uncommon.

We have designed *Slimming Smartly* from a firmly feminist and body-positive perspective, but it is not a diatribe against slimming groups. The larp understands and accepts that many people do get positive results from the programmes, and that the groups themselves can be encouraging and friendly places to be. Participants are each free to choose their own angle on how their character is affected by membership of the group.

Practicalities

Slimming Smartly is written for 5 or 6 participants, and two GMs. (A later version may expand that to be able to handle 7 or 8 participants.) It takes about 4 hours in total. It can take place in any ordinary room: no equipment is needed other than chairs and tables.

Pre-larp workshops

People introduce themselves and pronouns. (Don't ask at this point why they signed up for this larp – that will be covered later.)

Safety

'Offgame' is the general-purpose safeword, followed by stating your need.

The door is open – you can leave at any point, and you don't have to explain why, unless you would like to.

Lookdown to enter or leave scenes unobtrusively.

The fictional setup

Explain that it's the present day, in the UK (but could be any other country where such groups exist and operate in the same kind of ways). *Slimming Smartly* is a popular and long-established slimming organization. This particular group serves the town where the characters all live. It is led by an experienced coordinator and assistant (NPCs played by the GMs). Some of the characters have been members for a long time, others may be new to it. The group contains more people than are represented by the characters – meetings are usually attended by 20 or so – but these are the people who have been seated together around one particular table.

NPCs

The leader of the group is Trudy (she/her, aged about 39), an inspiring and somewhat forceful person who wants members to get the best out of themselves, and is sympathetic about their failures.

Her assistant is Steve (he/him, aged about 58) who is a shy and kind technically-oriented person, somewhat harassed, whose job is to handle things like the scales and arranging tables and chairs. He does not interact much with group members, but stays mostly in the background.

(Of course, you should change these as required to suit your own needs.)

About weight, and terminology

Explain that we use 'fat' and related terms as a neutral descriptor in this script and in the larp's briefings. Characters' (and participants') lived experiences may involve them being judged for their apparent weight, but the larp does not make any such judgement.

In-game, by default the NPCs will use terms like 'overweight', 'obese', and 'morbidly obese', as is usual for these groups in real life. But, at this point, offer participants an opt-out to that medicalized language, if anyone finds it triggering etc.

Slimming Smartly doesn't use numbers for characters' weights, and participants should avoid doing so as well. You may have in your mind that your character weighs around X kilos, but you should not talk about it.

Characters are in three fatness categories.

Standard size – means that you can buy clothes in ordinary shops: you don't need to use specialist shops, or the internet, to find clothes that will fit you.

Fat – means that you are above the standard range of clothes sizes. In ordinary shops, you usually can't find clothes that will fit you: you have to go to the website to find larger sizes.

Very fat – means that you are above the standard range of clothes sizes. You have to order clothes from specialist shops online.

Weight fluctuation

Point out that weight can go up and down because of things other than whether one has or has not adhered to a diet regime. Invite suggestions of examples from participants, and then add any of these that have been missed: menstruation, medication, body being weird, water loss, muscle gain, stabilization of dramatic weight loss, calories needed for maintenance, illness.

Suggest that participants might want to think about these factors in relation to their characters' weight fluctuations from one meeting scene to the next.

You and this larp

Ask the participants, around the circle in turn:

1. What do you want out of this larp?
2. How do you feel about weight loss groups?

Choosing characters

Spread out the character briefings on a table, or pass them round, so that everyone can have a look at each of them. There are nine characters available. Participants should look at the content warnings on each character first – they may wish to exclude, and to avoid reading, certain characters on that basis. Each participant should choose one of the characters that they will feel comfortable representing in the larp.

It's important to note that the participants do not have to choose characters of the same body types as themselves (although, of course, they may choose to do so). We expect that people will be thoughtful and respectful when representing a different body type.

(If someone can't find a character that they were happy to play, people can swap. Or if that doesn't help then maybe one of the leftover ones can be tweaked to make it work for them.)

If you have badgeholders, then print out the name badges (below) and the participants can each take the appropriate one. (There are also badges for the two NPCs.)

Otherwise, each person should write their character's name, age, and pronouns on a sticky label, and stick it onto themselves. Include the two NPCs.

During meetings

Talk through the meeting structure (see below).

Share the meeting code of conduct, which characters are expected to abide by.

Show an example weigh-in card, and talk through it.

Black box scenes

Explain how black box scenes will work (see below) and have people practise an example one, if there's time for that.

Timetable

Workshops – 50m

Meeting scene 1 – 20m

Interval – 15m

Meeting scene 2 – 30m

Break – 10m

Interval – 15m

Meeting scene 3 – 30m

Interval – 15m

Meeting scene 4 – 30m

Wrapup – 25m

Total – 4h

The larp

Slimming Smartly takes place over four scenes, each representing a meeting of the group. It meets every week, but the meetings that are to be larped have three-month intervals between them. Between each scene and the next, there is an offgame interval where participants can decide what their characters are doing during the intervening time, etc.

Set up the play area with a table around which all of the participants can sit, facing the front of the room, where there's another table and two chairs for the NPCs. Stick the scales printout onto the floor near this table.

Start with the participants at the other end of the room, away from the play area (or even outside the room, if that's practical). Ask them to close their eyes and get into character as you play the larp theme music (see below). When the music finishes, the larp starts with the characters arriving at the meeting and taking their seats. The two NPCs are already there, to greet them.

Meeting scenes

Each of the four meeting scenes takes about 30 minutes, and has the same structure.

1. Weigh-in
2. Speech
3. Break into small groups

Each meeting scene starts with the characters arriving in the meeting room and taking their seats, greeting each other as appropriate. But, after the first one, you don't need to play the music again each subsequent time: just prompt them to start.

Weigh-in

Once everyone has settled down, each character in turn is called to get on the scales (symbolized by a printed picture of scales, on the floor). The organizer NPC announces how much they have gained or lost since the last meeting, and updates their weigh-in card. The group are expected to cheer those who have lost weight.

(How much weight each character has lost or gained is determined by a mix of player preference and a random factor. The player decides on the mix of coloured tokens to put into a bag, and then draws from it.)

The organizer NPC makes a short inspiring speech, to encourage and hearten the group, including those who have not managed to lose weight.

The meeting breaks into small groups, each around a table. The characters form one such group (others are imagined to be elsewhere in the room). An NPC places a question to discuss on the table (see below for the questions). The group discuss it freely in conversation together.

The organizer NPC should draw the meeting to a close when 30 minutes has passed (or, use your judgement as to when to end it). The characters can bid each other farewell as they leave the meeting room.

Intervals

After the first, second, and third meeting scenes, there is an offgame interval lasting about 15 minutes.

The interval after the second meeting scene should be preceded by a 10-minute break, to give people a chance to use the bathroom, get a drink, etc.

During the interval, individual black box scenes take place (see below for details of which characters have theirs when).

Each character has a predefined black box scene that should be used. They should invite another participant, or one of the facilitators, to play any other role that's needed in the scene. It should be kept to no more than five minutes in length.

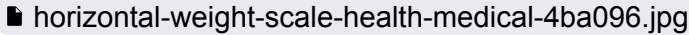
After that, there's a few minutes for participants to think about what has happened in their characters' lives during the three months that have passed since the last meeting that was represented in a scene.

Ending the larp

After the end of the fourth meeting scene, the participants should not leave the meeting as usual, but should stay in their seats and close their eyes. The larp theme music will play, and while it's doing so, participants can contemplate their experience and transition silently out of character.

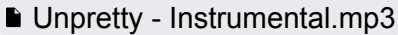
When everyone is ready, there's space for an emotional debrief, any further contextualization that might be wished or needed, and an intellectual debrief.

Supporting materials

Picture of scales: 
(print it on A3 / tiled across two pieces of A4)

Theme music:

https://open.spotify.com/track/0xrp6PBmIkDtKHBvWNUpJd?si=wl_RnpnfR1uGjGIYsWiMHA&nd=1&dlsi=e017a327a5ed4af5

Also as an MP3 at: 

Beads for drawing

Bag for drawing

Name badges

Trudy, 39 she/her	Steve, 58 he/him – standard size
Jade, 23 she/her – standard size	Rowan, 31 she/her – standard size
Jackie, 25 she/her – fat	Alice, 41 she/her – very fat
Chloe, 27 she/her – very fat	Sara, 27 she/her – fat
Cerys, 44 she/her – standard size	Maria, 34 she/her – fat
Astrid, 29 she/her – fat	

Meeting code of conduct (to be prepared)

Notes for weigh-in meta procedure

Print this and place it next to the pot of beads, so that people can see it while they go through the procedure.

Put 6 beads into the bag

At least 1 of each colour

Purple = gain weight

Red = neutral

Orange = lose weight

Draw 2 beads from the bag

Weigh-in card

Name:		
Date	Weight change	Notes
(...)	(...)	(...)
22/02/2025		
(...)	(...)	(...)
24/05/2025		
(...)	(...)	(...)
23/08/2025		
(...)	(...)	(...)
22/11/2025		
(...)	(...)	(...)

Session questions

Cut these up and choose which one to use in which session. We suggest this sequence for the four meetings – but do change it around, or create your own, in response to how play is going.

Talk about your weight loss journey so far?

How do you feel the programme has helped you so far?

Think about when you have failed in your weight loss journey. What caused it, and how can you stop it happening again?

Imagine your new thin self. What does their future look like?

Session speech notes (to be prepared)

Sequence of black box scenes

Cross off the names of the characters that aren't being played. Then the first two names remaining should have their black box scenes during the interval after Scene 1; the next two during the interval after the 10-minute break that follows Scene 2; and the last two during the interval after Scene 3.

Maria

Chloe

Alice

Jackie

Sara

Astrid

Cerys

Jade

Rowan

Debrief questions

First of all we're going to just do emotional stuff – we will get onto more thinky processing of the experience next. We'll go around the circle – say something if you'd like to, but you can pass of course if you don't want to say anything, or we can come back to you.

And please don't interrupt or start a conversation, when people say something – just let them talk. We'll have space for a proper open discussion next.

[Go all the way around with the first question – then move on to the second question.]

1. Is there anything that you need right now? – how can we help you?
[Deal with people's needs as they come up one by one, don't wait to go all the way around before helping.]
2. Are there any feelings that you'd like to express, or to share with the group?

OK so now let's move onto thoughts. Are there any thoughts or opinions that the larp has stirred in you, that you'd like to share? (And again, please don't interrupt or respond to what someone is saying.)

1. About your character, about slimming groups, about slimming culture in general, etc?

Maria, 34

Content warnings

Disordered eating, relationship insecurity, family pressure, emotional blackmail

Size

In the terminology of this larp, you are currently **Fat**. That means that you are above the standard range of clothes sizes. In ordinary shops, you usually can't find clothes that will fit you: you have to go to the website to find larger sizes.

How it's been for you

"Hey babe, you want some of these?" Kris had a big bowl of mini chocolates.

It had been a long day – like so many of them just lately. You could just fancy some chocolate – something sweet and satisfying. Or like some Häagen-Dasz maybe. Salted caramel flavour.

"No, I'd better not, sweetheart, thanks," you said. Slumping into the sofa next to him, you smoothed down your top over your tummy. It had been getting bigger again. You were sure Kris had noticed, although he hadn't said anything.

"Suit yourself," he said, cheerfully, and dug out another handful. "How was work?"

"Oh... it was... ok. Not too bad." *It was tough and stressful*, is how it was. But Kris's work was tough, too. There was no use complaining.

"Fancy watching some telly? I'm pretty tired."

"Yeah, ok, why not." So it was going to be one of those evenings – warm, companionable, but not exciting. Not passionate. That's what Kris meant when he said he was tired. And who could blame him? "Ah hell, go on then darling – pass those chocs over."

Background

You're fat now, but you haven't always been. Sometimes you've been really thin. But each time, you got fat again. It's been up and down, up and down. You're really tired of it.

Dieting diligently, and seeing that weight fall away, is a good feeling. But eating what you want, when you want, is a good feeling too. And sometimes you just need to do that. It's always been like that, for you, as long as you can remember.

Food was about treating yourself, when you were a kid – your mum was always dieting, and then she was so happy when she sneaked a chocolate bar or a pastry or something. And then so guilty and angry with herself afterwards. You came to understand how a second helping, or a sweet treat between meals, was something that you absolutely deserved, in the moment – but afterwards it made you miserable to acknowledge your lack of self-control. Denying yourself was good, but also impossible to keep up. It was complicated, being a woman, Mum said. Men would only like you if you were thin. And if you had curves. And your mirror would lie to you.

As you approached adulthood, growing and being active, to start with you found that you could eat quite a lot and not put on weight. So you did. When you needed to cheer yourself up, those packets of biscuits, those tubs of ice cream, they gave you the rush that you wanted. And then you cursed yourself for it and maybe skipped breakfast and lunch the next day, and that was ok. But as you got older, your metabolism changed, and it became more difficult. Much more difficult.

You got together with Kris when you were just the perfect thin-with-curves. He thought you were gorgeous: it makes you cry sometimes, looking back at photos of you from then, how at the time you didn't realize how special a moment that was in your life. It was all good for a while, but then when the two of you hit a bad patch financially, you started comfort-eating again, and put on a load of weight. Kris didn't say anything about it – but he looked at you differently, and touched you differently. And you hated yourself, your weakness – and you dieted hard, and lost most of it. And then things were good, again – he loved you like you wanted him to, again.

But that was just the first time. Each time since, it's been a bit tougher to lose the weight – and impossible to keep it off for long.

Your body now

Sometimes you look in the mirror and hate your body, for not just doing what you want it to, for betraying you. Sometimes you don't look in the mirror, because you fear you might smash it out of anger. But sometimes you lie in the bath and cherish and pamper your body. Why can't it be allowed just to be how it wants to be?

Other people

Kris still never says anything about it, when you get fat again. But he must be able to see how upset you get. Eventually he's going to decide that enough is enough, and leave you – which would be the end of your world. He's the only person you've ever loved, or has ever loved you. But even a saint would be looking at other women by now.

You didn't need to develop that fear by yourself – Mum has been in your ear about it constantly. She thinks that's the main reason that she and Dad split up, her being fat – although you suspect there was more to it than just that. But it's like you can't bear to go

round and see her now, because you know she'll straight away start in again on how Kris will leave you, or will have an affair or whatever, unless you lose that fat right now.

How you feel about Slimming Smartly

You heard about Slimming Smartly through a friend, and you've been using it on and off for a while now. It has actually worked quite well for you for losing weight, better than some of the weird diets that you tried in the past. At least you get to eat actual real food. And being in a group helps, the social side of it, and how everyone can see how much weight you've lost.

It is kind of depressing sometimes, though, when you come back to Slimming Smartly again after six months of not needing it, because you've got fat again somehow. And the routine is still the same, and so are some of the faces even. It feels like you're on a treadmill, sometimes. But what else can you do?

What would it take to be honest with the group?

You feel a bit superior to some of the others, sometimes, because they don't lose weight – or they even put it on, some of them. It's probably because they don't stick to the rules. You do stick to them: and so you always lose weight. Even if you put it back on again later when you're off the programme, that's a different thing altogether.

You would never say any of this, of course. Unless maybe someone was rude to you. Or if they really needed to hear it.

Chloe, 27

Content warnings

Microaggressions regarding size, past experience of bullying

Size

In the terminology of this larp, you are currently **very fat**. That means that you are above the standard range of clothes sizes. You have to order clothes from specialist shops online, you can't find clothes to fit in high street shops.

How it's been for you

You have to fly for work and you dread it. You've only actually had someone ask to move seats once, but you fear it every time. You try to ignore the sighs when you sit down. You try to get an aisle seat. You have your own seat belt extender. You don't want to ask.

You go out for meals with your family. No one else knows the calculations you're doing. Can you fit into the booth or do you need an excuse to move to a chair? Will the chair hold you? Should you order a salad and pretend to be 'one of the good ones?' Should you eat what you like because to hell with it?

You wear earphones in public. You used to dread the comments made by younger men - things shouted from cars, obvious laughter, even being grabbed once or twice like your body was fucking public property. It happens less now that you're not in your early twenties. You still wear the earphones.

Background

You're very fat. You've always been bigger than your family and your weight has increased over time. As a child there were some murmurs of concern but your parents shut them down. Your check-ups at the doctors always showed you were healthy. You didn't particularly eat more than anyone else.

Growing up, things got more difficult. As you got older being fat made you an acceptable target for bullies. You were angry - at them and yourself in equal measure. You would've liked to have seen something different in the mirror. You reinvented yourself, dying your hair, trying make-up, trying a new image every term. Still, you couldn't escape the fact that being fat made you a target. You weren't alone. You had close friends and you didn't let anyone see that the comments got to you. Why would you want to date these men who kept telling you they didn't want to date you?

As you approached adulthood, you started eating more. You enjoyed food, although that tended to manifest as eating larger portions - you didn't have a strong need for anything sweet, or for snacks. You knew you were putting on weight, but after a while it seemed to make no difference. The world had categorised you as fat, so you were fat.

You were popular at university - you had lots of friends and a couple of partners. The romantic relationships didn't last for a variety of reasons, although some of the friendships did. You started becoming more politically aware, understanding the intersection of fatness, feminism and the way an ideal body image was sold to everyone, but particularly women. You were loud about it. You didn't tell anyone about how insecure you sometimes felt when you were alone with a partner taking your clothes off for the first time.

You were feeling tired for a while. You suspected anemia, or maybe a vitamin deficiency. You went to a doctor who was insistent that your weight was the problem. Your blood pressure was fine, and everything was in normal range but they only agreed to the blood tests if you took part in the wellness programme - sponsored by the NHS as a health initiative. You could have fought harder, but you were tired. Maybe it would be easier just to lose the weight. Maybe life would feel less like a battle.

Your body now

You avoid mirrors. You've moved on from the body positive movement now - it seems to have been co-opted by thin white women talking about allowing themselves a bar of chocolate. You consider yourself body neutral - you don't have to love your body but you don't want to waste your life hating it.

Only you are insecure at times. Sometimes you avoid intimacy and other times you pretend not to care when someone looks at you naked. It shouldn't be a shock to them. You know that rationally. So you try not to think about it and avoid mirrors.

Other people

Your parents are wonderfully supportive. You get the impression that if you'd allowed it then your dad would've called the doctor and told him to take you seriously and do the blood tests. Your mum was always clear that if anyone considered being overweight an indicator of poor health they could also just check your blood pressure or whatever they were concerned about. You don't tell them what it's like day to day. It doesn't seem worth it. They wouldn't understand.

You have a group of close friends who are really important to you. They're fun, you love spending time with them and they never make you feel less because of your weight. They are all thinner than you. You still occasionally grit your teeth when one of them tells you about the latest diet they're on. You know they have every right to decide what's best for their bodies and you know no one is intending for you to hear 'I don't want to look like you.' Sometimes it still stings.

How you feel about Slimming Smartly

You hate commercial weight loss programmes. There are so many things they don't take into account, including ideology, patriarchy and capitalism. They have no interest in making you healthier and they certainly have no interest in making you feel more confident. You would love for the class to focus on how to shut down people making comments when you're shopping or how to feel good about yourself at any size. That seems much more valuable than a recipe for a cake that's half the amount of calories per slice.

What would it take to be honest with the group?

You would like them to see the truth. They are caught up in these ideas of failure and weakness. You want to tear apart the talk of willpower and 'being good'. You are sensitive to how difficult it is, but you hope you can get the message across that having a body society considers non-normative doesn't make you a bad person. Fundamentally, you would rather change the world than lose weight.

Your own insecurities, though? Well, that's more difficult. You tend to respond to honesty and sincerity. If someone expresses similar insecurities to yours then you might admit you have them too, even though you don't want to think of yourself like that. Fundamentally, you would rather change the world than lose weight, but you can't change the world and living in it as it is, with no one understanding is exhausting.

Alice, 41

Content warnings

Emotional abuse by parents, internalized fatphobia

Size

In the terminology of this larp, you are currently **very fat**. That means that you are above the standard range of clothes sizes. You have to order clothes from specialist shops online, you can't find clothes to fit in high street shops.

How it's been for you

You would like to feel like you looked nice, just once. Even when you order clothes online the models are half your size and the dress, or top looks like a sack on you or just feels wrong. You were recently invited to a wedding and you spent the evening hovering awkwardly, trying to avoid appearing in any pictures.

You think about dating occasionally. You imagine meeting up with someone and them really seeing you. You imagine them walking out. You have no idea if that's how people think. You aren't going to risk it.

Sometimes when you're walking down the street people turn to look back at you. Sometimes when someone talks to you at an event you can almost see the self-congratulation in their face. Talking to the fat woman and feeling like a good person. You hate them. You hate yourself. You smile anyway.

Background

You're fat now. It became obvious when you were a teen. You were already deeply unhappy by then. Your parents took every chance they could to tear down your self-esteem. By the time you were 14 you already knew you were stupid and abnormal. Your two comforts were drawing, sometimes doodling and sometimes the view from your window or the local park, and sneaking food when you could. It might have started as a form of rebellion but it became something you looked forward to. You would wait until your parents went to sleep and then sneak biscuits or chocolate - not enough to be noticed, or at least no one ever said anything.

You got out at 18. You were depressed and lost, but you managed to get an apprenticeship at a hotel. There was enough money to rent a room, just about, and what you had left you spent on food. You found it hard to face the other people living with you. You didn't know how to make conversation if you ran into them in the kitchen. Instead you brought food you could eat in your room - mostly chocolate, crisps and snacks. You didn't worry about mealtimes. You just ate.

Once you got your own place, you could cook. You ate what you enjoyed and you didn't weigh yourself. Your parents would call you and your weight was one of the things they would talk about. Who would want you? But you had never believed anyone would so what did that matter? And wasn't it better to keep them away than let them see what you were really like as a person?

It wasn't just potential partners. You never let anyone close. You didn't know how to make friends - whenever you started letting anyone in you would hear the voices of your parents and feel like you were too much and not enough. You kept drawing. Maybe more than anything you would like someone to show your art to. Maybe if someone could see it they would understand you.

You still take your parents' calls. You now have a better understanding that what they say isn't necessarily the truth, but it still feels true. But what else can you do? They're the ones who told you to do something about your weight. You were defiant about it for about a day before you joined the group. That was a year ago.

Your body now

You force yourself to look at your body in the mirror, to map out every fault. Are you beyond fixing? Even if you could lose weight, the stretch marks would still be there. You would still carry yourself differently. You would still be you. You force yourself to look every day. You've lost a bit of weight since you started attending Slimming Smartly a year ago, but it's hard to notice or care when no one else does.

An article in a magazine challenged the readers to look in the mirror and find something they like. You know you're supposed to say that it's your eyes. But you can't see your eyes without looking at the rest of your face. You should stop looking. You don't need extra reasons to hate yourself.

Other people

Your parents didn't really want you. You knew that as a child and you know it now. And maybe that's no excuse for the things they said and the names they called you over the years, or the way they seem to delight in your failure. You don't think losing weight will make them happy. You need to find a way to stop believing it, but you don't know where their words end and you begin anymore.

How you feel about Slimming Smartly

You've lost some weight but you're still one of the largest people in the group. You feel awkward about the forced socialising and the discussion of people's weight loss. People half your size are celebrated for losing less weight than you have.

The fear you barely admit to yourself is that it might work. If you keep going you might get to a size where people stop avoiding you. If your weight isn't a shield against the world, then how else are you going to find a way to keep people away? It's not a thing you think about consciously, and part of you is lonely. You just don't know what you'd do if someone saw you and hated you as a person.

What would it take to be honest with the group?

You feel so awkward with the others that it's hard not to just agree with them, even when you find it frustrating. You have struggled with honesty, and at the times you've said something true, it's normally been because you've agreed with someone else, or because you've become emotional. Occasionally, it's been in a bid for connection. You might try to be honest about how you feel if you feel lonely enough.

Jackie, 25

Content warnings

Sexual violence

Size

In the terminology of this larp, you are currently **Fat**. That means that you are above the standard range of clothes sizes. In ordinary shops, you usually can't find clothes that will fit you: you have to go to the website to find larger sizes.

How it's been for you

Comments. Lots of comments. Friends suggesting spin class. Co-workers telling you about the new diet that did wonders for them. Your mother's slight concern "if it's a health issue..." You smile and nod. You're becoming an amazing actor.

Your doctor suggests a blood test. You hadn't gone to talk about your weight, but it seemed easier to say yes than to ask about how to deal with your anxiety. Smiling sympathetically she hands you a leaflet for Slimming Smartly. You just need to get it under control.

You noticed your size increasing every time you bought a new item of clothing. Your options started to become limited. First not everything was stocked in your size. Then nothing was. You think that it's a stupid thing to be ashamed of. You think that you'll add it to the list of stupid things to be ashamed of.

Background

You were a standard size growing up and you never really gave it a second thought. When friends mentioned jealousy over it you would laugh and talk about how lucky you were. You could eat anything you wanted and not gain weight.

You started University after a few years of work. Your friends teased you that this was when the weight gain would come. You'd spent the past few years living with your parents, saving money and essentially being catered for, but you'd also learnt how to cook simple meals. You didn't gain weight and it wasn't really something you thought about. You loved university, both studying and the social side of things. You joined the hockey team, and became close friends with them all, particularly Holly and Ella who shared your attitude to life.

You were 6 months off graduating when you were sexually assaulted during a party on campus. You tried to tell yourself it wasn't a big deal - these things happened. You managed to continue your normal life for a couple of weeks, mainly in a state of shock, before the nightmares and anxiety hit. Sometimes eating would calm things down, so you'd get up in

the middle of the night, eat from the stack of food you had in your room and surf the internet for solutions. You were functioning on about 2 hours of sleep a night, but determined not to drop out. You took the long route around campus, trying not to see the man who assaulted you again. Eventually, you graduated and went home. Your parents expected you to look for jobs and you tried, but you had lost energy and motivation. When you got an interview it was derailed by a spike of anxiety. And you still weren't sleeping.

Your mother expressed gentle concern about both your sleep habits and your weight gain, but you couldn't explain. The words stuck in your throat. When she suggested Slimming Smartly, you agreed. Maybe getting control over your body would make it feel like yours. And then you would feel safe again.

Your body now

You can just about stand to look in a mirror when you're dressed, but anything else makes you cringe away in disgust. If you're honest with yourself, it's not the weight really. You're not sure if you can describe why you were OK with your body once, liked it even, and now it feels wrong. You just know you need to fix it.

You have some weight to lose but you're confident that you can get back to the size you were. And when you do then everything will be OK again.

Other people

Your parents are concerned about you. You've tried to shut down any conversation that headed in that direction and agree with them that Slimming Smartly might be the answer. Maybe they're right. Because when you think about other possibilities you feel like you're overreacting or somehow culpable for the sexual assault. Better just to think about your weight and talk with your parents about that.

Holly and Ella are the only two people who know what happened and you've made them promise not to tell anyone. You know that they're less sure than your parents that weight loss is the answer, but neither have contradicted you directly. Holly gently suggested counselling once but you don't want to make this a bigger thing than it is.

How you feel about Slimming Smartly

You want to feel good about the group. If they can help you lose weight and feel normal again then that will be ideal. You aim to follow the program as carefully as you can. You feel a bit more relaxed when you think of the control it will allow you. You already have the app and have started calculating the right sort of meals. You've brought a set of scales and drafted out a potential trajectory of weight loss.

You hope the other people will be supportive. More than anything, you want kindness, not judgment.

What would it take to be honest with the group?

To be honest with the group you would first need to be completely honest with yourself. You're aware that there's more to this than weight gain, but you want to focus on following the program and getting it right. You can imagine yourself back at the size you were and feeling like you again.

On the other hand, you have a lot of empathy for other people's struggles and if there is room for other people to introspect then you might feel you can do that too. If you feel you can talk without being judged, or if you can begin by implying what you need without stating it outright, then you may be able to begin to be honest.

Sara,27

Content warnings

Disordered eating

Size

In the terminology of this larp, you are currently **Fat**. That means that you are above the standard range of clothes sizes. In ordinary shops, you usually can't find clothes that will fit you: you have to go to the website to find larger sizes.

How it's been for you

"Vodka and Diet Coke" your friend Kerry slurred at you. "Least calories. You shouldn't be drinking wine. Not if you want to lose weight." You were about to tell Kerry that you never told her you wanted to lose weight, but she smiled and winked at you, like she was imparting a secret. And you did want to lose weight. You stopped drinking wine.

You browse for clothes online. You can't tell how it'll look on you. Worse are the size charts which mean you invariably get it wrong and have to send back something you can't squeeze into.

You pick at a salad. Your friends have ordered pizza, and this happens often enough that you've started to talk about allergies. You tried to mention weight loss once. There was a chorus of people telling you you didn't need to lose weight. Later you heard one of them whispering about a girl at the next table thinking she could "get away with wearing that." The girl was thinner than you.

Background

You were a standard size growing up, and only really put on weight after leaving your parent's house. Part of it was work - you threw yourself into it and came home exhausted, picking up takeaways or whatever you could get at the local convenience store. You lacked any real motivation for exercise, or any time. You would work and you would go out in the evenings with friends or colleagues.

The weight gain started slowly, and you weren't too worried. Your clothes size was increasing, but it was only when people started looking at you differently that it became a concern. Men that used to flirt with you stopped spending time with you, and after a while you started shut down anyone who tried. No point being used. You had work and your friends.

You tried a few diets, mostly what was trending at the time, but they all seemed to require a lot of work. You didn't have hours to spend preparing special meals. You struggled to even cook for yourself some nights. And what was the point when you were going out for drinks or dinner with friends most nights anyway?

You found a leaflet for Slimming Successfully and the promised scientific approach appealed. You joined. The weigh-ins kept you accountable, but they didn't give you any more time than you had before. After a few months of seeing the numbers on the scale rise, you stopped getting takeaways on the way home and brought rice cakes to eat instead. That helped and your weight loss started and was celebrated. When asked about your secret you claimed you'd finally learnt to cook, which made the group laugh. You still went out with friends but you didn't join them for dinner anymore and drank diet tonic water with lemon, pretending it was gin. You realised that if you ate a salad for lunch, you could get through the day. And every week, your numbers are decreasing.

You're getting a bit worried. When you lie down at night, you get palpitations and sometimes your breath catches. During the day you sometimes get dizzy. Once or twice you've found yourself running out of energy to the point you couldn't move. Your work is definitely suffering. Still, it won't be forever. As soon as you reach your target weight you can start eating again.

Your body now

You definitely don't like it, but you're bringing it under control. You almost see it as something separate from you, something that you can force into being what you want it to be. You've practiced smiling at yourself in mirrors.

You know the numbers show you've lost a lot of weight, but you can't quite see it yet. You're sure you will, given time.

Other people

Your friends care about you and you genuinely don't think they think less of you for being fat. You know they've made comments about other people's weight though. When you mention something about your body they tend to look a bit awkward and then reassure you that you're attractive. They've noticed the weight loss, even if you can't see it in yourself yet. They've been genuinely happy for you.

Zoe, your work colleague saw you nearly pass out during a briefing. Later she asked you if everything was OK and if you'd eaten. She probably didn't mean anything by it - that's one of the standard questions you ask anyone who feels faint. It made you feel a bit uneasy and defensive though.

How you feel about Slimming Smartly

Slimming Smartly is great, but for someone like you it doesn't work as well for diet advice. Your lifestyle is just too busy. What it's great for is accountability. Everyone's always really pleased for you when you've lost weight at the weigh-in. You were worried there would be jealousy but everyone seems to be genuinely supportive.

You have bought all the books, scales and measuring equipment. You want to show support and it also makes the claim that you're losing weight because you're following the meal plan more convincing. Part of you is concerned that you feel the need to lie about it but you try not to think about it too much. It's only temporary and once you've reached your target weight you probably will need to figure out how to cook.

What would it take to be honest with the group?

You want people to see you as a success story. You want to offer help and support to other people but you don't want them to know that you aren't quite following the program. If someone seems to be really struggling, you might tell them what you've been doing though.

Alternatively passing out, or a health issue caused by your disordered eating might force the issue.

Astrid, 29

Content warnings

Lack of control, emotional pressure, being misunderstood

Size

In the terminology of this larp, you are currently **Fat**. That means that you are above the standard range of clothes sizes. In ordinary shops, you usually can't find clothes that will fit you: you have to go to the website to find larger sizes.

How it's been for you

You were waiting in the cafe, facing away from the door, sipping on a glass of pinot. But you saw him come in, in the big mirror that was at the back. You saw him talk to the waitress on the door, but then stop and look at your back, your arms. You saw him turn and walk straight back out of the cafe.

"Was that your date, love?" the waitress asked, concernedly. "He asked for you, but then..."

"Yeah, don't worry about it, it's ok" you said, although ok was far from what it was. You sighed internally. "Can I get another one of these?"

Caz said "What a dickhead!" when you told her, when you got home: she'd been looking after the kids. "He'll never know what he missed. You're amazing, sis. And you'll meet someone lovely one day soon, I tell you."

"Yeah, maybe," you said. "I don't care really." But you did. You wanted to be desired, and to be loved – was that too much to ask for? Maybe anything was too much to ask, if you were overweight.

Background

You were quite a standard kind of size, growing up. Maybe a bit bigger than average, but not anything that would get people pointing at you in the street. It was only after the kids came along really that you started putting serious weight on. Twins were such a handful, it was like you were just focusing on them and their needs for those years, and you didn't pay much attention to what was happening with you.

When their dad left you, one of the things he said was about you being fat. You didn't take it to heart then, because he was such a waster and a liar anyway, he would have said anything – you were better off without him. And anyway you still needed to focus on Erin and Taylor.

It was really only after a while, when your friends were saying you should go on the dating apps and try and find someone else, then you found out how people on there mostly saw you as really much too fat. It was quite depressing, you hardly got matched with anyone, and then even if you did get a date you would see their face fall when they saw you.

You decided to do something about it, and joined Slimming Smartly – and even before you'd really lost any weight, you met Alex, who has been just brilliant and is an amazing person that you're lucky to be with. And so good with the kids, too. And to start with then things were a bit awkward and a bit distant, physically, as you might expect, with your body being how it was. But since you've been losing weight then they've just got better and better.

Your body now

You thought that you were pretty much ok now – you're around the weight that you initially had as your goal. Yes you're still fat, but it feels quite comfortable now – you can move around as much as you want, do the things you want, you can pick the kids up to cuddle them, you feel generally healthy. And your love life with Alex is much better than what it was. You would be happy to just maintain like this.

But if Slimming Smartly say that you need to lose more weight, they're the experts after all. It's not going to be easy though.

Other people

Erin and Taylor are sweet little marvels, like always. They haven't said anything about your shape and size, and why would they? Kids learn that sort of thing a bit later, at school. You're their mum and you love them, that's all they care about.

Your big sister Caz has been very supportive. She lost a load of weight herself, a few years ago, and says it changed her life. And she still is what people would call fat, really, although she doesn't seem bothered by it. You know that she just wants you to be happy, really.

Your group of friends are mostly thinner, like 'standard size'. You are the fat one of the gang, and you always have been. But that's ok, they're not mean or anything, they do care about you. It's just that they don't really understand what it's like for you – that sometimes your body works differently to theirs, and so sometimes you have to do things differently. It's like it's always an afterthought, at best. You love them, but you do get a bit fed up at times when one of them says something thoughtless, even when they apologise afterwards.

The main thing is that with Alex things have been so much better, since you lost the weight. It's so nice to be appreciated and desired. And you don't have to be thin, to have that – you are fine for it just as you are. Alex is really kind and is paying you a lot of attention (more than the kids' dad ever did) and really wants you. It's a bit of a pity that it wasn't so much like that earlier, when you were fatter: but that's human nature, you suppose.

How you feel about Slimming Smartly

Slimming Smartly has been brilliant for you – you don't know if you could have lost all this weight without its discipline, and the way it makes you pay attention to what you're eating and all that, really. And coming to the meetings was really good too, with everyone cheering each time they said you'd lost a few more pounds.

But then you wanted to just stay at the weight you'd reached – 'maintenance phase', they call it – but they said that no you needed to lose more, for the good of your health in the long run. That your body isn't yet suitable for maintenance phase. You don't know... it feels fine now, to you, to be honest. But then they are the experts at this, after all, and if they say you're still too heavy then you should listen. Otherwise what's the point of coming here? It's going to be tough to lose more weight, but you suppose you're going to have to try to.

What would it take to be honest with the group?

You feel a bit awkward talking about how you feel. People have such strong opinions sometimes. Some will say that yes, you should lose more weight if that's what the programme says – others will say that no, you should listen to your body saying not to do that. But do they really care about what would make you happy? They're nice people (mostly) but they do seem a bit caught up in their own little worlds, really, sometimes.

Cerys, 44

Content warnings

Sickness, medicalization, being misunderstood

Size

In the terminology of this larp, you are currently **Standard size**. That means that you can buy clothes in ordinary shops: you don't need to use specialist shops, or the internet, to find clothes that will fit you.

How it's been for you

"Wow, you're looking good!" Angela had stopped you in the street – she hadn't seen you since before you were sick.

"Yeah, well, thanks... I've been a bit ill, to be honest." You didn't want to be getting compliments for bad health.

"No, I mean –" she nodded, "– you've lost weight, haven't you? It looks good on you!"

"I mean, yes I have, but it's because of being ill –" This was frustrating. Angela was such an airhead. Show a bit of empathy, woman.

"Hah! I wouldn't mind getting ill like that!" She patted you on the shoulder. "Anyway, got to dash. Keep it going!"

Christ. What is wrong with people?

Background

You know that 'one weird trick for losing weight' that people are always linking to? Well, you found it. Thyroiditis. Your thyroid gland went wild for some reason, and started producing extra amounts of hormone. And the weight just gradually drained away from you like water.

You used to be really fat – since you were quite young. You got used to being the fat girl at school, and everything that came with that. It was shit, but so were lots of things about life. That's the human condition, isn't it? Your family were selfish and didn't care much about you, and you learnt to be independent.

You also learnt, as you got older, that there were plenty of fat people around. You weren't short of friends who didn't judge you – even if the rest of the world did. They were kind of sticking-together-in-adversity friendships, rather than the ideal kind of ones that you'd read

about or seen on screen. But they were fine for what you needed out of life: people to hang out with and to chat with.

You found a partner, and had kids, and that was good, for a while. He was fat too, and wasn't bothered that you were. Until he got the option of someone thinner who was interested in him, who he'd met at work, and then suddenly it became quite easy to turn his back on you and the kids and drift out of your life. But you didn't care all that much: he had never been that important to you, in the grand scheme of things. You knew who you were, and what you were, and what you needed: and you had never needed anyone else other than that. You brought the kids up by yourself, pretty much, and that was all fine.

When you fell ill with the thyroiditis, that was your first serious sickness. (If it really is serious – well of course it is, for sure, but it's not like it's immediately life-threatening or something.) You were caught off-balance, for the first time for a while. You still aren't sure how to be about it. Are you a different person now – a sick person, a thin person – or what?

Anyway though there is medication that you're supposed to be going on, which will fix the thyroid issue. But, it usually causes weight gain. How much? Who knows. But mm in theory it's your choice. Live with an overactive thyroid that's most likely gradually killing you, or else put back on at least some of that weight that's just disappeared.

Your body now

It's hard to know what to think, when you look in that mirror that you avoided for so long. Your neck is a bit swollen, sure. But otherwise... you for sure do look like one of the 'After' pictures showing the effects of slimming products. It's wild, after having been fat for so long.

You don't know whether you love your body for itself, really, now, or if it's more that you love how other people react to you. Or if there's even a difference between those, when it comes down to it. At last, you're 'normal-looking' – you blend in, you don't attract the kinds of harmful attention that you'd had to get so used to. You can wear clothes that you never would have dreamed of wearing, before. And that is marvellous.

But, this is all because of an important endocrine gland going wrong. And your doctors want to fix it. They say you're shortening your life, if you don't. But then that's what they used to say about you being fat, too. And anyway – what life is it, and how different might it be, whether shorter or longer? – you keep asking yourself.

Other people

You look after your dad – he's elderly now, and your mum died several years ago. He loves you, but he's quite selfish really. As long as you do everything that he needs doing, he's charming and kind. But he can quickly turn sour when he doesn't get what he wants. He used to criticize you for being fat, and now he's said repeatedly that he's glad you've lost the weight. It's kind of tiring, just nodding and smiling at whatever he comes out with, without complaining – but it's what you're used to. He's always been like that.

Your kids are young adults with lives of their own – you don't bother them with your health problems. If they've noticed what's happened with your body, then they've been too polite to comment on it. Most likely they reckon that it's none of their business.

Your friends are mostly like the people from the slimming group, fat themselves, and a mix of envious and admiring. They're good people, but you wouldn't say you're really close with any of them. It's a bit sad sometimes, to reflect that there's no-one who you feel you can talk with about all of this. What kind of a life even is that?

How you feel about Slimming Smartly

You aren't sure about the group, now. You've been attending for years, and it didn't seem to do you any good really. You sometimes lost a bit of weight, sometimes put a bit back on, but you were still always fat. It felt to you like more of a nice social thing to do, to be honest.

But now you've lost all of this weight, you're like a kind of hero in the group. They don't know about your medical condition, of course. It's nice to be congratulated! But maybe it would feel a lot nicer if it had really been because you'd stuck to the diet and been disciplined with yourself, like they all assume.

If Slimming Smartly didn't help you lose weight, and now you have lost it anyway, then why should you stay in the group? But to leave feels like a big step. And maybe the others need you here?

What would it take to be honest with the group?

The longer you leave it, the worse it'll be, probably. But you can't bear to say what's wrong with you, just yet. As well as enjoying the praise you're getting, it's just as much because you don't want to disappoint the others – they believe in you. You give them hope, even.

Or maybe that's just a story that you're telling yourself, to justify keeping them in the dark? You really don't know.

Jade, 23

Content warnings

Childbirth, post-partum depression

Size

In the terminology of this larp, you are currently **Standard size**. That means that you can buy clothes in ordinary shops: you don't need to use specialist shops, or the internet, to find clothes that will fit you.

How it's been for you

"Good morning, madam, how can I help you today?"

'I'm not sure if you can.' Her tone was rather cold. Sometimes people are like that, especially in the morning. It's ok.

You responded brightly, as usual. 'We have a special offer today on this moisturizing cream. It's got Vitamin E in, and –'

'Yes, I'm sure.' She looked you up and down. 'Have you been working here long? I don't think I've seen you.'

You flushed, defensively. 'Oh, I've been away on maternity leave, that's probably why. But I've been –'

'That explains it. Just a tip, dear – maybe you should have waited a bit longer before coming back.' She gestured at your body, turned, and walked away from the beauty counter. It was a vague gesture, but you knew exactly what she meant.

Background

You've worked since you left school – first it was in selling clothes in a department store, and then you got moved up to the beauty counter a few years ago. And that was brilliant – it was your dream, really. Helping people to make the most of themselves, and to feel good and happy about themselves. And you're good at it – you understand what are the things that people are insecure about, where they need help, even if they might not want to mention it.

It's a good team, nice girls, although of course you're all always under a lot of pressure to make your targets. You always feel a bit guilty when you sell someone some product that's on a particular promotion or whatever, when it might not really be the best thing for them. But

that's business, isn't it? The store has to make money. And they've looked after you well – they even topped up your maternity pay a bit, which you don't think they had to do.

Yes, because you had a baby – Emily. Six months ago now. The dad – you don't even want to talk about him. You'd forget his name if you could. When you told him you were pregnant, he said it had never been serious for him, and he wasn't hanging around. Your mum said, what did you expect, from a man? She'd been in the same situation herself, when you were on the way. She brought you up by herself, and it was a dreadful struggle, she's always saying. At least you've got her to help you with Emily, that's something.

But ever since the birth, you've just been really depressed – it's been grim. Everything just feels joyless and like a kind of prison sentence almost, really. You love Emily and you love spending time with her, but your own life is just worthless now really, it feels like. You had to go back to work when the maternity pay stopped, but it's not the same as it was before – you feel like you're going through the motions during the day, and it doesn't mean anything. And then the same in the evening, and through the night, and then again the next day. For the rest of your life?

Your body now

You sometimes just hate your body, really. Why can't it just do what you want it to? Having Emily was really tough on you physically. And feeding her and all that, carrying her around, sleeping (or trying to) next to her – it just feels like you're getting punched all over, every day.

So yes you do have some baby weight still hanging around. But it's not like you're huge – you can still fit some of the same clothes as before. You just look a bit... saggy, is what your boss Liz says. She says you need to lose that weight quick, otherwise no-one will want to buy beauty products from you. In like a quite kind and understanding way, she says it – but you know she really means it, too. She said you should go to Slimming Smartly, and so here you are.

And she's right – it is important to look good. Not just in your job (although yes, especially there), but in general – in the world. You were proud of being nice-looking, and people reacted positively towards you because of how you looked. Your mum always said that was the most important thing – you couldn't trust other people for much out of their own good will, so you had to look as good as you could, to make the most of your chances.

But it's been such a strain to be back at work and to have to be perfectly made up and smart-looking. You think Liz is exaggerating a bit, with what she says, to be honest – but there definitely are some customers who take one look at you and then go to one of the other girls, or just walk on past. And you have to admit, you probably would walk past someone looking like you do now, too, if you were a customer. It hurts. It's not like it's your fault – you didn't ask for this to happen. Stupid body!

Other people

Your mum looks after Emily during the day, and that's really good, you couldn't have started back at work otherwise. And she doesn't ask for money, or anything – you should feel so grateful. But she is such a downer on you. More or less whenever you say anything bad about yourself, or about your life, or about how tough things are, she just agrees, or even reinforces it. You really need her to cheer you up and tell you that things are going to be ok, are going to get better – but she doesn't seem to get that. You love her to bits, but sometimes you could just wish her to be a bit different to how she is. And then maybe you could be a bit different to how you are, too. A bit better.

Emily is a little angel most of the time, but oh my, she can be such a monster when she wants to be. So small but it feels like she runs the place, and you and your mum are just her servants. Is it going to be like this for the next 18 years? At least she's healthy and feeds well, that's something.

Your boss Liz is one of those people who comes across as very kind and caring, but now that you've known her for a while, you start to wonder how much of it is real. She has taken care of you, for sure, and has been very understanding around the whole maternity situation. And now that you're back at work, you can tell she's getting impatient that you aren't performing as well. And it's because of your size, is the main reason, she thinks: she's made that clear.

How you feel about Slimming Smartly

You don't really have a lot of hope that it'll help you lose weight. But you have to try something, otherwise Liz will get unbearable, and you might even lose your job. You don't know what the law is about that, but you know it's not likely that things will go your way – whatever it's supposed to be like in theory.

You can sense that some of the others here in the group are judging you, probably thinking "what's she doing here, she's hardly fat at all". Even if they would never say it, it makes you feel uncomfortable.

Or maybe it's you, though: you probably put people off wanting to be friendly. And fair enough, you aren't the cheeriest of company. And things are only getting worse, it feels like.

What would it take to be honest with the group?

It's just... they're good people probably, most of them. But their lives are all so different from yours. They couldn't possibly understand what you're going through. Even thinking of talking with them about it just makes you super-sad and frustrated.

Rowan, 31

Rowan is not here for herself, but to support a close friend, one of the other characters in the group – you will choose which one, in the workshop.

Content warnings

None of her own, but she is close friends with another member of the group (you will choose which one), who will have some content in their background that needs warning.

Size

In the terminology of this larp, you are currently **Standard size**. That means that you can buy clothes in ordinary shops: you don't need to use specialist shops, or the internet, to find clothes that will fit you.

How it's been for you

There are fat people everywhere – some of your colleagues, and your friend [other character] of course. It's like a modern plague of obesity, they say. You can't help noticing them. You're glad you're not fat yourself, but you wonder sometimes is it just luck and genetics and so on? Although your mum is fat, so maybe not genetics. You have sympathy for fat people, for sure. Society is hard on them and makes their lives miserable. You try to avoid being part of that – being judgemental, making repulsed expressions, saying things. You are as supportive as can be.

But sometimes it's hard to bite your tongue, when you see someone making decisions that are obviously making things worse for them, not better. Like there's a person at work who always goes for another slice of cake. And she says 'ooh I know I shouldn't!' like it's a naughty treat or something. But then she complains about never losing weight. It's not rocket science, for heaven's sake.

You're glad [other character] is doing something constructive about it, even though you have your doubts about this slimming group. It's better than just doing nothing, or being in denial, and letting it get worse.

Background

You were very much a 'good girl' when you were younger. And you kind of still are – not good in the same way, but good in how society approves of. You are the youngest of three, and your older siblings got into all sorts of minor troubles – you managed to avoid all of that. But, maybe this is why you weren't close with them – and you still aren't, really. You get on really well, but you wouldn't turn to them for help or confide in them – and nor would they in you.

You did well at school – not a teacher's pet, but not a trouble-maker, and popular enough with the other kids. You worked hard at being normal – having the same interests as the other girls, wearing the same kinds of clothes, and so on. It was almost like a game, sometimes – spotting how you were supposed to be, at each stage as you grew up, and working out how you could fit in with that. And you were very good at it.

And probably you can say you're good at being an adult, too. You have a decent job, as a team leader in the loss adjustment department of an insurance company. You have a nice apartment, and two good cats.

You don't have a partner at the moment, and that's ok? You've had loads of relationships in the past. Well, maybe not loads, but quite a few. But it feels like each time you're making new mistakes. They weren't bad people (well ok, some of them were not great people) but anyway they weren't right for you. Maybe no-one ever will be? But that's too depressing a thought.

It's weird though, it feels like your life is very full, but at the same time kind of empty. It sometimes feels like you're just going through the motions of living – like you don't know what your purpose is. But, who does? Not many people, probably. You're ok, you don't have anything to worry about really.

Your body now

You're quite happy with your body – it mostly does what it's meant to, other people seem to like it. You can look in the mirror and see things that you'd want to change, but not anything major.

It's not like you're one of those annoying people who are all "oh I can eat whatever I want, and I never put on any weight". You totally do have to be careful about what you eat, and how much. And you do keep an eye on your weight as it goes up and down, like any normal person has to. But you've never had what you'd call a problem with weight – never been way above average, or way below either.

Maybe you drink a bit too much, sometimes – but everyone does that, or nearly everyone. And it's nice to sometimes just be able to forget the stresses of life.

Other people

[Other character] is your best friend, and you'd do anything for her really. That's why you're here, after all. She has always been there for you when you needed her, and you want to live up to that. Even when you disagree with what she's decided, like with doing this Slimming Smartly thing – you'll support her until she maybe comes to see that maybe it wasn't a great idea after all. Although, maybe you'll get converted to agreeing with it!

Your parents are decent people but you don't see much of them, these days. They spend more time with your siblings, who have kids. Maybe if you had kids too then you'd be more in

favour. But, well, if they are so obsessed with playing at being grandparents, then good for them. You don't need them in your life much, really.

How you feel about Slimming Smartly

You were quite sceptical about it, before you started attending. You thought it was not really helping people, but more like keeping them trapped in their body issues.

When [other character] asked you to come along, you agreed out of a spirit of support, but you really would have preferred that she hadn't joined in the first place.

Now... you're still quite sceptical, to be fair. But you have seen some of the other side of it, too. Some people definitely do seem to be getting something positive out of attending. Even if they don't actually lose weight! People are weird.

What would it take to be honest with the group?

You try not to show to the others that you don't actually belong here, because you don't want to make them feel uncomfortable. But sometimes you really have to bite your tongue, when you hear some of them going on about their problems. You'd like to be giving them advice, like a counsellor or something. But then you'd probably have to come clean – to let them know that you don't actually have any of the weight issues that they have.