

My Slimming World Journal – 18months (and one week)...

This is hopefully the last time I write this journal as a slimmer. A journey that started on December 1st 2008 finally came to it's destination on June 14th 2010. What started initially to loose a "few" stone for my brother's wedding in August 2009 has turned into what I now believe to be a life long habit. For on June 14th I called target after loosing 14st2lb since December 2008.

But things started before December 2008, I'd known for a long time I had to loose some weight, but kept putting it off – there's always tomorrow/next week/next month. You'd have thought that the pains in my knees/hips when standing up would have been enough to tell me that I shouldn't be putting things off. The fact that I once broke a brand new office chair, purely by my weight, should have been enough. But no, it took the pictures from my other brother's wedding in August 2008, where I was clearly twice as wide as anyone else in them to give me that final kick. That and then being asked to be an usher at the August 2009 wedding. I was determined not to ruin (or cry at) another set of pictures.

So December 1st 2008 came around – D-Day- "Diet Day". I joined Slimming World. I stood on those scales and was in for a bit of a shock – weighing at least 5 stone more than I thought I weighed. When the consultant asked the new members what they would like to loose in their first week, I said I'd be happy with a few pounds. SO I went home that night, and changed from me 4 or 5 takeaways a week and countless chocolate/crisps/cake diet to food optimising way of eating. The first bite of the first meal (steak and steamed vegetables) lead me asking myself "Why did I ever stop cooking?"

The following week at the weigh in, looking down at the display, I was initially disappointed. The pounds part of the display hadn't changed. I hadn't lost weight. At least I didn't think that till I was told that I had lost a stone. That first rather large number had reduced by one but I hadn't been looking at that. I was gob smacked. It shouldn't be possible. But there I was – living proof that it can be done, and at that moment I knew I was on the right track. I went on to loose over 2 stone in that first month.

As I progressed into 2009, I set myself a target – I wanted to be less than 20 stone (which would have meant loosing over 7.5stone) by my brother's wedding that August. It was one I knew I had a good chance to make – so long as I followed plan. I did it by early July. In fact at the weigh in immediately before the wedding, I had been given my 8st award (I'd lost 8st and half a pound). An award I didn't fix to my book as I figured that with having promised myself a day off plan and two flexi-Syn days that when I weighed in next, I was surely to have a gain. The wedding reception though was the place I realised one of the most important things about this journey – what had started as a "diet" wasn't a diet any more – it was just how I ate. This came about as when the buffet was declared open, I took a look at a lot of old favourites – pizza, chicken satay skewers, potato wedges and just didn't want any of them – I didn't eat that way anymore.

I hadn't fixed the 8st award to my book thinking that I wouldn't deserve it. But with being in control, even on a day off plan, and the two flexi-Syn days either side, I came back to a 2.5lb weight loss that week. I could barely believe it.

I initially joined Slimming World to loose weight for that wedding, and it would have been so easy to stop going afterwards, but the realisation of what a profound effect on my life that loosing that much weight had given me, made me not want to stop. My confidence was growing in leaps and bounds, and my energy levels were increasing to. I had re-found my teenage love of walking. I had brought a bike. Things were on the up for me, and why should I give in now? I was hungry to see the final result of all this hard work, and had set myself the next big target – to weigh less then 15stone for my birthday at the end of March 2010. But with a few smaller targets by then. I wanted to have my 10st award by Halloween and went looking for something to do to celebrate that achievement.

After talking in the office, one wild suggestion sprung out, to do a parachute jump. Alas, when looking into it, I would still be too heavy. But I wouldn't be if I got to my March target. In the meantime, I carried on going to group, and carried on loosing. I even started walking to/from group whenever possible, and now do it every week after changing some hours at work. My energy levels continued to rise and I frequently found myself instead of just walking to town on a Saturday shopping – about 1.5miles away – going by a roundabout route and clocking up 7, 8, or even 10 miles with my weekly shop.

In late February 2010, I filled in the entry forms for the “Greatest Loser 2010” competition, not imaging in any way that I would get anywhere with the then 12stone 7.5lb loss. The same week in the middle of March that I hit the 15st marker, I was surprised to receive my invite to the finals as one of the top 10 weight losses for 2010. Up to this time, I had really just viewed the weight loss column as a means of keeping score – if I've been truthfully on plan the weight loss goes up, the figure didn't bother me. That weekend, I literally had to go lay down when I realised for the first time what it actually did mean.

However, due to an illness that had been dragging on for a little while, though I had hit my initial 15st target, I wasn't able to book the parachute jump, but hadn't forgotten about it. I also realised that at 15st, I wasn't happy to stop at that point and knew I could keep on going. I set myself a new target – to be half the man I was.

At the end of April, my consultant and I went to London for the Greatest Loser ceremony. What an absolutely fantastic day. To hear everyone's story from the previous and current “of the year” winners, down to the top 10 finalists was just amazing and so inspirational. I came in at 9th place – but truly – just being there was a prize enough in itself. I had come so far since December 2008 – and I still didn't want it to stop. Seeing my before picture on the big screen and looking at myself, I still couldn't believe I had more to loose – it is often like looking at two different people. Whilst receiving my award on stage, I also announced my intention to do the parachute jump – no backing out now.

I hit my next mini target – to be half the man I used to be – on 31st May 2010. I couldn't believe it. I had gotten there. I marked the day by posting on my Facebook

page a “lost property announcement” that I “had lost a me, and if anyone was to find it please tell it to get lost as I never want to be re-united with it again”. I don’t ever want to go back to the way I was.

Over the 18months I’ve been food optimising, the one thing that truly has come to light for me, is that before loosing the weight, I was merely existing – my life was little more then drive to work, come home, walk upstairs, eat, eat, eat, sleep, go to work. Now days I walk, I cycle, I am living again. And I don’t ever want to stop that.

And then on June 14th 2010 – I called target at being less then half my starting weight. I had known the time was coming soon, I was getting scared of looking too thin at times in some recent photos, and so had set myself a target of the next half stone below that 50% weight. There had been times I didn’t think that I could ever make it. There were times I wanted to give up. But I stuck to it, as I could see the changes in myself and I liked those. And when the big picture looked too daunting, I could always look back on what had already happened, and what I had achieved to boost me, and find a new mini-target to aim for.

But I had made it. I’ve gotten to be a new me. I’ve lost over 14st; I weigh less then 13.5 stone. I’ve gone from being a 54inch waist and a 5XL chest to being 34inches and an M/L chest. I’ve gone from being out of breath after climbing one flight of stairs, to walking 13miles – just for the sake of it. The future is out there for me to grasp and make it what I will. July already holds so much for me. July 4th I’m going to Slimming World head office to compete in the “Man of the Year” competition. July the 11th I hope to be walking up Snowdon. And July 31st, well I couldn’t duck it any more after what I had said at the “Greatest Loser” ceremony – I’m jumping out of a plane to benefit the NSPCC. (<http://www.justgiving.com/ianh-jump>).

Have yet to work out what comes after that. But one thing for sure – it’s not a return to how things used to be. But none of this would have been possible, for I would have surely fallen at the first hurdle, if it wasn’t for the help/advice/support/inspiration from both the groups I’ve been a member of since joining in December 2008 and the numerous Slimming World members that I have met online. I can only thank them all, even if they’re unlikely to see this. I only hope that in turn, I have helped them in the same way – even if only a little bit.

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