

# **Mark Tipton's Journey to a Healthy Beginning**

## **How it all started:**

I got out of the Navy in 1989 newly married and ready to take on the world. I had never had any experience with bad eating habits or the knowledge of what I should or should not eat. If I was taught this at home or school I never paid attention because it did not apply to me (so I thought) because I had never had a weight problem. I was always very active growing up in sports and lifted weights in high school and the Navy. When I was discharged from the Military, I was 6'1", 189 lbs., and a 36" waist (life couldn't be better).

## **How I Got Here:**

Fast forward 22 years and 3 kids later, I discovered my wife could have been a gourmet chef with her always searching out something new to cook and it showed on me. My idea night out was the local buffet and desert at home. It was all catching up to me with pain in my back, legs and heart. I knew inside I was dying and needed to do something about it, but I just refused to get out of my comfort zone. I knew there was going to come a day that I was going to be rushed to the hospital with a heart attack or just drop dead. I guess I just avoided or ignored the situation.

My wife and I talked about losing weight but really did not know how to (remember I never paid attention). We bought exercise equipment, pills or just about anything on an infomercial at 1am while eating a piece of chocolate cake. Nothing worked and I was not too concerned because I just hoped everything would be all right. Over the years I went from a size 38" waist to a 58" waist in 2009. I was now at the biggest I have ever been and had not seen a doctor or been on a scale in over 5 years.

In August 2010 I had a massive back pain in my lower back and needed medical attention. Being recently unemployed, I went to the Charleston VA Hospital Emergency room. During check-in my blood pressure and weight was taken. I almost passed out, I was 411 pounds and my blood pressure was 168 over 112. I wasn't on any medication before this date and was given pain pills for my back and scheduled for a follow-up with a doctor.

After my doctor visit(s) I was placed on 12 medications from High Blood pressure to Water Pills for my legs to Stress related pills to sleeping pills. I was a complete mess. I was also asked if I was interested in a Gastric Bypass Surgery for my massive Obesity. I said yes, and met with Dr. Lucan to discuss my options. What I did not know was my life was about to change in a big way.

Doctor Lucan met with me and explained why I have all these health issues which were related to my obesity and that if I did not lose weight I was going to end up killing myself. He saw I was serious and I told him I would like the Gastric Bypass Surgery. He explained it is not that easy. First he said I need to change my eating habits otherwise surgery would not help me over the long term. He also told me Surgery is not necessarily the answer and is used as last resort. He said the only way He would consider surgery was I had to join the MOVE program and lose 10% of my body weight (41 pounds). I think he knew if I lost 41 pounds I could keep going. I was not feeling good about losing weight because I had never done it before.

## **The Transformation:**

I remember my first meeting at the MOVE class. I was in a class with a bunch of people that were very obese (like me) which made me uncomfortable and I did not want to be here. However, as the instructor, Tina, started to explain how to read a label on a box of Ritz it all started to make sense. I took out my pin and started to take notes. Everything I had been doing (eating) was wrong and she was making a lot of sense. I started to realize how the body works and what foods it needs and requires to function. Tina made me realize I need to write everything down that I ate and start counting the calories I consume. My first week I consumed 4500 (on one day) and realized I could have done it differently. Over the next few weeks I started transforming my eating habits to eat what was needed and less of what I wanted. My first month I lost 22 pounds, I was starting to understand nutrition and how important it is to lose weight. I also realized I needed to start some kind of exercise so I started walking in the mornings. The first time I walked I walked around the block (less than ¼ mile) once and quit and did not walk for a week.

Over the next few months my routine was exercise in the morning eat the right foods during the day and exercise at night before bed. My motivation was the scale. I stayed away from the scale during the week and only weighed at the MOVE program every 2 weeks. Every time I would get on the scale I would shed 10 pounds. I was losing almost 5 pounds a week. Every week I would be told that eventually it will catch up to you and your weight will plateau. I knew I had to step up my game each week to maintain 5 pounds per week. After the first 50 pounds were shed I realized I do not need Surgery because "I can do this" and I was now starting to understand Nutrition thanks to Tina and the MOVE class. The greatest thing is my blood pressure is under control and I'm starting to feel good.

Now it's been 10 months and I have lost a massive 163 pounds and weigh 248 from 411. I am now equipped with the right ammunition for the battle ahead. I still have about 50 pounds to go but I know it can and it MUST be done. I had my blood work done and was told ALL my levels are perfect. I have also been off Blood pressure medicine for 6 months now and my last reading was 118/65. I am also told by my Doctor that I am not required to take ANY of my meds anymore. I have gone from 12 meds to none in six months and feel good. I still workout twice a day and eat about 1600 calories a day. I am eating better food now and feel completely satisfied after each meal.

### **The Bottom Line:**

The road ahead is exciting to know I will one day be healthier and have undone what I did with my body for the past 22 years. I know it is not easy and it's a lot of hard work but when you look at the alternate path, death, it doesn't seem so hard. What has made everything so much easier for me is to know will-power is all mind control and can be the easiest or the hardest battle. Once you decide to do it stick with it and do not let ANYTHING get in your way.

I have put it in my mind that once I achieve my weight goal, I will still realize I am Obese even though I'm skinny. Just like a Drug or Alcohol addict I am addicted to food and will always be obese in my mind. However, I now know how to fight this by writing down my calories I eat, eating the right foods and proper exercise. I thank God, Dr.Lucan, Tina, Lisa and the MOVE program for my success.



**Before (411 Pounds)  
August 2010**



**Now (248 Pounds)  
July 2011**