

Winning a lifelong battle *becoming a new man*

Mary M. Nearpass, MA, MS

Dear PhillyFIT Magazine,

A lot of your literature is dedicated to managing one's weight. I am writing to "go public", on behalf of a friend, who has accomplished this rapidly. Scott is a 38-year-old successful businessman, well educated, and extremely well liked. However, like so many, managing a lucrative business provided him with the chance to thrive externally by day, yet struggle internally on his off hours.

One day, he had a huge wake up call from his physician. Diabetes out of control, day-to-day bodily functioning, e.g., standing up on his own and getting knocked right back down by muscle cramps, sleeping with a CPAP machine for nine years due to sleep apnea, and finally, a desperate need for gastric by-pass surgery or he would die within the year. However, Scott was too heavy and could not get the necessary qualifying testing. He knew he had to figure out something if he truly wanted to contribute to this world.

Prior to his Cardiology wake-up call, Scott had been on numerous diets, including the infamous Optifast (pre-Oprah). On each diet, he lost 100 pounds or more, but every time proceeded to put more weight on than he had lost. After a ten-year hiatus from dealing with his obesity, (if I ignore it, it will go away . . . Life Law #4, you cannot change what you do not acknowledge) he finally decided last summer that it was now time to change his life. In that interim period in 1999, Scott was "privileged" to win a radio station contest as the "fattest Philadelphian at 497 pounds!" In his own words, "That should have been a signal for me", but instead he continued to labor through each day. Even though he was very limited socially, in the places he could go or things he could do, it was not until the literal death threat was blatantly presented to him by his medical team that he actually grew fearful.

At the very same time of this rude awakening, he was in the market for a new car and found his choices to be extremely limited. It became a choice of what he could fit into instead of what he wanted or could afford. On August 3, 2004, Scott made the commitment to stop choosing to be overweight. No matter how many times he tried and failed in the past, it was no longer an excuse to give up on him. He started the herbalife diet at 512 lbs. He had been successful on this diet 10 yrs. ago, but had to quit due to the Ephedra in the supplements. It was his hope that now it was "Ephedra free" he could be successful once again and he immediately became used to the diet again. The difference this time was that he



set specific goals. Within four and one half months, Scott dropped 100 lbs., and was able to purchase his new car! Talk about motivation and finding appropriate, non-food related rewards!

Scott remained extremely focused in changing his life forever. He began to feel so much better. On to his next goal: Getting into better physical shape by joining L.A. Fitness. Despite not stepping foot in a gym in over 15 years, determination became his strategy. He now goes to the gym five days/week, and works with a wonderful personal trainer. He has also learned the importance of resting and relaxing his body in order for it to recover from strenuous workouts. In this 10-month period, Scott lost an additional 159 lbs. In 66 weeks, he has lost a grand total of 267 lbs and is now, at a weight of 245, less than half the man he used to be! Scott's ultimate goal is to lose another 28 lbs., which I am convinced he will accomplish.

A large part of this weight is loose skin. Although his physicians have told him that the excess flesh is of no physical harm to him, having it surgically removed will further enhance his new lifestyle. He has worked so hard, and has truly made a commitment to be in the best shape he can and looking the best he can toward living a long and healthy life; Scott has tons more energy, and a greater ability to enjoy his life. One of the best things is that he does not miss or even crave any of the foods he gave up. One of the biggest obstacles before Scott committed to his healthy weight management was the thought of never being able to last a year. Up until then, Scott could never understand how people succeeded at losing weight, but given no choice, he put his mind to it, and now, a little more than one year later, he has lost more than half of his old self. He has gone from a size 6X shirt to a size large; a size 72 to size 44 inch waist; his diabetes medication has been cut in half, and he can now stand up on his own and not worry about being knocked down by muscle cramps requiring ice packs in order to move again. He can now safely

fall asleep WITHOUT THE CPAP MACHINE! He is experiencing a better night's rest, and his sinuses are clear.

Scott has "battled with being overweight his entire life." The good news is Scott is capable of achieving much success in his external life; he was just out of balance with his internal cues. Personally, I do not believe anyone consciously chooses to select food as their "weapon of choice" to cope with life's struggles. No more than an alcoholic chooses booze or a drug addict chooses his/her multiple arrays of anesthetizers. Somewhere along the line, Scott learned while growing up, coming from a nice, Jewish family and being the oldest son of a traditional "Jewish mother", that food equals love. Additionally, with our three basic needs in life being food, security and love, they are so intermingled and entwined that it became difficult for Scott to keep them separate. Therefore, in my opinion, when Scott became "hungry", he was really thinking about love, and his hunger for food and love became interconnected. Therefore, listening to his physical body's true hunger signals for sustenance became suppressed, and food became a source of comfort, a literal feeding of a hungry heart. Whether it was receiving pleasure through food, finding that obesity provides a protective barrier, using his weight as a form of rebellion, or gaining attention from playing the victim, Scott was getting something from being overweight. People do what works, and at some subconscious level, this was obviously working for him.
