

Slimming World – My Story.

So, I guess, to start with a bit about me. I'm a 34 year old male, single living in Leamington Spa, and I work in IT for a large retail organisation based in Birmingham (about 25 miles from home).

I started Slimming World on the 1st December 2008, knowing that I had to lose weight. This wasn't a new thought, I had known it for some time – in fact if anything, I had known it for years. This also is not my first time on Slimming World – I did it about 5 yrs ago and lost almost 5 and a half stone in the 5 or so months I was there – but then life got in the way, it was hard to make the group sessions, and it just went by the wayside and I undid all that good work.

However in about May 2007 I had the news that one of my two brothers was getting married. I figured it was time to do something about the weight in time for the wedding – especially as a few months later, my other brother made the same announcement. Alas, I kept putting it off, and putting it off, and in the meantime the weight kept piling on.

I entered 2008 with the thought of I've got to lose weight, and again I kept putting it off. It got to June and I knew then it was too late to make any real effect and so put it off still. In the meantime I developed a problem with one of my wrists and whilst getting it checked at the GP had been weighed – I was about a stone heavier than I was when I started Slimming World last time. Easy enough to handle I thought.

So along came August 2008 and the bank holiday weekend at the very end of the month, and I drive down to Aylesbury to the first brother's wedding. Now, I hate photos being taken of me anyhow, but was resigned to the fact that being brother of the groom, I'd probably appear in a few. Thankfully, at the end of the day – I only appeared in one official photo, and hopefully no-one's personal snaps (I carefully avoided cameras where possible).

Then I got the official photographs through at the end of September. I cried. I really didn't think I looked that bad, it really was a slap in the face to see that picture. I knew I couldn't do anything about the weight then, there were a few other things in my life that needed to be changed before I could do that. Firstly I had to change my eating habits – from eating out a lot (or at least ordering in) to cooking most nights, and then move towards changing those to a more healthy way of cooking stuff and then I would be able to make a good attempt at Slimming World again.

I set myself a plan to be there for December 2008 and I was. To start with was the incentive that I simply couldn't look like that again on the photographs of my other brother's wedding in August 2009. Though with hope and thought, I'd avoid most the photo's again. Alas, that plan went out the window when that brother called in the middle of October to ask me about toners for laser printers and where to find them, and whilst doing so, asked me to be an usher at his wedding. I guess that's me in a few more photographs then. I can't look that big in another set of wedding photographs and that gave me even more motivation to get myself on track for December and back to slimming world.

Having done Slimming World before, I had an idea of what to expect, so I used November to start getting ready. Experimenting with new options and ideas, and filling the shelves, the fridge, and the freezer with healthier food ideas. I have more pots of herbs and spices on my shelves than ever before. The deep fat fryer on the work top has been replaced by the steamer and the George Foreman Grill.

And then came D(iet)-Day. I should have been good on the day I was going to weigh in, but old habits die hard and without thought I had had a few chocolate bars and a pack of crisps and full sugar drinks. But I figured that so long as that was the last day, then I start the morning afresh and do my utmost to stick to plan. So, although I rejoined and weighed in on the 1st December, I didn't start food optimising till the morning of the 2nd December.

I may have picked a better time to start – the group was being held in a changing room at a sports club due to the main room being booked for some Christmas function. I could have waited till after Christmas as well – after all there's a works Christmas party and goodness knows what to go to, and the chocolates and wine and whiskey and all the other Christmas goodies too. But I stuck to my guns and turned up, paid my dues (and then for a 10week countdown – I knew I had to be committed from the start and this way, being a Yorkshire man, I'm not going to waste that money and I know I'm going to do my best to loose weight each and every week) and weighed in. I recall swearing a lot, both out loud and to myself when I saw the figure on the scales. Never mind the weight when I went to the GP earlier in the year – this was high. Far, far too high. I joked about loosing as much as possible in the next week during Image Therapy but really inside I was hurting. I knew I had let myself go over the years but till that moment, had never realised to what extent.

I drove home that night mentally kicking myself. Additionally a friend had just revealed that their cousin had died from a heart attack, and that also focused the mind on what I had been doing to myself over the years. That drive home was filled with all sorts of negative thoughts and again, once I was home, I cried.

So I guess that brings us right up to Week 1 of Slimming World...

Week 1:

It's been an interesting week so far. There have been changes to the plan since the last time and what foods are free that weren't then and those that were then that are not free anymore. But thankfully a lot of the basics are still the same. I've had hunger pangs – but that has been more due to elapsed time (8hrs between eating is not necessarily a good idea after all) but for the most part everything has been fine. I've even resolved to do things differently from last time around, and include at least one green day a week (I'm a meat lover; I have to have meat at nearly every meal).

Cooking healthy meals from scratch for 6 days in a row seems new to me. The taste of the food makes me think "Why did I ever stop doing this?" Having items such as leeks and butternut squash makes me wonder the same question – even more so after tasting steamed leek for the first time since the first time around at Slimming World.

I've experimented too – my roasted vegetables were not as tasty as I imagined it'd be, but there's room for improvement there. I've also had trouble using up my syns – I'm probably averaging about 4 or 5 a day at the moment, and that is probably too little. I also need to find some variation for lunches at work – though the work's canteen do a wonderful (and cheap) salad, I can't keep eating that without getting bored of it eventually.

With regards to the syns though – yes I'm not using enough, but with cutting out all the masses of chocolate and fatty food out of my life and using food optimising as the gears to move forward and eat more healthily, then that is all that is left – a very low syn usage each day. It'll go up over time though as I find other ways of using it up.

So this is in fact day 6 of week 1. Tomorrow is weigh in day. I'm apprehensive as I don't know how much I've lost. I've stuck to plan and should have lost a fair few pounds, but we'll wait and see. I know I could have been more active and I certainly shouldn't have blown out last Monday – but this has now been a week without multiple chocolate bars each day, without full sugar drinks. And with freshly cooked healthy meals every day – so if I only maintain – then that's good enough for me and next week I can have a loss.

My biggest danger however will simply be holding a candle against the last time around – yes it was an impressive weight loss over all, but I should not hold that as the same standard as this time around. I'm older, my body has changed and my life is in many ways different.

So after the first week, I was surprised and shocked to weigh in and be a whole stone lighter. It shouldn't be possible and every time I think about it I have to tell myself that quite simply that if the body has it to loose, then it will loose it. I never went hungry and I never went without and I kept to plan all week.

Week 2:

So the second week commenced with that fantastic weight loss – I find myself embarrassed at telling people – mainly at their look of shock at the whole idea of someone losing a complete stone in a week.

Finding planning ahead on my meals is working out – though I still need to ensure some backup in case I'm really late home. Having variety by ensuring I have a green day once a week (I like my meat – what can I say) is helping – whilst also meaning I can explore other items. I've also been pouring over the latest magazine for ideas and the 100 free original recipe book I brought at the last group session.

Even a trip to London went without returning to my “old ways” – though it has to be said that there was temptation and I should have planned ahead better for that day. M&S to the rescue though and their salad's (minus the salad cream garnish of course).

So I've stuck to plan again this week. I'm realistic enough to know I shouldn't expect such a large loss this week. Though part of wishes I could get that every week – I'd be done by my birthday. But realistically – it will settle down very soon and I've got to accept that that will happen.

Weigh in at end of week 2 gave an amazing 6.5lbs off. Thought I may have had more, but at same time, nothing to complain about. First “Slimmer of the Week” award too.

Week 3:

Week three pretty much went the same as week 2. Looking for ideas whilst out shopping, whilst also concentrating on ensuring that I made up for my failures in the first two weeks where by it seemed I wasn’t actually having all my healthy extras (and never count syns – they were a complete nightmare – I either wasn’t having enough or finding out afterwards I’d had more then I planned to – but that’s the joys of the first few weeks of a new diet).

Planning ahead for food is becoming easier though – especially with Christmas just around the corner (next week in fact). Knowing ahead of what I want to eat is keeping the shopping bills lower too – no little extras, packs of cakes, etc. making their way into the trolley. I really, though, should start using lists more – that way I don’t have to remember what I already have in the house and just have to buy what I need.

Week 3 weigh in, and another 4.5lbs, and another “Slimmer of the Week” award and another half stone sticker on the book. Can I make it 3lbs (or more) this coming week and hit that 2 stone mark in the first month?

Week 4:

The week I’ve been dreading. Christmas is this week and although not necessarily a big fan of the season there are all the temptations out there food wise. So planning ahead and the “Slimming World” magazines was a help as one of my downfalls is the accompaniments to the Christmas meals – sausages wrapped in bacon and stuffing balls amongst the favourites. Well thanks to the stuffing recipe in the October/November magazine, I was able to have the bacon wrapped stuffing balls as a “treat” which has lead to another recipe idea for New Year’s Day.

As I say, I’m not a huge fan of the season but I do use Christmas Day as an excuse to be a bit more extravagant then usual – even though I’m trying to stick to plan. So I planned ahead, knew what I was going to do, and even booked Christmas Eve off to do the shopping (I know, mad fool, but I had everything planned, and knew what I wanted and where to go for it). But then I had to work Christmas Eve and plans changed for food on Christmas Day. But still, a treat of a piece of organic steak and vegetable accompaniments.

All in all a good week – though the Tuesday was a bit of a downer with a few more chocolates then I probably should have had – I certainly exceeded 15 syns, but the key thing is that I just picked up on the Wednesday and have balanced out my excess of the rest of the week.

On a negative side though – my physical activity level has probably decreased this week. But that will be about to change I suspect in forthcoming weeks – certainly

work is going to be more hectic then it has been for me and more physical too, so hopefully that will help burn some extra weight too.

I targeted for 3lbs in Week 4. I have to admit to narrowly missing that target – I got 4lbs.

Looking Back after one month:

Four weeks of food optimising and 2stone and 1 lb off from where I started. This is the start of a long journey down the food optimising path. My weight loss in month 1 is probably considered extreme. It certainly will not be possible for everyone. But the saying goes – if you've got it to loose then you will loose it. I have it to loose in abundance. My weight loss this last month should not be used as an example of what everyone will experience, just what can be done.

I'm part of a good group – I already know that. I have plenty of motivation – I'm still effectively 7 months away from my brother's wedding. It's too late for the other brother's wedding – having been and gone, but I guess something had to kick start me somehow. Work permitting; I know the benefit of attending each and every group I can make it to. It is the support of those people and those around me that is going to help go forward. I'm doing this for me. I can do it, and I will do it.

If anyone is reading this and thinks that Slimming World is for them – go and try. What is there to loose – apart from a few pounds, and a few inches or even more. What may you gain though? A new outlook on life for certain. Four weeks in and I'm already feeling the benefits. I already feel that I have more energy then I did 2 stone and 4 weeks ago. I'm hopefully starting to make friends in the group. And even a few pounds in the pocket perhaps – I'm actually better off in the wallet now then I used to be when buying in what seemed like every other day. I'm determined to make a new me out of this – and although I'm writing this on New Years Day, this is no new year's resolution, this is a new life-long resolution – I do not ever want to look that way again.