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Wake Up Call to Healthy Living!

Three years ago, I almost had a heart attack. As a single mom of two sons, the look of worry on their faces was absolutely heart breaking! It was a major eye opener for me, forcing me to make a decision - start living a healthy lifestyle or not be alive at all!

I met with a dietician and received information on eating healthy – plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and limit salt and saturated fat. I had never been big on veggies and it saddened me to realize all of the foods I liked to eat were very unhealthy. My options seemed extremely limited! Thankfully, my sons became my strongest support system! My oldest son has become the food police, monitoring what I eat even while he is away at college! My first night home from the hospital, he cooked a healthy meal of baked skinless chicken breast, baked herbed potatoes and steamed broccoli. That night, I realized I was doing this for more than just myself.

It was a struggle to change, but after a few weeks of eating healthy, I felt better and had more energy! I subscribed to healthy magazines and looked online for recipes. One of my favorite snacks is nuts, dried cranberries and dark chocolate chips. I discovered fresh fruits can satisfy my sweet tooth! My diet plan is to eat 5-6 times a day, consisting of three meals and two snacks. For breakfast I may have a slice of toasted whole wheat bread with sliced avocado and low fat cheese. Dinner may be a baked chicken breast with as many steamed veggies as I can fit on my plate!

I began going to cardiac rehab, and at first, couldn't walk more than three minutes at a time! After 6 weeks, I had slowly worked up to thirty minutes. I learned many things about physical activity and how to set realistic goals for myself. After completing my rehab program, I started walking around my neighborhood – no more than three blocks at a time. I'll admit, some mornings I just didn't feel like getting out of bed! My youngest son would come into my room, stand at the edge of my bed, and ask me if I was going to walk today. He would refuse to leave my room until I got up to go walk! I needed the push and thanked him for it!

Despite my discomfort, I walked daily! As time passed, I noticed that I was less sore and enjoyed my walks, being outside, and the fresh air. I actually looked forward to my walks! Slowly, I began increasing the distance that I walked. A few months later, towards the end of a walk, I just started to jog! I hadn't planned to jog – my body wanted me to! It was only half a block, but I felt like I just ran a marathon! Having never been a physically active person, it was a major milestone for me. At that moment, I felt anything was possible for me!

I am now a member of the YMCA and continue to work on my endurance, increasing my physical activity. I even started a boot camp class! To date, I have lost a total of 50 pounds, with a goal of 30 more! My list of nine medications is down to four! Due to weight loss, I am no longer a diabetic and my heart health is great! I have come a long way in the past three years. I won't lie and say that change has been easy. I have had obstacles to overcome – new health problems, trying to stop bad habits, and saying no to people who may be unknowingly sabotaging my goals. I see myself as a recovering addict. I live one day at a time and look at lifestyle change as a journey that I plan to continue.

Last year, I joined the [wellNEssoptions](#) program. At first, it seemed like a major chore to complete the requirements, but I soon realized that tracking my progress helped me to be accountable for my actions. I look forward to the phone calls with my health coach, who is very supportive! I also love getting the emails with new recipes and tips to stay on track. The majority of my life I have not eaten healthy or exercised. I have good days and bad days. When I have bad days, I try not to be too hard on myself. We can be our biggest critics! I am a happier, healthier person, and try to see the positive in every situation.