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The Woman in the Mirror

This is the story of one not-so-brave alumna beating the odds...and the scale gods...with help from the Ohio State Center for Wellness and Prevention.

Warning: This article may contain weight loss humor. Dieters' discretion is advised.

"Don't let the scale gods determine your fate... Weight loss is an easily-won war if you are willing to fight each battle, step by step, for the rest of your life."

—Randy Crawford, OSU Center for Wellness and Prevention Intervention Specialist

Please allow me to introduce myself: Rebecca Miller, class of '05, former poster child for the "Freshman Fifteen Gone Wildly Wrong Association of Not-Nearly-Anonymous-Enough Crash Dieters," Ohio State University Chapter.

January 2004: Precisely at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, I feel the *scale gods* awaken from months of shuteye. Well-rested and ready for battle, I know they plan to follow me from scale to scale, seeking to devour my determination. I prepare for the coming *Resolutionary War* like any good soldier trying to shed 75 pounds from a 5'7" coed body. I combine two-a-day workouts with the latest Organic Goat Cheese & Raw Juice Diet straight from the bestseller "What to Expect When You Are Expecting to Lose".

Despite a disappointing weigh-in battle record that could make even the Michigan football team blush, I manage to discover that if I step on one toe at a time, the scale reads 209.75 instead of 210! I stick to my lose-75-pounds by Easter plan, cheating only a few teensy times... yet my elaborate drills do not defeat the digital readout. After a month of half-starved straining, the *scale gods* finally triumph when I weakly wave a white button-down in surrender. I then lay down the largest non-plus-size oxford in the mall—that still doesn't fit—and slump, defeated, in a dressing room.

May 2004:

If I had failed to discover the OSU Center for Wellness and Prevention's Living Well program post-shopping disaster, I would still be avoiding changing areas for fear of spontaneous collapse. I would also still be wearing the *resolutionary* uniform of oversized sweatpants and stepping in time to the rhythm of yet another Crash Diet-Death March. Thankfully, it appears I found the comprehensive weight loss program just in time; I start next month.

June 2004: After all the effort of schlepping my sorry self to my first Living Well class, I find myself slipping lower in my chair as Randy Crawford, the evening's meeting coordinator, outlines the basics of the program. Overwhelmed, I nearly storm out before remembering that I'm failing miserably on my own. With tattered confidence and battered resolve, I vow to win my weight loss war.

July-September 2004: The Center equips me with every weapon possible and teaches me how to use them--one step at a time. Our class meets once a week to weigh in, discuss wellness strategies, and submit food and exercise logs. I quickly learn that desperation plus deprivation does not equal motivation, and that moderation is of the utmost importance. I meet individually with a psychologist (Becky), exercise physiologist (Kelly), and registered dietician (Angela) who help me plan manageable lifestyle changes. My progress is charted on based on body measurements, pounds lost and fitness testing. I start with small substitutions and additions—swap light bread for regular, exercise 20-30 minutes---and graduate to calorie counting, cardio, weight training and yoga. I soon recognize the previously overwhelming “Eat less, move more” prescription is highly effective.

October 2004 –December 2005 - : If this article were to suddenly morph into an inspirational film in *Chariots of Fire* style, this paragraph would be the scene pairing uplifting music with years of condensed action. Featuring an always-smiling me, I would be shown listening attentively in class, then exercising sweat-free; enjoying writing down calories, logging exercise and eating vegetables...all interspersed with snippets of consistently-dropping scale numbers and high-fives. Unfortunately the mechanics of real life are decidedly un-inspirational. I did all of the above, in a frowning, grunting sort of way, with only inconsistent flashes of joy (the first time my old jeans fit, my old boyfriend’s mouth falling open, the numbers falling...slowly), and much more hard work than I care to remember.

January 2006: Approximately 548 days after starting the Living Well program, I reached my 75-pound weight loss goal. I had burned a grand total of 262,500 excess calories. Though the total sounds huge (roughly 525 cardio hours), it averages out to a manageable 480 calories per day-- the equivalent of a taking a brisk 30-minute walk and avoiding a large soda. By the math, I’d clearly had many “off days”, but skipping the deprivation merry-go-round enabled me to stick to the plan long-term.

January 2007: You look great in this picture, but who is the fat blonde chick?” inquired my exceedingly uncouth neighbor. When I replied the thin brunette in the photo was my sister and the “fat blonde chick” was me in 2004, he turned ten shades of red and left in a hurry. I can’t really blame him for the mix-up, because at my current weight of 135, I look a lot like my younger sister. I took the funny fiasco as a compliment and a testament to the tremendous difference a massive weight loss makes.

January 2009: The scale gods haven’t haunted my bathroom in years, nor have I showed the slightest inclination to bear up revolutionary arms. I believe it is finally safe to claim: “I WON!”

PS: Though being fired from poster child status at the FFGWWA, OSU Chapter quite some time ago, I understand they are still accepting new members. Let’s make 2009 the year we put them out of business.

