

Robert Norton's Journey to Weight Loss

How I Got Here:

All my life, weight has been an issue. While at The Citadel, the food was good, we had three solid meals a day, and plenty of servings. I slowly developed some bad eating habits. On the other hand, I was constantly on the go with PT, sports, and exercise. I began to notice, that when I went home for the summer, the workouts slowed and it was not unusual to gain 20 lbs. I found it a constant battle to fit back into my uniforms at the start of the new school year.

Upon graduation, I started my service with the USAF. Weight was under control because of annual physical requirements and the requirement to stay physically fit.

In 1978, my service was completed and my wife and I started a food related business. I seemed to work all the time, did very little exercise, so the weight gain started.

Year after year, I gained until I had reached a top weight of 351. My health problems of high blood pressure, diabetes, poor heart health, and other issues had me on many medications. Multiple medications were prescribed as the numbers with these diseases were reaching bad levels.

My VA doctors urged me many times to attend nutrition classes to assist me in losing weight. They were right on. I just thought that I did not need help and would be able to do it alone. I thought I could just get back to exercise and the pounds will come off. I was wrong. It seemed I had great endurance to work out but after each workout I loaded up with food. You must eat less and exercise more to lose weight.

Move Class:

Finally on Aug 31, 2011, I agreed to start a MOVE class at the Trident area VA clinic. Joyce Tye was my dietitian and instructor. I started at a weight of 342. As I attended class, she informed us that everything is about what you eat, how much you eat, reading labels and exercise. Everything began to make sense. I started working hard to put her words and plans into action. After the first week, I lost about 10 lbs. I told myself this plan could work. I also started back on a serious exercise plan. When I first started I was tired after a block of walking. Today, I walk at least 2 miles a day at a 3 mph pace, swim, and do weights. My energy levels are higher at age 61 than they were at 50.

As the weeks went by, I attended class every week. It was my goal to always lose at least a lb or more a week. To date, I have lost about 50 lbs from my starting MOVE class weight!

Meds

My biggest accomplishment in the MOVE program is how the health numbers for diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol, etc have improved so much that I have greatly reduced meds for these problems. My blood sugar numbers are less than 112 on average and I am taking the minimum meds. My blood pressure readings are so low, that the doctor is considering reducing meds. All other blood reading numbers have been so good that several appointments to discuss these issues have been cancelled.

Pluses for MOVE class:

- I can do this without bariatric surgery.
- My meds were reduced.
- My energy levels have greatly improved.
- I can fly on airplanes again. Previously I did not want to fly because the seats were so small and I was so uncomfortable.
- I have reduced several sizes in clothes.
- I can sit in a booth at a restaurant.
- I have met some great friends along the way in class who have been very supportive.
- It's a lifestyle change which has been very proactive and enjoyable for me.
- I do not feel this is a diet plan but a plan to eat the right things and the right portions.
- I have a goal for better health thru weight loss.
- It has given me several more good years of doing things I have missed in years past.
- I personally believe it has extended my lifespan.

Tips:

- Read labels on all food you take in
- Eat low calorie items
- Write everything down in a note pad
- Record info daily on Sparkpeople.com
- Exercise daily.
- Get a timer to make sure you do an adequate amount of exercise
- Dodge all high calorie drinks
- Keep healthy items around to prevent eating the wrong stuff
- Stay in the MOVE class because attending every week keeps you goal focused and accountable

Future:

I know I have hit a plateau at times. The biggest thing I have learned is that I know why it has happened and what I need to do to correct it. I strongly suggest you start today in a MOVE class, listen and heed, and you will be surprised by the results.

I have one full month left for the year end. I had hoped to be at 275 at the end of the year. I will be near that goal, but if I don't make it, I will not give up. I know that if I follow the plan and stay on it, more improvements can be made.

Quote:

I want to thank Joyce at the Trident Clinic VA Move class, Dr. Kagan for looking after me and encouraging me, and the fellow veterans in the class. My wife of 37 years is also a big help and inspiration. Dr. Kagan said “Many think I am Superman and can fix everyone, but it all comes back to the person.” It’s really up to you!