

February 2014: Inspiration for a Healthy New Year

Make 2014 a "Healthy You Year." Find ways to boost your health, fitness, and well-being, and be an inspiration to others!

Need inspiration to get started? Meet three people who changed their health habits—and their lives. They lost weight, became active, gained energy, and grew in self-confidence. Here are their stories and tips for making healthy living easier. **They say if they can do it, you can too!**

Brian



Brian before

Brian After

Brian grew up snacking on potato chips, fried chicken, and other fatty foods, and spending a lot of time sitting in front of a computer. At age 26, he started having arm and chest pains, which became a wakeup call to change his lifestyle.

"I was scared it was the beginning of heart issues," admits Brian, a 28-year-old pharmacy technician. "I'm way too young to be having those kinds of issues. I went to my doctor, who said the problems were caused by stress."

Like other family members, Brian would overeat in response to stress. At 5'7, he tipped the scales at 320 pounds. He viewed the arm and chest pains as a wakeup call to lose weight and be healthier. After consulting a dietitian, he now centers his diet on baked or grilled chicken and fish, steamed vegetables, and fruit.

Grapes especially are a treat. He also joined a gym and works out three times a week on the treadmill, stationary bike, and weight machines.

For 1½ years, Brian stayed determined and dropped 140 pounds. He sleeps better and has lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels. He completed his first 5K run/walk in 2013 and plans to do a 10K in 2014.

Brian declares that he feels great. "It was time for me to get myself together and make

sure I was healthy. I wanted to always be there for events in my life and my loved ones' lives."

Strategies That Work For Me

- I gave up diet sodas because of all the additives, and now just drink water.
- Instead of immediately sitting down to surf the Internet when I get home from work, I often go to the gym.
- I keep healthy snacks like almonds in my drawer at work so that if I get hungry, I won't reach for junk food. I do allow myself the occasional "cheat" though, so I don't feel deprived. It's all about moderation.

Eva



Eva found out she had breast cancer at age 45. Due to her fit, healthy lifestyle, she was shocked. An avid exerciser, she had no history of cancer in her family. But a mammogram screening in 2009 had turned up abnormal cells, and she was diagnosed with ductal carcinoma in situ (noninvasive breast cancer).

"I was in disbelief that this was happening to me. I felt lost. I read as much as I could and went to a lot of forums for cancer patients. With my years of translating a cancer website to Spanish, I realized that I had the same questions that other cancer patients had. This made me feel part of a huge community."

Eva had a lumpectomy, but the lab reports showed more cancer cells scattered in her left breast. After two more small surgeries, the doctors said she could wait and see what happened. For greater certainty, she decided to have a mastectomy and reconstructive breast surgery. Now she is diligent about getting all her regular health screenings, and encourages others to be too.

She also started hiking after the surgeries and now logs about 25 miles a week, in addition to regular Pilates classes.

Eva says she doesn't take life for granted. "My approach is to have a positive attitude. I became more minimalist, letting go of things that weren't important. I wanted to enjoy more life experiences than being attached to material things."

Strategies That Work For Me

- I eat healthy, including vegetables, to keep my immune system strong.
- I get regular health screenings, including mammograms and annual physicals.
- It sounds corny, but I try to do at least one good deed a day as a way of "paying it forward."

Randy



Randy started practicing yoga after injuring his back in the military. Ten years later, not only is his spine more flexible, but he has lost 40 pounds, gained an overall calmness, and gone from retired Army sergeant major to yoga instructor.

The discipline he learned in the Army served him well. After his first class, Randy was hooked and immediately signed up for an introductory package of classes. He spent the next few years practicing yoga as often as possible, often seven days a week or twice a day.

At almost 6'2, he has trimmed down from 270 pounds to 230.

"I feel really conditioned. My back is doing so much better. I am a much calmer person. I feel like the stress level in my life has gone down tremendously.

"I was mobilized in Desert Storm and came back with asthma and other respiratory issues. My breathing has really improved. That's another thing that has kept me dedicated to yoga."

The father of three boys had not planned to become a yoga instructor. He says people had a stereotype of an action-oriented, strong male figure that didn't gibe with the image of a yoga practitioner. However, at age 52, he took the plunge and trained for 10 weeks. "It's like basic training in the military. They challenge you physically and mentally."

At 55, Randy enjoys helping other people enjoy the benefits of a yoga practice. "I knew what yoga could do for me, and I could see it in them as well. When you see your students succeed, that's a reward in itself."

Strategies That Work For Me

- I practice yoga at least four times a week.
- Yoga has helped me change my lifestyle and make better choices. I can drive past fast food places now. I eat sushi, more fruit, and more vegetables.

- I try to get better rest.

<http://www.cdc.gov/features/healthynewyear/>

**“We have added a healthy recipe for you to try!
This new addition will be in each Healthy at 80 for 2014.”**

Recipe - French Toast Surprise

