

Healthy Living

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My Story

I'll be honest. I've never been an athlete and probably never will be. I was generally "the chubby kid" growing up. Still, in high school, I was playing pick-up basketball several times a week and while I certainly wasn't in perfect shape, carrying about 200 pounds on a 5'10" frame was manageable.

Then came college. Yikes! No required gym class, buffet-style cafeteria food, a dorm room full of junk food snacks, etc. By the time I graduated from college I had put on 75 pounds and was up to 275.

Fast-forward five years to the summer of 2006 and things really hadn't gotten any better. I knew I was headed for trouble with both heart disease and diabetes in my family history. Yet, it was still hard to get motivated to change my lifestyle. That motivation came when I stepped on a scale and saw "299."



"Lifestyle Change"

That did it. I decided to make changes in how I live my life. I told my girlfriend, who was dieting at the time, that I was going to turn things around and that I was committing to it.

I didn't want to call it a "diet." That's something to me that sounds temporary. I needed to eat healthier and I needed to exercise and it needed to be long-term.

I didn't set out saying, "I'm going to lose 'x' amount of pounds in 'y' amount of months." I set out saying, "I have to be healthier and I have to start changing now." There was no pressure to reach an arbitrary number, just a dedication to getting in better shape. I wasn't setting out to look like the people

from the fitness equipment commercials, I was setting out to be able to climb stairs without getting winded.

Food

I thought finding healthier foods to eat would be hard. It really wasn't once I started looking at nutrition information and finding out a) the big difference between some of the stuff I was eating regularly and healthier options that were just as satisfying and b) realizing how many healthier foods I actually liked.



So, what did I cut back on? It seems like common sense, but I cut fat as much as possible (I was eating far too much), monitored my calorie intake without setting a strict daily limit, and cutting sugar wherever possible. Adding more fiber to my diet was also a part of the plan.

It's amazing how many healthier options are available in grocery stores—even when shopping for easy-to-prepare foods. From fat-free, no sugar added ice cream to baked or fat-free potato chips to Lean Cuisine paninis that grill in the microwave, you can find low-fat, lower-calorie "easy" snacks and meals at your local market.

Of course, in our profession, we're often at the mercy of fast food menus. Well, there's good news there, too. Almost every fast food chain has some delicious, healthier options and you can go online to find the healthiest meals at each one. *(You can find some of my favorites in comparison with popular heavy meals from the same chain on a separate hand out.)*

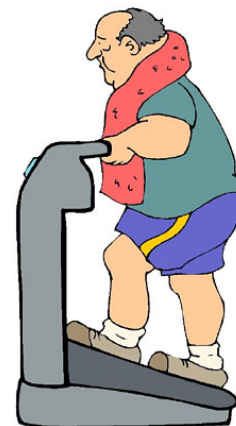
Exercise

Before my "lifestyle change," you could look up "atrophy" in the dictionary and you might have seen a picture of my muscles. Exercise had to be brought back into my life, but it had to be brought back in gradually.

Looking back, I'm glad I started to make these changes in the summer. It allowed me to incorporate better eating habits and exercise into my life at the one time of year where I'm not swept up by work. The exercise piece of this change may never have happened if I had tried to push myself into it in the middle of a season.

Instead, it was summer and I had some time. I started with the easiest exercise I could think of - walking. I'd come home from work (thankfully in the late afternoon and not some time around midnight) and went on meandering walks around town. If I needed to go somewhere and I could walk to it, I did, even if it took much longer.

Once the academic year started and the weather eventually worsened, my walks started taking place at the end of the day or on lunch break on the treadmill in the fitness center. I didn't have time every day, but I went when I could. I've since moved to running on the treadmill or outside, getting on the stationary bikes, and playing some pick-up basketball again, but it all started simply with walking.



Results

So, here I am, less than a year later from seeing that dreaded "299" and I've lost over 100 pounds and currently weigh about 195. Am I the portrait of fitness? No. I have, however, turned my life around and feel better physically now than I can ever remember. I've maintained the healthy changes in my life and am confident that I can keep them up. Starting small and making reasonable changes to my diet and exercise routines that I could **maintain** have put me in a healthier place.

Eating Lighter at Fast Food Chains

Comparing Lighter Options with Popular Heavier Options at Fast Food Chains

Fast Food Chain	Healthier Option	Popular, But Heavier Option
McDonald's	Grilled Chicken Classic (no mayo) Side Salad Low-Fat Balsamic Vinaigrette Dressing Large Diet Coke Calories: 430 Fat: 8 grams Sugar: 16 grams	Big Mac Large French Fries Large Coca-Cola Classic Calories: 1430 Fat: 59 grams Sugar: 94 grams
Burger King	Tendergrill Chicken Garden Salad Fat-Free Ranch Dressing Small Onion Rings Large Diet Coke Calories: 440 Fat: 16 grams Sugar: 10 grams	Whopper with Cheese Large French Fries Large Coca-Cola Classic Calories: 1550 Fat: 75 grams Sugar: 92 grams
Subway	12" Subway Club on Italian Bread (lettuce, tomato, sweet peppers, fat-free honey mustard sauce) Apple Slices Large Diet Coke Calories: 705 Fat: 12 grams Sugar: 29 grams	12" Italian BMT on Italian Bread (cheese, lettuce, tomato, olives, oil and vinegar) Chocolate chip cookie Large Coca-Cola Classic Calories: 1445 Fat: 57 grams Sugar: 113 grams
Wendy's	Ultimate Chicken Grill (with honey mustard sauce) Baked Potato (with sour cream and chives) Large Diet Coke Calories: 700 Fat: 12 grams Sugar: 14 grams	Big Bacon Classic Large French Fries Large Coca-Cola Classic Calories: 1445 Fat: 57 grams Sugar: 90 grams
Taco Bell	Steak Fiesta Burrito Mexican Rice Large Diet Pepsi Calories: 520 Fat: 18 grams Sugar: 4 grams	Crunchwrap Supreme Nachos 'n' Cheese Large Pepsi Calories: 1160 Fat: 45 grams Sugar: 84 grams
KFC	Honey Barbecue Sandwich Green Beans Small Corn on the Cob Large Diet Pepsi Calories: 400 Fat: 6 grams Sugar: 23 grams	KFC Chicken and Biscuit Bowl Large Pepsi Calories: 1140 Fat: 44 grams Sugar: 81 grams