

Fitness at Age 75

How I Lost 25 Pounds with 6 Changes in My Lifestyle
by Phil Myers

Ten years ago I wrote to several hundred friends and asked these two questions:

- 1. Have you ever lost 25 pounds at one stretch?**
- 2. What did you do?**

After high school I logged twenty-two years without gaining a pound. I wrestled three years in college and went to the state championships twice. Then I married a girl who didn't believe in desserts (*at least not daily ones—a small disappointment to an inveterate chocoholic*). For years I ran the perimeter of our small local airport three mornings each week—one mile on each side.

Kay almost never bought soda at the grocery store, nor chips, nor fries, nor candy, nor cookies in our first twenty years of marriage, and not very much ice cream. Of course, in my twenties and thirties my metabolism was pretty high and with nine babies coming in our first twenty years of marriage, the paycheck didn't often allow for many meals with second helpings. I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times in my adult life when I have left the table feeling “stuffed.” Lifestyle and metabolism kept my weight stable.

When I became a missionary, the older kids were moving out of the home and only six kids were left in my quiver. My salary also took a hike as a missionary. I gained ten pounds.

When we returned from our three year stint in Indonesia, I still carried those extra pounds and added another ten pounds in two years during a stressful teaching post. Now in my (*sedentary*) golden years, my writing ministry has ramped up and my belt got tighter.

Today I finished my goal of shedding twenty-five of those slowly accumulated pounds. Three months on—seven months off—three months on again. I made six changes to my lifestyle. The first twelve pounds came off as a bachelor last summer while Kay spent three weeks as a camp cook in another state. Eighteen pounds total in the first 7 weeks. Then I plateaued for seven months I only gained three pounds. The rest still came off very slowly. It took 13 months.

Here are the six lifestyle shifts I made. They're all about decisions I made.

1. Lots of water largely replaced my four Cokes and two-gallons-of-1%-milk intake per week, down to one weekly Coke and one gallon of milk. Hungry? Drink 8 oz of water. I try to make every other glass I drink, water.
2. Portion size ruled my intake. I learned to enjoy the taste more but enjoy less quantity. No specific foods are forbidden. Victory over the fork is a major step. I expected to be hungry for months at a time—almost prophetic. Hunger did subside considerably.
3. I rode my bike 50+ miles a week for 10 weeks in the summer: small shopping errands [*with a backpack*], library, mostly highway miles. Schwinn: 27 lbs, 45 years old, yard sale \$65, average speed = 14-15 mph (walking equivalent = 15 miles/week at a very brisk walk, 50 bpm above reg. pulse, burning 400-500 calories).

I started out riding 7 miles at 11 mph. I try to ride before eating in the morning. It uses up all the nutrition still floating around in my bloodstream from my last meal. Morning exercise starts the daily process of expunging nutrients from the fat cells early in the day. I [*try to*] eat nothing for two hours after a hard workout.

I sometimes did ab crunches during TV ads. Maybe you prefer to walk the perimeter of your backyard briskly twice instead. The precept is to do something everyday to make you puff hard for five minutes five days a week. And maybe memorize the number of calories you burn doing five different activities.

4. I ate only one-meal-a-day about 3 pm (*400-700 calories—a guess*) plus 2 snacks. Examples of complete one-a-day “meals” (*pretty boring I admit*):
 - * 1/4 watermelon
 - * lettuce plus who knows: Catalina, slice of salami, or slice of cheese, nuts, raisins

- * just a smallish bowl of ice cream for the whole day, my treat with wife
 - * small bowl of Cap'n Crunch cereal plus English muffin with butter and cinnamon sugar
 - * two eggs over easy plus toast with butter or jam or powdered sugar
 - * three ears of corn-on-the-cob, dripping in butter with a side of sliced tomato sprinkled with sugar.
 - * drink almost anything I feel like except soda (*that's my Saturday treat*), and up to a quart of homemade sweet tea each day. I had never succumbed to the lure of the bitter black bean [*coffee*].
 - * bowl of smashed potatoes with bacon sprinkles, butter, sans sour cream
 - * fruit chunks: pineapple, watermelon, grapes, cherries, mango, apple, raisins—no limit
 - * carrot salad with raisins
 - * Waldorf salad
 - * Ahh. . . V-8 Spicy Hot, 8 oz = 45 cal.
 - * chef salad
 - * egg salad
 - * I gave my stomach a day off several times (*old-timey word is fasting*) but drank juices freely.
5. Examples of snacks, twice-a-day, each about 100 calories. I felt no guilt indulging.
- * three little pieces of beef jerky
 - * 5 pretzels
 - * Wheat thins, or Cheez-its
 - * Reese's cup
 - * tiny handful of trail mix (*easy to abuse*)
 - * piece of salami or cheese with jalapeno mustard
 - * fruit = no limit
 - * 5 peanut M&Ms
 - * 1/8 cup of nuts
 - * applesauce
 - * raw okra (*just kidding*)
 - * fresh fried plantain (*in ignorantly small portions*)
 - * two hard boiled eggs
 - * glass of chocolate milk
 - * Notice I've almost entirely left out vegetables. If God wanted us to eat vegetables, He would have made them taste better without our adding melted cheese. ☺
6. Nothing after 7 pm except water. (*I know I cheat.*) A "refrigerator magnet" is actually a physics term meaning the power of a refrigerator to draw people at 3 a.m. I know.

Kay made virtually no meals for me during this draconian period except salads and hard boiled eggs. We eat ice cream for our one meal together each week most often on Sundays. This regimen is hard on her since she loves to cook for me and she really loves to eat together. Sorry, Hon.

12 Mottoes I had to repeat to myself. [*Make up your own.*]

- A. "Phil, you've treated yourself to unearned snacks for years in the past. Don't pout."
- B. "Keep it up. I know you want to look good for Kay."
- C. "She has worked very hard to keep herself trim all these years. Now it's your turn."
- D. "Snacks eaten when no one else is looking—still have calories."
- E. "You know you want to get back into those three pairs of pants hanging in the back of the closet!"
- F. "Ok, so the seventh week you feel like giving up? But you already dropped 18 lbs. Keep it up."
- G. "Try to remember to do thirty ab-crunches for each hour of TV you watch, Phil."
- H. "When bored out of your skull and it makes you "hungry"—read a book or write a blog."
- I. "When the temptation to eat is overwhelming, drink 8 full ounces of water. It's your punishment for the snacks responsible for those love handles. Don't whine."
- J. "When you hit your target weight you'll be within 5-10 lbs of your college wrestling weight!"
- K. Turn off TV food ads.
- L. Phil, think about your most unflattering photo. Ha! Put it on top of your desk or workshop.

I have found this routine exceptionally boring, so Kay and I played backgammon, RummiKube, and other games to as well as Scrabble four different ways [*most of the time with nine tiles*] to pass the meal times. Kay has been on two-meals-a-day for several years. We've tried hard to develop generally healthy lifestyles, but I absolutely hate my self-imposed law, "*No seconds on dessert.*"

I started cutting down on red meat 10 years ago. Neither of us is on much more than BP meds. Kay spends about a half hour slaving in her magnificent flower and spice garden each day. She can still do 90 sit-ups. Kay has a treadmill. I've always had dumbbells, a curl bar, a jump rope, a bench, as well as 300 lbs of iron. Until last year I've been able to do 50 touch-the-belt-buckle-to-the-ground push-ups in 30 seconds but I've finally slowed down a tad. This summer I turn 75. I may stay on the same eating regimen until Christmas (*4 months away*) but will add a light breakfast—I love cereal! Who knows? I may never go back to the three-meals-a-day grind.

All experts agree:

- We must burn more calories than we take in.
- Muscle burns more energy than fat. Get stronger, somehow.

A word about skipping breakfast. In my opinion, the only reason weight-loss gurus [*and everyone else*] recommend we shouldn't skip breakfast is, "You'll be too hungry at lunch and you'll overeat. If you skip breakfast resolve that you will not binge for lunch.

A word about fasting. A 30-hour fast might begin by skipping the evening meal and going to bed hungry [*drink clear juices instead*]. Then skip breakfast and lunch but drink lots—*maybe till you feel like bursting*. Break your fast with a 100-calorie snack mid-afternoon. Enjoy a sensible supper. Take Tylenol for headaches which are unpleasant but not damaging. Our heads must make the decisions, not our stomachs. During my seven-day fasts I get bored with not eating, but I try to think of creative ways to fill that void. For many people hunger actually goes away about the fourth day. And yes, you will operate at a slightly slower pace. Relax.

A word about water. Don't whine. Drink more than you want. It works as well as diet pills if you drink enough.

And yes, I did get stuck for a couple weeks (*twice*) and was sure my \$150 Detecto (*doctor's office*) scale had broken.

I too, have been challenged and inspired by many friends from the Chubby Club who shed thousands of pounds corporately. Thanks for your example.

Blessings on any friends who are encouraged to know that changes can take place in the golden years of our lives. And my interest in fitness, as well as 15,000 lifetime miles of biking has, of course, opened opportunities to witness to a number of unbelievers. I treated a couple Mormons at Dunkin' Donuts mid-way through my bike ride, and yesterday I witnessed to a pastor while biking! He was already a believer.

Phil Myers, c 2020

PART II, Fall, 2022

Slowly 10 pounds crept back onto my scale so I've recommitted myself again. This week I lost 3 pounds after I re-read the last 3 pages. Hope to drop most of it by New Year's Eve.

THIS WAS MY LETTER TO MY FRIENDS IN THE "NO-LONGER-A-MEMBER-OF-THE-CHUBBY-CLUB"

I'm 10 days into a 3-month diet and I'm writing a blog while I'm doing it. I need input from any of my friends who have intentionally lost 25 pounds at some time in the past. My goal is to drop 25 pounds and get back near to my college wrestling weight of 165 lbs. [Low 70s will be fine.]

This goes out indiscriminately to a couple hundred of you who are friends. No offense is intended. If you've never personally lost 25 lbs in a single stretch please don't respond. *And please don't tell me your mate's secrets.*

Whether you kept the weight off or not, I'd like you to answer a dozen questions. Brief answers are fine, but anything you say might be used. Oh, and I won't use any names.

1. Why did you decide to lose the weight?
sick of carrying the weight
health was deteriorating
wanted to keep a promise I made to myself
save money on food, medicines, & clothes
heard a snide comment someone made
sheer pride
a friend did it
class reunion coming up [that is MY current reason]
other _____
2. What was the single most frequent thought that went through your mind during the time your weight was dropping?
3. How often did you weigh yourself?
4. Did you make any major changes midstream through your "diet"?
5. What did you tell yourself when you got hungry?
6. What helped you to say "no" to snacking?
7. Did you have any time parameters to lose the weight?
8. What was the most frequent lie you had told yourself while you were gaining weight?
9. What else changed in your life while you were dropping the weight? Attitudes [pos or neg]? Positive habits? Spiritual changes [pos or neg]? Other_____
10. How often did you "cheat" on your regimen? Did it help or hinder?
11. What was the most helpful piece of advice you read/heard?
12. How significant a role did sheer hunger play in reinforcing your resolve?
13. Anything else?

I weighed 165 lbs for 22 years and then gained about a pound per year for the next 25 years. My guess is that losing weight isn't about the food we eat - it's about the decisions we make. Prove me right or prove me wrong.

It would be nice if you could send any comments before the end of July. Class reunion is coming up.

and...thanks.

Phil Myers