



*Dave Johnson began training two years ago, in August of 2007. He topped the scale at 332, with a body fat percentage of 43%. Like many of us he was ready to see a change, and fast. I've watched Dave overcome frustration and become 100% committed to creating a healthy lifestyle for himself. He's an example to us all. Today he weighs in at 280 and 24.5% body fat (overall fat pounds dropped from 143 down to 69lbs) and he's still in the process of losing. I asked Dave to share a little about his perseverance and what it has taught him.*

**Trainer:** *What prompted you to begin personal training?*

**Dave:** I had been told by my doctor that I was pre-diabetic. That was kind of sobering. I had been trying to bike and Nordic track and those things worked in the summer when I was off from school but then school would start and I would gain weight again. I knew I needed to learn to change my eating habits but had no guidance or clue how to do it. So, I had been thinking about it and the doctor kind of woke me up. Also, I think it was an answer to the prayers my mother had for me. Do not discount a mother's prayers.

**Trainer:** *How did you perceive training when you began? Was there a pivotal moment*

*where training went from coming into the studio a couple of times a week to making it your lifestyle?*

**Dave:** My initial perception was that the stretching was interesting but a pain. I was sore doing that and my neck hurt. But after a while it got easier. Trying to eat differently was a challenge but I did notice little things, like looser pants (not much at first but) enough to notice a little change. Enough to keep up with it. What also helped me at first was committing the money for 6 months. I did not want to waste my money.

After a while I began to notice the exercises and stretching were easier. That and I was doing things I had forgotten I could do. Things I thought I would never do again. My perception of training changed as I figured out that I could trust my trainer and they knew what they were talking about. I also realized that this would have to be a lifestyle change, at least with eating.

Now I know it is also a lifestyle change with exercising. I am not sure when this hit me. I guess it was after I had been out for a month with an infection in my leg. Just laying around the house and hospital set me back, not so much weight wise (in fact, I may have continued to lose, but I do not recommend getting a major infection to do it. It costs more than a trainer and could have killed me!). After that I really tried to be consistent in my cardio. I would hit the Nordic Trac and stretch every day after work while watching the Simpsons and other junk. It cost me time but I believe it was worth it. It took me many years to get fat; it will take many to get less fat.

**Trainer:** *Was it helpful to have a trainer alongside you to break down your progress into incremental steps?*

**Dave:** Baby steps are very helpful. In education they tell us to break things down for the students; why wouldn't it be the same for me? It was helpful. First I kept track of the cardio and the amount of grains, veggies, fruit etc. That was good (I would even slip a pizza in once and a while.) Then I started reading some books like "The End of Food" and "Eat, Drink and Be Healthy" and learned about what I was putting in my body. That helped a lot. Then I was told about the web site CalorieKing.com and learned how many calories were in the things I ate.

A real eye opener was standing in Kowalski's and reading the calories in frozen pizza. Holy cow! I would eat a whole pizza a couple times a week! Now my trainer has me adding up all the calories I eat a day. That has been a real experience. I used to write down X number of veggies. Now she expects me to count the calories in the veggies and use 50 calories as a serving. I thought I was doing so good eating 4 or 5 types of veggies but with the new plan I have a hard time reaching the new goal. I am even tempted to lie about it, just to get my calories up. But I don't because that would only hurt me.

Learning how to eat has made a big difference in my weight loss. I used to eat a lot of what Kristi calls "crap." I don't think it was crap; much of it was made with a lot of love by my mom, grandmother, and aunts. Much of it was easy to buy and eat. Now, however, I know why Kristi calls it crap. It adds up calories quickly and I do not burn those off so I store them. For what, I do not know.

Back to the question; I do not think I would have been so successful if I had had everything dumped on me at first. My brain would have been fried. But, my trainer did a great job of helping me in the baby steps and encouraging me.

**Trainer:** *What motivated you to move beyond the studio into more time spent exercising on your own?*

**Dave:** Well, the motivation is easy when I see I need to buy new belts every few months. Smaller belts. I also noticed my pants are way too big. But I'm holding off on new "skinny" pants until school starts. I know I am down two pant sizes and hope for two more but I do not need to stimulate the economy every time I go down a size. So I will wait a few more weeks.

I guess early on I thought I had better work hard outside the studio to get the most out of the money I am spending. After the month off being sick it became more inner driven than just the money. It is hard to keep motivated but I just have to do it. Something happened and now if I miss more than a day of cardio I feel I am really missing something. Sometimes I go two days in a row but that is because I am too sore from doing something stupid. Sometimes you just have to take a rest.

**Trainer:** *How much time do you invest into your overall lifestyle change?*

**Dave:** Besides the studio I have been doing the Nordic Track at home almost every day after school. We got an elliptical at school in the spring and I would do that occasionally. I did some XC skiing in the winter and hope to get some snowshoes next winter. This spring, when the snow was gone I started jogging. That blew my mind. I hadn't done that since I had to get ready for football in high school. In the summer I ride my bike a lot. I have been riding it to summer school. I like riding the Gateway trail and the trail out of Hugo. I just bought a kayak. That should be fun. I'm going to tell my trainer I bought it to go float around and drink beer and smoke cigars, don't tell her.

How much time do I devote a week? Too much and not enough. I do the Nordic Track for 40 minutes and then stretch or about 20 or 30. If I go to the bike trail I try to go a minimum of 10 miles. On those days I may "forget" to stretch as I tend to plan other errands but usually I go home and stretch. I try to go to the studio 30 minutes early and ride the exercise bike so that's an hour shot. I try to eat healthy so preparing takes more time than popping a pizza in the oven. I would guess I spend 2 hours at the studio, 10 hours cardio and stretching and lots of time prepping. So at least 12 hours a week, not counting food prep. I don't think about it much. I try to set a regular time and do it. It helps to be single I would bet.

**Trainer:** *How would you encourage somebody who was looking for fast results and is realizing that their success will be a longer term lifestyle change?*

**Dave:** Keep at it. Reward yourself with a pizza or something every now and then. I like pizza. I would tell myself that in 5 pounds I would eat pizza. When I hit that 5 pound mark I would realize how hard it was and say, in 5 more pounds I'll have that pizza. Then, when I got to a plateau for a while I would just eat the pizza. Then I would go back to the new way of eating. That helped me to realize that the pizza wasn't as fun as I thought and it was becoming more important to maintain my new way of eating. Also, realize it took a long time to get to where you are now so it will take a long time to get to where you want. I have lost 50 pounds. If I lose 20 more I will be close to my high school weight. That was 30 years ago. So, if it took me 30 years to get as heavy as I was, I guess it is OK to lose 50 pounds over a two-year period. Also, remember, you are you. You will be the same person at whatever weight you are so you should learn to like yourself whenever.

