

I have always been overweight. Funny when you are younger, people say 'But you're tall, so it doesn't look so bad.' Even though they are trying to make you feel better, somehow it seeps deep into your consciousness and permanently affects your self-image.

Just recently it got really bad. I had put on 30kg in about two years. I wasn't enthusiastic about anything. I had lost interest in a lot of things I had really enjoyed before. Nothing seemed worth smiling about. I started hibernating inside so that I didn't have to face others. I was too tired to do things I used to be able to do. I even found things that everyone 'should' be able to do really hard, like bending down to tie my shoelaces.

In the end, I went to my doctor. I was so upset and embarrassed that I burst into tears on him. I felt like I had reached rock bottom. He was brilliant. He knew I didn't want to use medication, and that I wanted to make lifestyle changes that stuck, so he suggested a green prescription.

Paulien rang me a few days later and she was just great. She helped me identify my goals and to find realistic ways to get there. One of the things she suggested was the Green Prescription's ten-week support programme. I wasn't sure if it would be for me. The things the plan was supposed to cover - well, I thought I already knew about them. I knew fat and sugar were bad and that I should eat more fruit and vegetables. I wasn't really sure it would be useful. But in the end I decided to go and try it out.

The people supporting us on the programme were fantastic. They were never judgemental. They just constantly supported us. It was great working to achieve my goals with others who were going through similar things. One of the things I appreciated the most was the nutritional support. All those things I thought I knew - well, I was right but just knowing the facts hadn't been enough to change my habits. Alison, the nutritionist presented the information in quite unique ways that shocked me into changing my bad habits. She showed us physically how much fat was in fish and chips - I was so shocked I went home and weighed out 80g of butter to represent the fat content of one fish and some chips. I put it in my fridge and saw it every time I went into the fridge. It really helped me realise how bad some of the foods I was eating were for me. Since then I've only had fish and chips once in about three months. A big change from the weekly 'treats' I was having before.

Each week Kathy and Henry also introduced us to different types of exercise as well, even boxing and aqua aerobics. Their support and the gentle way they took us through the exercises were great. I actually learned to enjoy the exercises - a first for me.

This year, I have lost 9 kg and for the first time in my life, I am enjoying exercising. I go to pilates and yoga and walk regularly. I try to walk further each time or to climb bigger hills. Since we've finished our programme, a group of us still meet and go walking in the weekends. Slowly we are getting fitter, and what is more, we are enjoying ourselves. In fact, we have been doing so well that a couple of us are going in the 10km walk section of this year's Wellington marathon!

I've achieved the first part of my goal - making exercise a regular part of my life. Because of that, I am slowly achieving the second part of my goal - losing 30 kgs. It might take me another year, but for the first time, I'm not worried. I know I can get there. No, that's not quite right. Thanks to Kathy and Henry, I know I *will* get there.



See us!!! How cool is that? We did the 10km walk today - and we didn't even pike out because of the rain :)

We're aiming at doing one 10km walk event every month with the hope that we can be faster at each event. Hopefully :)