

losing it

Need Motivation? Readers Share Their Secrets of Success

Dropping 30 pounds skyrocketed Charlene's self-image.

I was never athletic or health-conscious. I was a yo-yo dieter. I hovered between carrying 15-20 extra pounds in high school, but I was a master at hiding it...or so I thought. I'd do the typical starve all day and gorge at night thing. Growing up the youngest of four children and the only girl, my athletic brothers encouraged me to get involved in sports. I was never interested in team sports. I felt

like a misfit because I was "big-boned," and not in great shape like the rest of my family.

When I was 24 I met a wonderful guy. We got married. At the

time of our wedding I was about 20 pounds overweight, wearing a size 16 wedding dress. By this time I had been on three popular weight loss plans, spending a lot of money with the only result being that I gained more weight after I stopped them. My husband always commented on how great I looked, but internally I felt miserable. Like many women who struggle with weight, my biggest fear was what would happen after pregnancy and starting a family. After waiting five years and still unsuccessfully battling my extra weight, my husband and I decided to start a family. I was certain I would never fit into those size 14 jeans ever again. I

became pregnant in no time and started doing a lot of research on the best way to get healthy for this growing baby inside me. I started eating right and walking every day. I gained 30 pounds during the pregnancy and gave birth to a beautiful healthy baby boy. After doing research on living healthy for our baby, it dawned on me that I should have been doing these things all along for my own health. I started doing exercise at home during the day with a friend while the baby was sleeping. Unfortunately, the weight wasn't coming off that easily. Although my friend suggested various diet pills and shots, I was determined to lose weight the healthy way. I knew pills were not the answer.

I started reading everything I could on weight training at the local library and educated myself on proper nutrition. Now, five years and two sons later, I've maintained my goal. I never get on the scale anymore because I realize it's only a number. I lift weights and do cardio on the elliptical machine at the gym. I also play with my kids every day. When my husband and I celebrated our 10th anniversary, we enjoyed my healthy new lifestyle by hiking and scuba diving- things we only dreamed of doing on our honeymoon in Hawaii. The best part was that I never felt guilty about any morsel of food I ate during that vacation and I was proud walking on the beach in a fabulous swim suit.

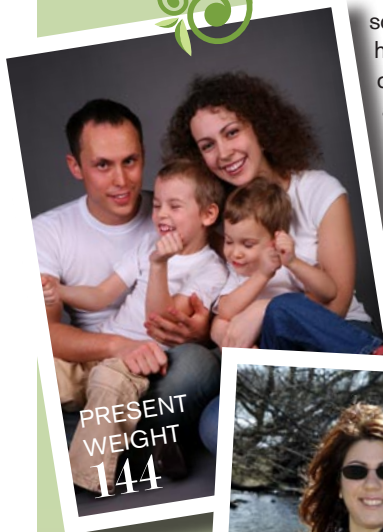
I always think to myself, "I wish I had known the benefits of healthy living in my teens and early twenties!" It would have

saved me from all the guilty feelings about myself.

Yet I'm very grateful to have finally realized that it's not just a food thing- our feet were made for walking, running, and anything else active. If people would be more physically active, even just by taking the stairs instead of the elevator, food wouldn't be such an issue. Some people at the gym admire my strength and ask, "How did you get in such great shape?" They are the same people I see fighting to get the closest parking space to the gym door!

I have learned many things since I decided to become healthy. Most importantly, I have learned to surround myself with positive people who share similar healthy goals. Having genuinely supportive friends and family to share my accomplishment with has made me mentally richer and healthier. Attitude has so much to do with it. Health and fitness are a lot more than what you see in the mirror. My husband has been wonderful every step of the way. He has made me realize that we are all responsible for ourselves and I can do anything I put my mind to.

I feel stronger and more flexible with every workout. Nothing beats the feeling of well-being. Looking forward to getting dressed- without having to change ten times to see what camouflages me best- is a thing of the past. In the future I hope to be fortunate to have good health for a lifetime.



Name:
Charlene
Young

Age: 35

Height: 5'7"

**Present
Weight:** 144

**Starting
Weight:** 174