



“The Best Thing I Ever Did”

Veteran John Sarris Gets the Coaching and Positive Reinforcement Needed to Lose 30 Pounds

It was a phone call from his primary care provider that started everything in motion for Veteran John Sarris.

“She wanted to put me on more pills—increase my statins and start me on metformin for diabetes,” he says. “But I said, ‘no way, let me try it my way first.’” John’s provider then suggested that a “coach” might help with the lifestyle changes needed to prevent the medication adjustments. At first, John resisted. But as he was getting dressed a few days later, he had a realization. “I was sick and tired of trying to squeeze into my pants,” he says. “It was the wake-up call I was waiting for.” John agreed to the TLC referral and says, “it was the best thing I ever did.”

Support, Awareness

John attributes much of his success to his coach, Erin. “She was very informative and patient,” he explains. “She shared the latest research findings in a supportive manner—even when they differed from my beliefs.” And importantly, she never used the words “you should...” or “do this...”

In terms of lifestyle changes, John believes that the most important thing was becoming aware of his unhealthy activities. “I realized, for example, that the taste and enjoyment I get from eating 4 cashews is the same as I’d get from 100 cashews,” he says, “but without the high calorie count.” Accurate expectations also have helped keep him on track, especially after he started to lose weight. “Erin told me that I might not lose another pound for a week, or maybe for 5 weeks,” he reports. “But just having that bit of information prevented me from getting discouraged and backsliding.”

John’s also realized that it’s essential to know what you’re putting into your body,



and be aware of those calories. Sweets remain his biggest temptations, but he's learned to make cakes and brownies with sugar-free mixes, for example. "If I want to cheat, I cheat," he says, "but now I really don't feel like I'm missing anything."

Do-able

In addition to making changes to his eating habits, John's also incorporated regular physical activity. "I had this treadmill that I was using as a clothes rack," he says. "But I saw on TV that alternating 5 minutes of intense walking with a few minutes of walking at a comfortable pace can be effective for weight loss. So I started doing this and found that brief bursts of intense activity were easier to



complete than sustained intense activity. Now, I put the TV on and walk—it's really do-able!"

When John realized that he'd lost 30 pounds through TLC, he almost didn't believe it—until he tried on those same old pants. "They fit comfortably, and I even fit into a pair of pants that hadn't fit in 20 years," he recalls. "It was a great feeling!" Several months later, John met an old acquaintance who immediately recognized his weight loss. Having someone notice that change was "really reinforcing" for him.

Positive Reinforcement

At a subsequent visit to his provider, John got his labs re-checked. "When the results came back later that afternoon, my provider was so excited that she called me on my way home," he says. "She said she'd never seen that happen before!" Backed by "nothing but positive reinforcement", John has now maintained his weight loss for 7 months. He also feels confident that he has the knowledge he needs to continue to lose even more pounds.

John tells other Veterans to be open to trying TLC. "Stick with your coach and listen to what he or she is telling you," he explains. "Don't block anything out. And create your own remedies!"



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