How often in your weight loss journey have you heard this comment? I was about two months away from having surgery when my nephew’s soon-to-be mother-in-law told me she was extremely disappointed in the way I was choosing to lose weight. She literally told me that I was looking for “an easy way out” and a quick fix.

Was she for real? Easy? Since when is getting cut, having your stomach reduced to the size of a golf ball, and having your insides rearranged easy? And that’s just the operation. There are a slew of other things that now dictate our everyday life.

Naysayers have no idea what weight loss surgery patients go through. We have all the rules to live by, including the 30/60-minute rule, eat protein first, exercise, take your vitamins and stay hydrated. Wouldn’t it just be easier to drink with our meals, eat whatever we want, skip exercising and forget about our vitamins? These are all things however that will keep us successful. They can not just be forgotten.

For the first year, it is like you are re-learning how to eat, learning the new feeling of fullness, becoming acquainted with what works and what doesn’t. We also have to measure our food. Remember starting out with a quarter cup of nourishment for the first three months, gradually advancing to half cup and finally a cup and a quarter? Who would think that this was easy?

What about everyday menu planning? How many patients prior to having surgery actually planned and cooked healthy meals? Isn’t it much easier to get dinner from the drive-through? I spend much more time making grocery lists, reading labels at the market, planning menus and cooking than I ever did when I was obese. It was much easier to get a menu out of the drawer and make a telephone call to place an order. Now that was easy.

The exercise factor also has its impact on us after surgery. Studies show that if obese people spent time yo-yo dieting causing their weight to fluctuate, they now have the added “pleasure” of having to exercise more. Yo-yo dieting causes our metabolism to slow and the more we diet, the slower our body burns fuel. This results in the wonderful fact that most weight-loss surgery patients have to exercise sixty to ninety minutes per day, most days of the week. Is that easy?

It doesn’t stop once we have achieved our success. I remember shopping as an obese consumer. If I found something to wear that actually fit, I would buy it in
several colors because I never knew if I would find something else. Now the choices are too numerous to count. We go from one or two “specialty” shops to a vast array of merchants with racks of stylish clothing. Now this is a positive, but it certainly isn’t easy having a multitude of choices. You wonder, “Well this looks good but what if I find something somewhere else that looks better?” You may end up going to several stores only to be so confused by the choices that you don’t know what to do. And then, if influenced by a limited budget, your dilemma continues to grow.

As we lose our weight, we start to feel better about ourselves. We like looking in the mirror. We don’t mind having our picture taken, We get more compliments. This, however, can be difficult. It takes time to adjust to the new person we are becoming. We don’t see ourselves as thin or pretty or handsome. We still see an obese person. People pay us compliments on how we look, but we think to ourselves, “Gee, what did I look like before? Was I ugly, unkept, or gross? Emotionally, this is not easy. It makes us question our own self worth.

Finally, when all is said and done, we reach our goal. Now we may not reach that magic number on the scale but we are healthier, weigh less and ready to embark on a new life. But no one told me about the apron and flags I was going to inherit. Now don’t go running scared if you are a pre-op patient. These are the wonderful added “benefits” of weight loss surgery. I wear mine proudly. They are my badges of courage. But for some, the remaining skin can be burdensome, resulting possibly in additional surgery. A second or third surgery? Easy?

My feeling is that people have no idea what weight-loss surgery entails. If they did, they would not make such an uninformed comment. Do they think that we just jump right into having surgery? Wouldn’t it have just been easier to eat less and work out more?