



September 2010



September 2011



January 2012

I have spent the majority of my life overweight. As senior in high school, I decided I wanted to make a change before college. I was able to lose a significant amount of weight through diet and exercise. The college lifestyle afforded me a great opportunity to keep the weight off with little effort since campus parking issues left me little choice other than long walks to class, and I was usually too broke to eat out or buy many groceries. I soon forgot how much effort it had

taken for me to get to a weight I was happy with. After leaving college and starting my career, my lifestyle changed dramatically. I was working full-time as a social worker, which left me mentally and emotionally exhausted most days. Having a full-time job gave me more resources and eating out, often twice a day, became my regular routine. Food seemed to be at the center of every activity in my life whether it was lunch with my co-workers, dinner out with friends, or inviting family over to cook out on the weekends. I had a major wakeup call during the summer of 2009. My dear friend and co-worker who was morbidly obese became pregnant with her first child. I saw her struggle through her pregnancy as the additional weight gain stressed her body and aggravated her other weight related health problems. The week she was due to give birth, I had to leave to go out of town for work. I jokingly told her on my way out of the office not to have baby Garrett while I was gone. I had no idea this would be the last time I would see my sweet friend. Kimberly passed away two days before Garrett was due to be born, and baby Garrett passed a few days later. I realized that I wanted to have a family one day, and I knew Kim would want me to remember what she went through and do things differently. I joined a gym and lost about 10 pounds, but without support I stopped going after two months. I knew how to lose weight, but I felt overwhelmed and hopeless after weighing in at 355 pounds. A coworker mentioned that she was going to try weight loss medication and asked if I would try it with her. I was hesitant at first since I had tried weight loss drugs in college for a month or two here and there and was not successful at keeping the weight off. I felt like if I lost some weight on the medication and then gained it back (or worse ended up heavier than when I started), I would likely just give up for good. Out of desperation, I decided I would rather take a chance than continue down the path I was on. I began my journey to health in November 2010 at 355 pounds. The doctor was very supportive and talked with me about how to use the medication the "right way." I took baby steps the first six months like forcing down unsweet tea and choosing grilled chicken instead of fried. The weight began to drop off month by month, and at the end of the first six months I had lost about 50 pounds. Some months I would lose 10-15 pounds and others I would only lose 4-5. I was feeling very hopeful but scared knowing that I would have to take a six month break from the pills. I had lost enough weight where I could finally find workout clothes that fit (who can give me an amen on this!), and I started back walking and swimming last summer. I started off by walking just a few times per week but quickly worked up to going over two miles 5-6 times per week. During my six month break, I was not only able to keep off the weight I had lost, I lost an additional 11 pounds. I decided to get back on the medication to accelerate my weight loss and have lost an additional 24 pounds over the last 3 months for a total of 85 pounds in 14 months! It has been amazing to me how baby steps have turned in to life changes. It's funny how things have progressed like how I went from buying ground chuck to ground sirloin, and now I head straight for the ground turkey. I've replaced dinner dates with friends to nights out at a local paint your own canvas studio, and instead of having the family over to cookout we try to come up with other activities to do together that don't involve food. I have accepted the fact that I'm not perfect, and I won't always walk 5 times a week or deny myself a donut. This doesn't mean I won't be successful at being healthy. I truly believe that moderation and self-acceptance are the key to my weight loss success. My biggest annoyance now is that "I never have anything to wear!" I've had to replace my clothes several times after going from a size 26 to an 18. I've even had to replace my bras and panties twice and need to again! I have learned to deal with this by shopping for clothes at local consignment shops and then reselling the clothes in the same stores once they've outgrown me. My advice to anyone starting a weight loss program would be to make small changes and realize that 20 pounds or 2 pounds lost in a month is still weight lost. The sun will rise and set every day and time will pass whether you're working towards a goal or not. I remember thinking after my first week on my journey, "I just wish I was a year down the road to see what's going to happen." Well, I'm passed a year down the road now, and I could not be more proud of myself. The fact that I have regained control of my life and I am making more responsible decisions about food has boosted my self-love so much more than losing weight alone ever could have.