

My 20 Months of Slimming World Journey:

I wrote a blog like this at 18months (and one week) saying I didn't think I'd be writing one of these blogs again – at least not as a loser. I had just claimed target after losing 14st2lb over that 18months and was ready to move my journey from losing to maintaining.

Well unfortunately fate had other plans for me. I claimed target on June 14th 2010, and now, almost two months later, am back at target on August 2nd 2010.

Except it's a different target. But I'm getting ahead of myself here.

I claimed my target in June, and went away from group that evening happy about what I had achieved and ready to face the new challenges ahead. Except they never came – target + 1 week, and I lose 3.5lb, the following week I maintained, and the week after 1.5lb off. I'm back as a paying member (and I was so looking forward to my £5 a week extra) and facing having to put at least 2lb on to get back into target, or resetting target. There's no way I could deliberately eat to put the weight on, in fact, I had been trying and was unhappy doing so – so I reset target on that third week.

It was strange though those first few weeks of being a target member. I used to find myself reaching for the things I hadn't been having whilst losing the weight, but ultimately were the things I used to eat that helped put the weight on. But I only reached for them... I never ate any – why – because through food optimising and Slimming World, I had learnt that I don't need to eat that kind of food anymore – the high fat, high sugar addictions I used to have and why would being at target mean that all that suddenly changed? No way. I don't eat that crap anymore and target is not an excuse to start, for if I start, then I'm likely not to be able to finish and the weight would start going back on again – and I've worked far too hard to allow that.

The decision to reset was made on July 5th 2010, but my July was full of wonderment and amazement even before that decision was made.

July 4th saw me, and 63 other guys invited to Slimming World's head office to the "Man of the Year" competition. 64 guys who amongst us had lost over a staggering 460 stone. 64 blokes who would spend the morning sharing with each other in small groups about our journeys – with 5 minutes allocated to each of us. 5 minutes sounds like a long time, but it's very difficult to get everything you want to say into 5 minutes. The morning was spent in groups of 10 or 12 as the National Semi-Finals, with the 12 finalists being announced after lunch. Let's just say – the lunch was more than enough reason for being there.

Even though I had been to Slimming World's "Greatest Loser" competition in April, I was again humbled being there to listen to the 11 stories that were shared that morning. I was even more humbled being announced as one of the 12 national finalists after lunch. Having to give my 5 minute speech again that afternoon was tiring but listening to everyone else's stories that afternoon, on top of the journeys heard in the morning was inspiring and mind blowing. You can't help but be touched by the struggles we have gone through, the moments that lead to the moment that we walked through the doors for our first group meeting to the time we arrived in

Derbyshire that morning. I'm humbled and respect them all for their journey, their candour and their willingness to share their stories with everyone else in the room.

I didn't "win" the "Man of the Year" title. But then I never started this journey to win a competition. But everyone there was a winner in his own right – we had all taken that first step through the doors, and made the commitment to change our lives for the better and stuck with it and, as clichéd as it may sound, that makes us all winners. But it's not just the 64 of us there that day, but every man, woman who does the same that counts.

But my fantastic July didn't stop with "Man of the Year". July 11th saw me do something that I could only have dreamt of 20 months previously when I started this journey. I had always been a fan of walking, but as the weight piled on – I stopped walking. I had started walking again about May 2009 as the weight came off, initially just to town on a Saturday, then both in and out of town on a Saturday and then at weekends and any other chance I got – if I could walk there I would. On July 11th though I did a walk I didn't think I'd do, though I had thought about it previously as a way of celebrating losing the 10stones in late 2009. I took up the invite issued at "Greatest Loser" and walked up Snowdon. Fantastic company with some people from a few of the North Wales Slimming World groups and a wonderful view from the top.

But my 20th month of Slimming World doesn't stop there either. I had been looking for something in late 2009 to celebrate having lost 10stone. There had been two ideas mooted – the second was Snowdon, but late October/early November and Welsh Mountains do not mix well, not as a single person. The first idea had been ruled out due to still being too heavy to meet their weight requirements – jumping out of a plane.

It was originally intended that I would do the jump at the end of March when I hit my first target of weighing 15stone, but in the end that didn't happen due to being sick in early February. Instead I put it on the back burner till I knew I was healthy and then (after announcing my intentions on stage at Greatest Loser) at the start of May – I booked it, 31st July, tandem skydive raising funds for the NSPCC. Too many good things clicking together to miss the opportunity – and with knowing that target was around the corner by that time, I was going to use this to celebrate hitting target.

Oh boy, what a rush... Strapped to an experienced skydiver, and literally falling out of a plane at 12,500 feet, travelling at 120mph in freefall before the parachute deploys and then seemingly floating to the ground. It was a thrill like one I had never experienced before but hopefully will again one day. And it brought home that regardless what life throws at me, I'm now in control of my weight and that I am now living, rather than the existence I had before. There is so much more I can do now than I could 20months previously – and I don't mean walking up mountains or falling from 12,500 feet in the air. I can walk, I can run, I can fit into spaces I could only dream of. I can buy clothes from the high street now that I'm a 32/34 inch waist and not the 54inch waist I used to be.

The parachute jump was the 31st July. The end of a brilliant and inspiring month for me, but I had hoped I would be at my reset target by the time of the jump (even

though I made my original target in mid-June). I didn't make it. But I didn't worry about that, I had done my best, I had lost more than half my starting weight by the start of June, and I was jumping out of a plane. That remaining 3lb to target would come when it was ready to. Well, I need not have worried. I weighed in on the 2nd August – only two days after the jump, and I had lost 3.5lb. 20months of Slimming World, 2 years to the day of another significant milestone in my life, and I was at target again after losing 14st9.5lb. As my wonderful July didn't start till July 4th, I think I can allow myself the licence of saying that that month from July 4th was quite simply – fantastic.

And none of it possible without having lost the weight, and that wouldn't have been possible without Slimming World and Food Optimising and the support/inspiration and help of everyone I've met along the way due to that, the two consultants I've been with, the two groups I've been with, and others from Facebook and other sites. This journey in the end is a solitary one, but there's nothing as good as company along the way – and I can't praise the company I've had enough – thank you all.

Maybe this time around – the next time you see a blog from me – it'll be about maintaining and not carrying on losing – I certainly hope so anyhow.