

From

Crazy

to

Control

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How Stress Got Me Started, and My Mom's Suggestion Got Me Back on Track

I used to weigh around 160 pounds. I exercised every day and ate fresh fruits and veggies. I had complete control over my eating. I rarely ate junk food or sweets. There was no food that “I had to have.”

But that was five years ago, before the stress, before the “crazy eating.”

I had been thin all my life. Even after I gave birth to two daughters, I stayed thin. Then one of my daughters, at age 16, started hanging out with the wrong crowd, and doing things a teenager shouldn't be doing. The huge stress of worrying about her caused me to start “crazy eating.” I would wake up in the morning and start eating everything in sight. Suddenly, I looked at food and thought, “I have to have it!”

It wasn't any particular food—it was food in general that I had to have. I would eat until my stomach hurt, take a nap, then get up and eat some more. I had little energy to cook food, so I went out almost every night and ate fast food.

I had no desire to control my eating. My mind and soul were focused on my daughter. The fact that I was eating huge amounts of food and gaining weight was the least of my worries. I felt like I didn't have time or energy to try to lose weight and get fit. The main



Veronica Yopez (left) and Lorena Torrez say they are happy their mom has made changes. “We eat at home more. The food is healthier. She has become happier.”



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"Of course, I want to look good, but the most important thing is to be healthy!"

thing I had to concentrate on was my family. I blamed myself for what happened to my daughter. I was stressed, depressed, upset.

The weight piled on. I felt disgusted with myself. It didn't help that people who hadn't seen me for awhile said things like, "What happened to you?" My answer was, "I got chunky."

Then my daughter started doing better, and I thought I would be able to gain control of my eating and lose some weight. But I got a new job as a manager, so I went from one big stress to another big stress. After working 10-hour days, and being totally stressed out, I had no desire to do anything. I went home, ate, laid on the couch, and went to bed.

One day, my mom told me about a weight-loss contest sponsored by the tribal diabetes prevention program. She wanted to join, and I wanted to help her get healthier. Plus, I wanted to win the \$500 prize

for the team that lost the most weight. I went from one day eating whatever I wanted, and lots of it, to being in a weight-loss program.

I had no particular goal to lose weight, and didn't really believe I could. The first week I lost one pound. How discouraging! I wanted to give up, but kept going for my mother. The next week, I lost three pounds. That boosted my spirits.

I started listening to what they were saying in the weight-loss class. I started eating breakfast and fewer carbohydrates. I started eating more fresh fruits and veggies again. I met with a dietitian, who showed me what to eat and how much. I started walking two and a half miles each day.

In six weeks, I lost 20 pounds! It wasn't just my waistline that changed. My mind changed. I was no longer embarrassed about walking. I walked at work around the smoke shop parking lot. I walked at home around the neighborhood.

My mom noticed my weight loss. She suggested I buy clothes at a thrift shop to save money. She knew I would lose even more weight and need smaller clothing.

People started noticing. Some said, "Wow! How much weight have you lost?"

I am still losing weight. So far, I have lost 35 pounds. The biggest change has been my thinking. Before I lost weight, I wondered what I was going to do when my youngest daughter went to college. She had given me advice, "Just go for it!" I had no idea what she meant, because I had nothing to "go for." I had nothing to look forward to, because I felt like I didn't really have a life of my own.

Now that the weight is coming off, I feel much more positive. I feel like I can, "Go for it!" I feel like I can have control of my life, take care of myself, and have a great life.

With the weight loss has come a realization: I have never, ever, put myself first. It was always my mom, my daughters, my job. Now I know that I have to take care of myself before anyone else.

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I found the real motivation that will help me lose even more weight and keep it off. I am not doing this to boost my self-image or to find a partner. I am doing this to stay healthy, to not get diabetes. I am doing this to live long so I can spend time with my mother, children, and my future grandchildren. I want to be fit, sleep well, have energy, feel good, and be happy. I am doing this for me.



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An Extra Benefit of Losing Weight:

“I used to be too heavy to sleep well. I couldn’t breathe well, and it was hard to get comfortable. Now, when I wake up in the morning, I think, ‘Wow! I slept through the night!’”

Tips to Lose Weight from Raquel Yopez:

1. Walk (five days a week, try for one hour)
2. Eat breakfast (low-fat yogurt and a piece of fresh fruit)
3. Read food labels (you’ll find out the fat and calorie content)
4. Put food away and do the dishes right after eating (out of sight, out of mind)
5. Join a weight-loss program (share your stories and get weighed in every week)
6. Talk to a dietitian (they can give you information you don’t know, information that will help you)



Veronica Yopez (middle) and Lorena Torrez are happy that their mom is losing weight. “I was worried because her mom and dad are diabetic, and I didn’t want it to happen to my mom,” says Veronica.