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Three years ago, I was having problems with my knees, back pain, and problems walking. My orthopedic doctor told me that if I didn't lose weight, my knees would need to be replaced sooner than later. I have always struggled with my weight, sometimes as much as 100 lbs. overweight. I was unhappy with how I looked and how I felt.

I joined Madonna Proactive and started slowly by walking the aqua track and starting water classes and slowly started cutting back on how much I ate. Once I felt I could do more, I worked with a personal trainer to set a weight/cardio workout. I also worked with a nutritionist who would review my food logs and make suggestions for change. Over the course of a year, I lost 95 lbs. and have now kept 85 lbs. off for 3 years. I now work doing kickboxing and resistance training 6 days per week. I am amazed at my progress and the changes I have seen.

This lifestyle change has totally impacted my life. Not only did I used to be embarrassed about how I looked but, I was concerned about all the aches and pains that I was having at only 40 years old. I knew that if I didn't make some changes while I could, my body would give out and it would be even more difficult to make changes. Now, I feel that I can do almost anything. I have so much more energy and I am not afraid to try new activities. I have a more positive attitude about life and about myself.

If I were to recommend to others how to help manage their health, it would be to start slow and focus on one day at a time. Crash dieting or going from a sedentary lifestyle to marathon running is not realistic and doesn't create a long term change. Also, don't be afraid to ask for help or be afraid of what others will think of you.

The **wellnesoptions** Walk This Way program has encouraged me to get in even more exercise. The biometric screening is also great for keeping me informed of my cholesterol and other health measures. I believe the State's Wellness program helps us get a handle on health insurance costs and encourages employees and spouses to participate in and be responsible for their own well-being.

