

A SUCCESS STORY—IN HIS OWN WORDS

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About a year ago I wrote my first article for the Babble, documenting my early successes with Weight Watchers, Bootcamp/Exercise, and attempting to be healthy. At that point, I'd lost 42 pounds in a little less than six months. It was a milestone "Success Story" for me because I had just gone under 300 pounds, a number I hadn't seen in probably five years if I had to take an educated guess. My plan (hope) was to write the very article you are reading now, for it meant that I'd hit another big milestone in my journey towards physical wellness. Mental wellness...well, that's a whole SEPARATE article. But I digress (I do that a lot)...

This past week at Weight Watchers I hit the big 100 . . . pounds that is (101.2 if we're being specific). I'm not sure that it's quite sunk in just yet. I knew it was coming. It was lurking for a while, and it seemed like I would never get there. I was tired, my back had been bothering me for a while, I was grumpy (grumpier?), and I was at a plateau . . .

BIG time. And then I did something I never thought I'd do: I ran. I ran for a lap, and then for two, and then for a mile. And all the while I thought to myself, "What are you DOING? You don't do this!" It was then that I realized the only reason I didn't do it was because I was afraid. I was afraid that people would laugh or stare. I was afraid I would trip and fall and look like a fool. I was afraid I would run like Phoebe from "Friends" with hands flailing like a maniac. Most importantly, I was afraid that I COULD do it, which meant that the person I THOUGHT I was no longer existed, at least not in the capacity to which I had become accustomed.

My current weight is 239.8 which, if you do your math, means that I started this process at 341 pounds. This means that my Body Mass Index (BMI) at the start of my weight loss was 45.0, which is classified as morbidly obese. Not just obese—MORBIDLY obese—and halfway to Super Morbidly Obese (yes, these are real categories). Currently, my BMI is at 31.6. Although I am still classified as obese, I am less than 13 pounds away from simply just being "Overweight." And while some people might look at that and say "Well, you're still overweight," I prefer to look at the positives behind my weight loss.

So here are the positives: I've lost 29.68% of my body weight thus far. My suit jacket went down from a 56 to 46. My pant size went down from 50 to 40. An XLT shirt is starting to become too big for me, where a 4XLT was the norm for me at the start. I can run a 5K (3.1 miles) in a little over 30 minutes on a good day. I exercise at least five times per week (begrudgingly, but I still do it). My overall cholesterol is down 88 points. My good cholesterol and triglycerides are within normal limits. My sugar and blood pressure are both normal. But perhaps the best thing of all happened to me this weekend. I went to the Casual XL store to buy a suit, and the salesperson said, "I think you're too small to shop here." So I didn't—and it felt great!

I know it's cliché to say this (and it's cliché to say it's cliché), but if I can do it I believe most anyone can do it too. I will acknowledge there are some advantages for me when it comes to the weight loss game. I'm single (hint hint) with no kids and no family in the area, so I can pretty much do whatever I want. I don't have to worry about cooking dinner for the family (all of whom want something different) or running kids 90 different directions after work. I probably have less stress in my life than the average person. However, I've also never known "thin." I have no visual memory of what I would look like at a healthy weight because I've never BEEN at a healthy weight. Never! So I understand the struggle with being obese. I understand the lifelong struggle with weight. I understand the problems with motivation, the yo-yo dieting, and the psychological turmoil of seeing images upon images of fit and healthy people on television, in magazines, and on the web. I get it . . . and I get that it sucks!

I was asked if, now that I've lost 100 pounds, I had any advice for people on how I got there in the first place. It's hard, because I'M not even sure how I got here. I mean yeah, the standard "Eat right, exercise, take your vitamins, get good sleep, relax" mantra is important and all, but that's nothing we haven't heard 900 times. I will say that diets do NOT work, at least long term. By nature, diets are temporary. Weight loss/management is permanent, especially for those of us that struggle. So it is important to find a balance of eating healthy without restricting yourself too much. I think this is why Weight Watchers works for me, because I can eat anything and, as long as I stay on the plan, I will be OK. It is the "staying on plan" part that is hard sometimes.



The biggest piece of advice I can give is to set reasonable goals. My focus has never solely been on 100 pounds (or 156 pounds, which is my "ultimate ultimate" goal). Instead, my focus is on short term things. I focus on trying to lose each week. I focus on exercising at least five times per week for 30 minutes at a time (and it is important to stress that this goal increased over time, because at 341 pounds my goal was to exercise ONCE a week). I focus on making responsible choices with my food. Yes, Ben n' Jerry's ice cream would be delicious, but I can get the same effect from a Smart Ones sundae that is less than 200 calories. The reality is that, once you start saying "I can't eat this" or "I have to lose this much weight," you are setting yourself up for failure. Try losing five pounds at a time. Had I started out saying "I need to lose 150 pounds" it would be too overwhelming. Yes, I still knew I wanted to lose that much, but I can't lose the last five pounds without losing the first five and every other five in between. It is important to build success into your routine, because you are going to have setbacks. You will make bad decisions sometimes, but when you do you just start over again. Acknowledge the slip and work hard to make a better decision the next time.

So there's Chapter 2 in my story. Again, I hope this isn't the last you hear from me (although you might feel differently!). There is one final chapter left to be written, but I have yet to figure out the ending. I have some ideas in mind, but there is a lot of work left to be done before I can write that final chapter. So until then, keep on truckin'!