

the LAST COOKIE CLUB

ABOUT THE BOOK

“Larry Brennan, owner of the Lucky Charm – one of the most successful neighborhood casinos in Las Vegas – seems to have it all: A loving wife and family, close friends, money in the bank. But beneath the surface, he is slowly dying. All his life, Larry has suffered from a compulsive addiction to food, a dependence suffocating him, killing him, threatening to consume him.

“When Larry discovers that a small group of his friends and acquaintances are trying to deal with the same affliction, he bands them into the Last Cookie Club.”

Although it's the lead paragraph on the back cover of the new novel, “The Last Cookie Club” (released July 2009), it's not nearly as imaginative a statement as the book's genre of “fiction” might imply.

“Larry Brennan” is based on Gary Mahoney, former Las Vegas casino owner and author of “The Last Cookie Club.” Likewise, all of the book's characters are based on the members of the real Las Vegas-based Last Cookie Club, which Mahoney established in 2005 while still owner of Mahoney's Silver Nugget Casino in North Las Vegas.

More than a self-help group, the Last Cookie Club is a collection of survivors dedicated to freeing themselves from the deadly grip of addictive eating forever. With their help, Larry discovers a secret that is both simple and profound – and uses it to lead them on a path of discovery, enlightenment and freedom.

“The Last Cookie Club” goes beyond tactics and fad diets to uncover the real reasons why people overeat. By turns poignant, humorous and enlightening, “The Last Cookie Club's” all-too-human characters travel on an unforgettable journey of joy and sorrow, triumph and despair that anyone who has faced that last cookie at 3 a.m. and asked, “What do I do now?” can surely understand.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

“The Last Cookie Club” author Gary Mahoney is a former Las Vegas casino owner who has been plagued with eating addiction issues for most of his life. His passion throughout that time has been investigating a variety of programs and treatments, learning all he could about his addiction. This pursuit of knowledge and understanding led to the founding of the real Last Cookie Club and eventually, the writing of his new novel, “The Last Cookie Club.”

Mahoney hopes, through this book, to encourage and inspire others throughout the country who are fighting their own battles with addiction and food. Furthermore, he is dedicated to helping any community start up its own Last Cookie Club.

A detailed account of Mahoney's ongoing battle with food, as well as his blog, which allows readers and interested parties to join Mahoney on his ongoing quest toward a consistently healthy relationship with food, can be found at www.thelastcookieclub.com.

Father of five, grandfather of eight, Mahoney currently resides in Las Vegas with his wife of 37 years, Gail.

For more information on “The Last Cookie Club,” visit www.TheLastCookieClub.com. For review copies of the book or to speak with author Gary Mahoney, call Melissa Rothermel or Beth Dickman at 702-837-8996 or e-mail mrothermel@imnv.com.

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FACTS

Stats:

- ❖ In 2008, only one state (Colorado) had a prevalence of obesity less than 20 percent. Thirty-two states had a prevalence equal to or greater than 25 percent; six of these states (Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia) had a prevalence of obesity equal to or greater than 30 percent.
~Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- ❖ In 2008, Nevada's obesity rate was 25 percent.
~Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- ❖ Obesity has long been blamed on weak willpower, overeating, genetics and lack of exercise. However, according to a 2007 article in USA Today, scientists are increasingly seeing signs that suggest there may be an additional contributor: food addiction.
~USA Today, 2007

- ❖ Mark Gold, chief of addiction medicine at the McKnight Brain Institute at the University of Florida, says that food, especially highly palatable food, can produce the same effects as drug abuse.
~The Obesity and Food Addiction Summit, www.foodaddictionsummit.org

Book:

- ❖ "The Last Cookie Club" is authored by Gary Mahoney, former owner of Mahoney's Silver Nugget Casino in North Las Vegas.

- ❖ Based in Las Vegas, "The Last Cookie Club" was released in July 2009 and is published by Hardway Press.

- ❖ Physical copies (\$14.95) or downloadable versions (\$7.95) of the book can be purchased at www.thelastcookieclub.com or through www.Amazon.com.

- ❖ Although a work of fiction, "The Last Cookie Club" is based on the real people and heart-wrenching stories, like Mahoney's, of the members of the real Last Cookie Club, which Mahoney founded in 2005.

- ❖ The Last Cookie Club is more than a novel about food addiction. Based on the experiences of real-life people, it goes beyond tactics and fad diets to uncover the real reasons why we overeat.

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ARTWORK * INTERVIEWS * REVIEW COPIES

- Images are available in all formats (i.e. .jpg, .tiff & .eps) and can be emailed or provided as a custom art disk. Images available include: book cover; author headshot.
- Review copies of the book are available.
- Interviews with author Gary Mahoney can be scheduled.

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Q&A WITH GARY MAHONEY, AUTHOR, “THE LAST COOKIE CLUB”

- 1. When did you know you had an addiction problem? What were the signs, or what was your breaking point?**
 - I first realized I had an addiction problem when I was about 27 years old. My pants were getting tighter and I started moving up from a 32-inch waist to a 36-inch waist. I exercised frequently, but my waistline kept growing. Despite wanting to and my deep desire to cut back on eating, I wasn't able to stop. That was really the point at which I realized I had a problem.
- 2. Why did you decide to write your book, “The Last Cookie Club” as a fiction novel instead of a non-fiction piece?**
 - When I first started thinking about writing a book, I realized that there are a lot of self-help books already on the market focused on losing weight. I thought writing a weight-loss book in the form of a novel might be a better way to affect someone positively regarding their eating issues by not preaching to them, but rather have the readers observe others with eating addictions. I also hoped that reading a novel will be more entertaining than reading an in-your-face self-help book about the issue. By observing other individuals going through these problems in the book, it allows readers to emotionally connect, and hopefully to laugh, cry and grow with the characters.
- 3. How do you cope, day-to-day, with your food addiction? What's the hardest daily aspect?**
 - Every day I cope with my issues by trying to stay aware of my current situation, where I'm at with my progress, and by staying aware of my thoughts. I put a heavy emphasis on making sure I realize whether I am focusing on the present, the past or the future. When I focus too much on the past, especially my past problems, and even when I focus on the future too much, the thoughts tend to lead to anxiety. Anxiety (or its related emotions: anger, depression, self-doubt, over-excitement, etc.) lead to a compulsion to attempt to put the fire of emotion out, and I do that by turning to food. Food is always my go-to relief, and that is exactly what I need to keep in check every day. So, to answer the question precisely, I try to cope day-to-day by being aware of my thoughts and staying present. The hardest daily aspect is remembering to stay in the present. My mind continually travels to future or past events, and I work to stop myself from doing that.
- 4. Do you have days when you “fall off the wagon?” If so, what do you do on those days?**
 - Yes, I have days when I fall off the wagon. On those days I eat excessive amounts of food; I eat my emotions. The thoughts in my mind convince me to make up for all those days in the past that I ate normally. It convinces me that tomorrow I will start eating normally, so today I can eat the extra food to make up for the normal quantities that may occur tomorrow. One of the immediate negatives of this behavior is instantly feeling like crap. I feel awful, and I wouldn't recommend falling off the wagon to anyone. However, it happens, and when it does it's how you pick yourself back up that is far more important than what led to falling down in the first place.

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Q&A WITH GARY MAHONEY, AUTHOR, “THE LAST COOKIE CLUB,” CON’T:

5. What type of support/help is out there for people who suffer from food addiction and weight problems?

- There are a lot of help/support programs in place to assist people with their eating addictions including:
 - 12-Step Programs
 - Jenny Craig
 - Weight Watchers
 - Books
 - Seminars
 - Health Camps
 - Fasting Retreats
 - Meditation
 - Meditation Retreats
 - Group & Private Counseling
 - Your Relationship with Yourself and Your God
 - Last Cookie Club Membership

I would highly recommend them all. Find the one or the few that best suit you.

6. For you, what type of support/help works the best and what kind is least helpful?

- At this moment, daily meditation works best for me. Meditation clearly makes me aware of my thoughts and how they affect my eating and my life in general. This awareness allows me to go forward peacefully without relying on food to put out the emotional fires that are seemingly uncomfortable.

Also, the Cookie Club membership is working for me. After each meal I text a Cookie Club member to tell them about how I ate during that meal. A Cookie Club member also texts me about how they ate. It’s a support system. I look forward to hearing from someone else about their eating patterns for the day. I find myself rooting for them, like we’re teammates. A meal-by-meal connection with someone by text affects me positively. It helps me to be accountable to someone else in addition to myself. This doesn’t mean that I don’t fall off the wagon from time to time, but it means that I fall off the wagon less and that I’m making great progress. However, all the other programs I have attended and used have also been helpful and I would highly recommend them to anyone.

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Q&A WITH GARY MAHONEY, AUTHOR, “THE LAST COOKIE CLUB,” CON’T:

7. As simply as possible, how would you describe your addiction to others who have not suffered from it personally?

- Addiction to food (or addiction to anything). My thoughts lead to an unpleasant emotion or sensation in my body. It feels like I have to eradicate these feelings immediately. My thinking (MY EGO) says the way to eradicate this uncomfortable emotion/sensation immediately is to eat food. My thoughts say that this will not only eradicate the feeling immediately, but the food tastes so good! By eating food, I can go from anxious, uncomfortable feelings, to feeling soothed. If I buy into this thinking and believe it, then wild horses cannot keep me away from gorging myself with food, food and more food to change the feeling. Within five minutes of finishing the binging, I feel awful.

8. What is the first piece of advice you give to others suffering from food addiction/weight obsessions?

- The first piece of advice I would give to someone suffering from this addiction is to learn how to meditate and get to know yourself. Find a meditation that is effective for you, not just something that takes up your time and really doesn't impact your life. If you learn how to meditate in a way that works to produce results for you during your daily life, you have taken a big step toward healing your eating issues.