"This Is It!"

Veteran Alice Sarmento discusses how TLC gave her the tools to make lasting health changes

"A few years back, I'd lost a lot of weight by walking in a pool and eating right. More recently, I'd again lost some weight…until I got sick and regained it while taking prednisone. I'd been having ongoing health problems and was on antibiotics and steroids, with no improvement. I went in to see Dr. Kimmel at the VA Sierra Nevada HCS at one point and was literally crying that I couldn't take it anymore—I was very frustrated. Later one morning, I got out of the shower and really looked at myself. I thought, 'this is it!'

Shortly after the visit with Dr. Kimmel, I got my first call from my TLC Coach Rebecca, who said I'd been referred to the program. I started TLC in March 2012, and chose eating wisely and striving for a healthy weight as my Healthy Living goals.

The MOVE!® and TLC books worked for me because it was very helpful to have the materials there to refer to. Even though I've finished TLC, I still look at the books.

Mindfulness and Awareness

Coach Rebecca was another big factor in my success, as was my family. Rebecca taught me mindfulness—just being aware of what, when, and how I eat. I also learned to read labels, limit carbohydrates, increase my protein, eat more fruits and veggies, and control my portions. My husband is very supportive and I help take care of my mom—both keep me motivated to stay on track.

Big Changes

TLC has worked really well for me. During the program, I lost about 20 pounds and I'm maintaining that now! There have been other big changes in my health, too. I breed Rottweiler dogs, and now I can walk out to their kennels without being short of breath—something I couldn't do before I lost the weight. I can pick up things off the floor without my belly getting in the way. My fasting blood sugar went from 122 to 106 mg/dL. I've also stopped drinking soda and eating bread, and cut out fast food. Best of all, I've maintained these changes for 6 months now!

Message to other Veterans

Having successfully completed TLC and achieved my health goals, I would say to other Veterans, 'you have to tell yourself you want to do it. If you truly make up your mind—in your 'heart of hearts'—and do it for yourself and no one else, you'll be successful.'