



He grits his teeth, gets healthy

Dentist's alert puts patient on right path

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Author: Hellmich, Nanci

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When people ask Scott Morrow, 44, of Stockbridge, Ga., who inspired him to lose weight, he replies that it was his dentist. They say, "Don't you mean your doctor?" and he says, "No, my dentist."

Morrow went to his dentist in January 2007 for a root canal. As a precaution, the hygienist took Morrow's blood pressure twice, and both readings were way too high.

"Dr. (Randy) Daniel told me he could not proceed until I got my blood pressure under control," says Morrow, a supply chain analyst for Norfolk Southern transportation company. "In effect, I was kicked out of my own dentist's office that day. Talk about a wake-up call."

Morrow's story was selected by a panel of experts to be featured in the fifth annual USA TODAY Weight-Loss Challenge in the newspaper and online at dietchallenge.usatoday.com. This year's challenge, which runs every Monday through mid-May, is focusing on weight-loss champions who have inspired others to lose.

Coincidentally, the week after Morrow's trip to the dentist, his colleagues at work decided to start a weight-loss challenge. "I hadn't weighed myself in quite some time and was a bit hesitant to do so in front of everyone else in the group. However, I mustered up the courage and stepped on the scales and was shocked to find out that I weighed in at a whopping 371.8 pounds. Yet another wake-up call."

Morrow joined Weight Watchers and went regularly, even attending meetings in other cities when he was out of town on business. He has lost 137 pounds.

He read stories from USA TODAY's earlier Weight-Loss Challenge series and says he was particularly inspired by a story last year about Gary Todd, the Alabama man who lost about 90 pounds by walking around his backyard every day and cutting calories.

Morrow bought a pedometer and started keeping track of his steps. "I started walking during my lunch hour instead of heading out to restaurants with co-workers." As time went on, he began hiking more rigorous trails on the weekends.

His success inspired a friend, Bob Phillips, to lose almost 80 pounds.

Morrow just came back from a Grand Canyon hiking trip. "It was one of the most physically demanding things I've ever done, but one of the most exhilarating," he says. "It's something I wouldn't have been able to do this time last year."

TEXT OF INFO BOX BEGINS HERE

Scott Morrow

Age: 44

Hometown: Stockbridge, Ga.

Occupation: Supply chain analyst

Height: 6-2

Weight in Jan. 2007 372

Current weight 235

Loss 137

Goal: 220

How he gained: "I ate too much fast food. I made late-night trips to Wendy's for hamburgers and french fries. I led a sedentary lifestyle in my 30s. I got into a couch-potato routine. I would come home from work and didn't do much but watch TV, or I would go out with friends and eat.

"I had played basketball and ran cross-country in high school. In college, I played intramural sports. But I stopped doing that from my 20s until my 30s."

Key to loss: "On Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2007, I joined a local Weight Watchers group. I liked what I heard that night and received a great deal of encouragement from other members."

Eating plan

Breakfast: Oatmeal and banana, or raisin bran with skim milk, or a yogurt parfait with fruit.

Midmorning snack: A handful of unsalted mixed nuts.

Lunch: Grilled Chick-fil-A sandwich and a salad with grilled chicken, black-bean relish, cheese, lettuce, red cabbage and tomatoes.

Afternoon snack: Nuts and an apple or banana.

Dinner: "I eat out a lot. I often have salad, salmon, broccoli or mixed vegetables, and unsweetened tea."

Exercise routine

"I purchased a pedometer and started keeping track of my steps. I started walking during my lunch hour. I adhered to the 10,000-steps-a-day (about 5 miles) program and made it a goal to reach that level on a daily basis. On the weekends, I step it up a bit. I head to various state parks throughout Georgia to hike the park trails. In July, I started a boot-camp class, an hour class of calisthenics. I am doing that three days a week and working out with weights on those days, too. I'm building muscle tone, which will help me with weight loss. I have started running some 5K races."

Providing inspiration

Morrow inspired his friend Bob Phillips to lose.

Says Phillips: "Both Scott and I are outdoor people, and we had been struggling to do hikes with friends. I saw the activity level increase for him as he lost weight. I wanted to get back to the activity level that I was at several years ago. I used to ride a bike from 15 to 20 miles five to six days a week.

Losing that ability hurt me more than the (changes in) appearance. I also wanted to start refereeing youth football. I knew at the weight I was at, I would die on the football field.

"Scott and I go to church together, so my wife and I started going to Weight Watchers with him in the middle of June 2007. I have lost 79 pounds and

want to lose another 90 to 100. My wife has lost over 25."

Illustration

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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