

6 Giving up

Billy loves chocolate, anything and everything with chocolate in it. Chocolate bars, chocolate pudding, chocolate spread in his sandwiches, and of course there's nothing like Mum's chocolate cake. No, there's no doubt about it, chocolate is a very important part of Billy's life!

One morning Mum went into the bathroom and stood on the bathroom scales. She watched the numbers go round and then she stopped and stared with her mouth wide open and a horrified expression on her face.

"I don't believe it!" she shouted. "There must be something wrong with these scales. Billy, Billy, come up here!"

Billy had to stand on the scales, but they measured his weight exactly right, four and a half stone.

"I don't understand it," Mum kept saying. "I don't understand it," and then she said, "it's no good, I'll have to go on a diet. No more chocolate, no more crisps, no more doughnuts, no more cream cakes, no more..." Mum's voice tailed away and she took on that sort of far away dreamy look that she always had when she was thinking about cream cakes.

All that evening Mum did really well. The hardest thing was not having chocolate. Mum would normally have Coco Pops for breakfast, a chocolate biscuit or two with her elevenses and a piece of chocolate cake with her lunch. Then she would have a Mars bar in the afternoon, chocolate mousse or chocolate pudding with her tea, a cup of drinking chocolate and a few more chocolate biscuits in the evening. And there was always a bar of chocolate in the kitchen cupboard just waiting to be eaten.

Billy's Mum went to bed thinking about chocolate. All night she dreamed about chocolate, about holding it, about eating it, and even about swimming in it!

The next morning Mum packed Billy's lunch. She put in a Kit Kat and two chocolate spread sandwiches and she really had to fight to stop herself dipping her finger in the chocolate spread and giving it a big lick! But when Billy got home from school that day Mum was in a terrible mood. She snapped and snarled and banged the sauce pans. He daren't ask her what was wrong.

By bed time Mum was beginning to imagine that she could see chocolate everywhere. There seemed to be chocolate in every programme she watched on television, there seemed to be chocolate on every page of her magazine. When Mrs. Green came over to tell Mum all about the box of chocolates that Mr. Green had bought her for their wedding anniversary Mum began to go a funny colour and then she started to shake.

"Oh my dear," said Mrs. Green, "you do look queer. Why don't you get off to bed?"

Mum did just that, but she couldn't sleep. She could see big blocks of chocolate marching around the room. She could smell chocolate and taste chocolate. She needed to eat CHOCOLATE! She crept downstairs and into the kitchen. She looked in the biscuit tin, but there were only plain digestives in there. She looked in the cupboard, but where the bar of chocolate was there was just a torn and empty wrapper. She grabbed the jar of drinking chocolate, but there was only the tiniest grain of powder left. By now Mum was frantic, she had looked every where but there was no chocolate anywhere! Suddenly she remembered Billy's lunch box, she hadn't washed it from yesterday. Maybe, just maybe there was something left.

She rummaged in Billy's school bag and found the lunch box. There was nothing in it except the wrappers and of course the wonderful, wonderful smell of chocolate. She put her nose right inside and took a long deep breath, and then she grabbed the wrappers and started to lick them all over, just in case there was even the tiniest smear of chocolate left.

Just then Billy walked into the room. Mum had woken him up with all the noise. "What are you doing Mum?" he asked, looking somewhat surprised.

"Err ... Err... I... I ... I forgot to clean your lunch box Billy," she spluttered.

"But Mum," he said, "Mum, its half past one in the morning!"

Billy looked at his Mum with the chocolate wrapper in her hand and the slightly crazed look on her face.

"Its the chocolate isn't it, Mum," he said in his best doctor-like voice.

"Ye... ye... ye... yes!" she squeaked.

Billy thought for a moment, "I can help you if you like Mum."

"How could you help me?" sighed Mum, "I'm beyond help! I'm... I'm.... I'm a chocoholic!"

Billy was silent for a moment. He couldn't believe what he was thinking, but eventually he said:

"If you promise to try hard Mum, I'll, ... I'll, ... I'll give up chocolate with you so we can help each other!"

Mum looked at Billy with her big blue eyes and little tears started running down her cheeks.

"Would you?" she asked. "Would you really, Billy? Would you really give up chocolate for me? To help me?"

Billy swallowed hard, he could hardly believe this was happening.

"Yes, Mum I will," he said in his most reassuring voice, "I'll give it up just for you."

Mum went to bed feeling much better. She got up in the morning feeling even better, and by the next evening she felt great. Over the next few weeks Billy and his Mum struggled and struggled until neither of them wanted to eat any more chocolate at all. Every day that they didn't eat any chocolate Billy was proud of Mum, and Mum was proud of Billy. And because they were so pleased with each other they didn't want to let each other down the next day. Billy had to try very hard at school, especially when Mickey offered him a stick of Kit Kat. Mum had to try really hard at work, especially when she was offered chocolate biscuits with her tea. But every time they saw or smelled chocolate Mum thought of Billy and Billy thought of Mum and they stayed strong for each other until neither of them wanted to eat any chocolate at all!

Of course Billy has started eating chocolate again, but Mum doesn't mind at all. In fact, she loves to watch him enjoying a Mars bar or a big bit of chocolate cake because, when she sees the great big smile on his face, it makes her realise how much he must love her to have given up chocolate himself to help her give up chocolate.

Billy still weighs four and a half stone. Maybe if he eats enough chocolate he'll grow up one day. Mum weighs a bit more than four and a half stone, but not as much as she did before!

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