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How I Lost 115 Pounds



By Abigail Cuffey
Wed, Jan 18, 2012

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A Shocking Wakeup Call

My mom was only 50 years old when she died in 2009. The cause: brain damage due to oxygen deprivation, which was a direct result of her morbid obesity. She was too heavy to get on a scale, but her doctors estimated she weighed 600 pounds. At times, she had good intentions when it came to losing weight (joining a gym or buying

exercise DVDs), but her efforts always seemed short-lived and became fewer and farther between as the years went by.

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We only discussed weight when she brought up the subject. If I expressed any concern, she immediately shut me down. After one heated discussion, we didn't talk for weeks. When she died, I was absolutely devastated but furious: How could she let herself get that big? But then I realized I was on the same path. I was obese and needed a major lifestyle overhaul.

Beat the afternoon slump with these good-for-you foods

Small Steps

For years I had tried to slim down, but after my mom passed away, giving up wasn't an option. I began to document every BLT (bite, lick and taste) in a journal and swapped out fattening favorites for lowfat alternatives. If I wanted a hamburger, I chose a leaner cut of beef or used ground turkey breast instead, and replaced mayo with a healthy fat like mashed avocado. I also figured out how to recreate my favorite sweet flavors in a healthier treat (like mixing a fat-free hot chocolate packet in unsweetened almond milk).

Check out some high-calorie drinks from popular chain restaurants

After I made headway with my eating for three weeks, I added exercise. At first, my goal was to move more days than not. I thought of it this way: Four days a week was

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the minimum, five was better and, as I was doing low-impact cardio, six was best. In the beginning, I walked a mile and a half and increased the distance each week. When I felt more confident, I tried jogging and eventually added yoga and strength training.

Yes, I Can!

It took me about two years to reach my goal weight. Weight loss isn't a cure-all for life's problems, but it did help me take can't out of my vocabulary, as in "I can't run," "I can't wear that" and "I can't be good enough for him." I now know that I can do anything if I put my mind to it, and that I am worthy of the rewards. Sharing my journey online at healthystrides.blogspot.com helps me keep that can-do attitude. Committing to myself in a public place is a great motivator. I don't want to come back the next week and say that I didn't meet my expectations because lying on the couch seemed like a much better idea than a run.

[Learn the secret to successful weight loss](#)

My Best Tips

1. **Plan out your food:** "To stay on track, I write out an entire day's worth of meals in advance, noting exactly what I'm going to eat and when I'm going to eat it. I'm a lot less likely to have an ice cream cone when I already wrote down a half-cup of sorbet."

2. **Tell someone about your goal:** "I tell anyone who will listen about my plans—whether I'm trying to lose 2 pounds or running a 5K. This encourages me to stick with it, because I know people will ask later."

[Read about how to boost your declining metabolism](#)

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