



BEFORE



AFTER

PHOTO: DALLAS OLSEN

CAROLYN GERDTZ

A TRUE INSPIRATION

IMAGINE FEELING DISGUSTED AT YOUR BODY EVERY DAY AND HAVING GAINED SO MUCH WEIGHT YOU CAN'T PRIZE THE RINGS OFF YOUR FINGERS. FOR 37-YEAR-OLD CAROLYN GERDTZ, THAT WAS HER REALITY. SHE TELLS OXYGEN ABOUT HER GRUPELLING WEIGHT-LOSS JOURNEY THAT SAW HER LOSE ALMOST 40 KILOS. AS TOLD TO MAYA ANDERSON.

“You don’t end up over 30 kilos overweight overnight, it happens over a long time. I used to be quite healthy and slim and went to the

gym. But I’ve always had a weight problem. I was an overweight child who became a solid teenager, and then an overweight young adult. I wasn’t obese then, but I was certainly a ‘big girl’. I yo-yo dieted for years, losing the same 12 to 15 kilos a few times. Although I was slim at times, each time I’d just dieted down to my goal weight without exercising. I started going to the gym and really enjoyed training but then it all changed.

I received a promotion at work - I’m an electrical engineer and really enjoy my work - and although the promotion was great, I wasn’t really prepared for it. My stress levels went through the roof. I worked longer hours. Every night I drank to try to relax. I worked out but was getting home really late and my husband was starting to feel neglected as I was never home. Guilt consumed me and my gym attendance declined. Eventually I dropped out altogether. All the time my weight was increasing.

I was in trouble and didn’t want to admit it. Every night I drank and ate takeaway. I’d go to the shop for lunch daily. My usual chicken and salad roll was replaced with lasagne and chips – comforting food. Too under the weather each morning to make breakfast, I started buying toasted sandwiches every morning. My weight skyrocketed, and I started getting problems associated with obesity.

I was just 165cm, yet weighed 97 kilos. I ended up on medication for high blood pressure and had high cholesterol. My heart raced from drinking and stress at work. I slept poorly, sweated constantly and couldn’t get up stairs without puffing. I was always buying bigger clothes and ended up with size 20 jeans. Depression would consume me as I looked at my hands. I’d gained weight to the point where I

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couldn’t take my rings off. They had been stuck on my chubby fingers for over a year. Underneath, my fingers were red and chafed and the pain was becoming unbearable. Most of my shoes didn’t fit either as I’d gained weight on my feet as well. I felt like a stranger in my own skin.

I was so ashamed of what I’d become. My husband Paul never said much about my weight. He’d try to encourage me to do something about it, saying, “I know you’re not happy like this, why don’t you just do what you used to?” But it was a while before I felt mentally ready to commit myself to change. I’ve learnt that you have to be willing to change your fitness and lifestyle for yourself, first and foremost. You can’t do this successfully if you’re

only doing it for someone else. I believe you are setting yourself up to fail if you’re just doing it because your friend, partner or family member decides to get fit or lose weight - and you decide to do it just because they are. Certainly it can be easier and a lot of fun to be losing weight and getting fit with a friend - but what happens if that person gives up? You will probably drop out too.

I tried a diet clinic and lost a few kilos, but got sick of the food. I also figured out I wasn’t going to get my ideal figure doing their program. I would have gotten thinner, but I always admired fit, toned women. So I dropped out and went to Weight Watchers again. I was actually a leader there a long time ago. But this time some of the same





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CAROLYN WITH HER BODY TRANSFORMATION SPECIALIST, SUE HEINTZE, DIRECTOR OF IDEAL BODIES ONLINE.

women were still there from when I was a leader and as I sat in meetings, I felt embarrassed that I was so big. I dropped out there too.

While I was flicking through a fitness magazine one day I saw an ad for Ideal Bodies Online. Maybe that could be the way to go, I thought. Online training is something different and director Sue Heintze offered a training and nutrition program. She'd helped a lot of women achieve wonderful transformations from normal bodies into fit and toned figures, and that's what I wanted, too.

Sue sent me the sign up forms but I didn't touch them for months. I saw that most of the success stories on the IBO website were mainly achieved in 12 weeks and knew it was going to take me much longer to reach my desired figure. Finally I convinced myself to sign up.

Sue recommended I take photos and measurements. I was 96.7 kilos, and taking the photos was the hardest thing I've ever done. My husband volunteered to take them, but I refused. I wanted to believe that he hadn't actually seen me

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in underwear for the last two years. He told me that he knew what I looked like but I was in denial. I took my photos with the self timer on the camera; I was so embarrassed. When I had to download them off the camera I nearly cried. I felt so awful and ashamed of myself. When I sent them to Sue I apologised about how dreadful they were. She was so nice and supportive about it, and said that the next ones will be better and that we are all embarrassed about our 'before' photos.

Because I was on medication for my blood pressure, I had to get clearance from my doctor before Sue let me start an exercise program. Initially my doctor protested against my doing weights, but eventually let me do light weights and by week 18 gave me clearance to do a more rigorous program.

Getting used to a much higher level of activity was hard as I'd been completely sedentary for ages. Sue started me off with afternoon cardio and weights sessions, gradually increasing my sessions, but I didn't like getting home so late each night. I challenged myself to move cardio to the morning with weights in the afternoon. It took a while to get into the routine but I still train like this now, getting up at 4.30am to be at the gym by 5.30 for my cardio. I shower there and head off to work. On weights days I train right after work.

Preparing healthy food to take to work with me was the next challenge. I had to change so much about my routine and my lifestyle! I said goodbye to the lady in the coffee shop and finally got myself into a routine where I prepare all the day's food the night before. I now plan all my evening meals

weekly, which reduces thinking about what to make each night and the lure of going out for unhealthy options. I also schedule in my workouts weekly. If I have a busy week with meetings which are going to go past normal working time, I rearrange training. Planning is so important.

Not worrying about what others think was another big thing for me to learn. I attend many meetings where lunch is provided, and it took me ages to pluck up the courage to take my own food with me. Now I take my blue cooler bag with me everywhere and don't worry about what others think!

Each week I emailed my wonderful feedback coach Michelle and would write these huge emails, probably too much detail sometimes, but it became



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like a little therapy session each week. I would bare all about how I'd worked out and how I ate. I figured that if I wasn't honest and telling the whole story, then the only person I was really cheating or lying to was me.

While my transformation wasn't easy, I had memorable milestones that helped me push on. My first goal was to get into my new size 18 workpants during my first 12 weeks which I was thrilled to achieve. Now I fit into a 10 which feels wonderful. At 13 weeks, I was able to stop taking blood pressure medication. And after 19 weeks, I got my rings off. I remember sitting at our kitchen bench fiddling with them and getting them all off. It was an absolute highlight - I felt so triumphant! And I love my stomach now. I went from having a keg to a six pack. That was one of my major goals, to have abs.

It took me 57 weeks to get to where I am today, and now I've lost almost 40 kilos - 220cm from my measurements in total. The biggest drops were 41cm from my waist, 31cm from my hips and 31.5cm from my chest. Today I'm no longer ashamed of how I look. Actually, I'm quite proud! My confidence has improved and I'm full of energy.

I love being fit and toned - transforming myself has given me a great feeling of accomplishment. Fitness and vitality translates into other areas of my life now too. I feel positive about things and am better able to cope with stress. I find that if I've had a bad day at work I tend to go faster on cardio, or lift more if I am doing weight training, so I use my training time to work off my "grrrrrr" from the day!

I've received amazing reactions to my transformation. My family live in Sydney and I don't get to see them that often. I finally sent them photos and they were completely speechless. My mum didn't think it was me until she looked really closely! My wonderful husband Paul has been nothing but supportive during my transformation. He thinks he has the best looking wife around now! I couldn't have done it without the support from Sue, Michelle

and the Ideal Bodies Online clients as well - many of them gave me lots of compliments and encouragement when I posted my progress photos on the forum.

I've been so fortunate to have such a wonderful bunch of people who continue to support me. But you have to make the commitment to lose weight or change your fitness because you want to, because you will get the benefits, and because it's important to you - not because someone tells you that you should. I am now learning to maintain the fitness lifestyle as a way of life. I still fall down occasionally, but you have to pick yourself up, dust yourself off and keep on going. I hope I'll be able to inspire others who are overweight to make the decision to get healthy, because it's the best decision you'll ever make." ☺



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SHARE YOUR STORY!

Send your profile and photos to, c/o Australian Oxygen, PO Box 41, Maylands WA 6931 or email editorial@oxygenmag.com.au



DIET

MEAL ONE: Pancake and coffee with skim milk.

MEAL TWO: Cottage cheese or chicken breast, apple and coffee with skim milk.

MEAL THREE: Tuna or chicken salad.

MEAL FOUR: Tuna with rice and steamed vegetables.

MEAL FIVE: Protein shake.

MEAL SIX: Fish, steak or chicken.

MEAL SEVEN: Diet jelly.

WORKOUT

MONDAY: Cardio, shoulders, triceps, abs.

TUESDAY: Cardio, Body Attack class.

WEDNESDAY: Cardio.

THURSDAY: Cardio, back, calves, abs.

FRIDAY: Cardio, legs.

SATURDAY: Cardio, chest, biceps, abs.

SUNDAY: Rest.