



# Secrets of People Who Lost Major Pounds and Kept Them Off

Shedding triple digits (or nearly that) requires commitment, discipline and a lifestyle change that involves more than just food choices. Read inspiring stories of weight-loss success.

BY JENN SINRICH AND DIANA KELLY LEVEY



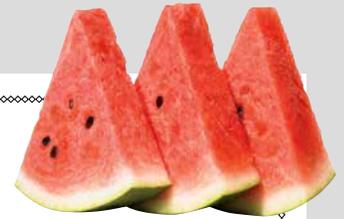
Gregg McBride

**AGE 42**  
**HEIGHT 5'11"**  
**WEIGHT-LOSS STRATEGY**  
**DASH DIET AND EXERCISE**  
**STARTING WEIGHT**  
**450 LBS.**  
**CURRENT WEIGHT 175 LBS.**

I tried about every diet and every gimmick out there, usually more than once. I started gaining weight in first grade, which resulted in my parents putting me on a very strict diet. Although they were doing what they thought was right at the time (even under the advice of a doctor), this taught me "off (the diet)" and "on (the diet)" eating behaviors—which led to excessive fasting, dieting and bingeing. Any weight I lost would be eventually replaced with even more weight. At the age of 27, I started trying to lose weight the old-fashioned way—through diet and exercise (mostly cardio: walking, at first, and then graduating to aerobics classes). I gave up my daily diet-soda habit as well. I didn't restrict any food group, since restricting food always led to bingeing in the past. My goal was simple: to live a moderate and balanced life. I tried to eat as much

"clean" or "fresh" food as possible—no additives, preservatives, artificial flavors or chemicals of any kind. Breakfast would often be dry toast and fruit; lunch would usually be a salad (greens, tomatoes, a few other fresh vegetables in season) with a protein source (usually turkey), with balsamic vinegar mixed with a little Dijon mustard and pepper as a dressing. Dinner would usually be a protein source (chicken, fish) and a steamed vegetable (usually sprinkled with garlic and balsamic

vinegar—no salt). If I had to snack, I'd eat fresh fruit. Initially, these foods tasted like cardboard to me, since I was so used to fast food and other junk foods that have lots of additives and unnecessary ingredients. Within a couple of weeks, my taste buds changed—and I found that a delicious Fuji apple could be as tasty to me as a bowl of ice cream. Seeing the scale go down was exciting, but suddenly having to give up my 60-inch belt (which I'd been wearing out) was the most rewarding. I'll never forget



the first time I could go into a store and pick out a pair of jeans (42 waist, the first time). It felt amazing! My new habits helped me lose 275 pounds in one year! I learned to combine all the tenets for weight loss—healthy food, exercise, good sleep and water—to maintain it.



Steve Rosenthal

**AGE 49**  
**HEIGHT 5'8"**  
**WEIGHT LOSS STRATEGY**  
**KETO AND WALKING**  
**STARTING WEIGHT 318**  
**CURRENT WEIGHT 228**

I created several smaller goals so that I could keep myself focused on the endgame. First, I wanted to get below 300 pounds. After that, 285, 275 and 250 were my goals. Recently, I had to buy a pair of size 34 pants—and I want to get to the

size 32 I wore in high school. I stayed true to my initial promise to myself to not set new goals until I achieve the current ones and that's helped me stay focused and successful losing nearly 100 pounds eating keto. I started off following the keto diet strictly but now that I'm closer to my goal weight after nearly a year, I slowly added more carbs into my diet (like fruits) but I'm still losing weight. I enjoy eating keto foods (like meat and eggs), but in the beginning, I had to get creative with ways to vary my proteins and fats. I've added avocados into my diet much more frequently and I find that I really enjoy them. I keep my meals interesting and fresh by following keto blogs and Facebook groups for recipes as well as trying to take traditional recipes and make them keto.

What works for me is eating breakfast and lunch every day, and dinner about four days a week. On the other days, I skip dinner because I will have eaten a late lunch or I'm doing a modified intermittent fast. I walk for exercise at least five days a week, setting daily steps goals with a Fitbit monitor. Some family members have decided to try keto after seeing my success and I've heard from real-life and online friends that my progress or recipes have spurred them to try something different, which is a great feeling. I fully intend to remain "keto-ish" as a lifetime goal.



*"Staying motivated has been easy since I keep losing weight."*

LIVING WELL



BEFORE



AFTER

Josh LaJaunie

**AGE 41**  
**HEIGHT 6'3"**  
**WEIGHT-LOSS STRATEGY PALEO AND PLANT-BASED**  
**STARTING WEIGHT 420 LBS.**  
**CURRENT WEIGHT 190 LBS.**

I was always going on diets and tried them all—Atkins, Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, high-protein, high-fat, fasting, powders, shakes and pills—and they all worked great for a little while. I would lose 80, 90 even 100 pounds and reach whatever my latest magical target weight was. Then, to celebrate, I would go right back to the foods and beverages that had made me fat in the first place—and gain back every single pound plus some. I didn't have a clue about what a sustainable way of eating was, and I was completely ignorant of the science of nutrition, so I had no idea that certain diets simply cannot be maintained indefinitely, even if they are wicked effective at helping shed excess weight at first.

The plan I finally was able to sustain turned out to be one without gimmicks and without counting: Paleo. Basically, I looked for foods that our ancestors could have reliably sourced

and made them the centerpiece of my plate—lots of unprocessed and minimally processed plant foods that are multicolored and low in calories. I used to love consuming huge volumes of food, so I needed to find foods that could fill me up without loading on the calories. Greens, potatoes and sweet potatoes, vegetables, fruits, mushrooms and legumes were all foods that I lost weight eating, no matter how much I shoved in my mouth. And they still make up the lion's share of my diet today. I'm mostly a plant-based eater now. The multicolored part is more about health than weight loss, since the colors in plants signify different micronutrients, antioxidants, phytochemicals and other wonder molecules designed to keep us free from chronic inflammation and disease. By "eating the rainbow" of fruits and vegetables, I was following a simple rule that gave me all the nutrients my body needed in exactly the right amounts and ratios. And because I got healthier and healthier, the diet was much more sustainable than the others I'd tried.

Once I started losing weight, I began to realize that the journey and outcome was about far more than how many pounds I weighed. The dirty little secret of weight loss was that the minute I thought I'd achieved my goal, I was actually beginning my journey. Now that I'm living a life in harmony with nature and my highest self, I find joy in living, not in food. After a few years of progressing along the path of easy walks and slow jogs, I ultimately turned into a marathoner. I've competed in more than 10 marathons and have run longer-distance races: 50 miles; a 50k, at least six times; 100k; and a 100-mile race. I now find joy in my physical capacity, going from being a guy who couldn't fit into a booth at a restaurant to someone who can do five sets of five pull-ups a day.

Meagan Kerans

**AGE 33**  
**HEIGHT 5'10"**  
**WEIGHT-LOSS STRATEGY MEDITERRANEAN AND INTUITIVE EATING**  
**STARTING WEIGHT 390 LBS.**  
**CURRENT WEIGHT 286 LBS.**

I've struggled with my weight my entire life. I was always a lot bigger than the other kids in elementary school. Being overweight became part of my identity. And when you are overweight, people offer lots of unsolicited advice, so I finally got to the point where I threw away every piece of advice I'd ever been given and started eating clean and listening to my body.

While I've tried many diets, the one thing that's made me most successful is cutting out processed foods. I started "shopping the perimeter" and eat mostly vegetables, fruits, whole grains, eggs, cheese, yogurt, fish and very little meat. I find that I feel best



BEFORE



AFTER



NO MATTER WHAT DIET YOU FOLLOW, LIFESTYLE CHANGES LIKE REGULAR EXERCISE ARE KEY TO LASTING SUCCESS.

and see the best results when I eat high-protein, moderate-fat and moderate-carb. Most of the carbs I eat are from vegetables, like sweet potatoes, beets and squash. Food is pretty social. It's nice to know that I have the flexibility to have brunch with friends and keep my day on track by eating healthy foods I spot on the menu and keeping an eye on what I eat the rest of the day.

My relationship with my body has changed so much. I've come to a place where I'm genuinely thankful for it and everything it's capable of. After I started losing weight, I found the confidence

*"I wouldn't have been able to do this job had I not lost the weight."*

to leave my longtime job and become a flight attendant, since I love to travel. I enjoy my job so much, and it's not lost on me that I'd never have been physically able to do it had I not lost the weight.

I enjoy being active and seeing the world like this. I love hiking

when I travel, from mountains in Denver to a coastal trail in Greece. I was able to scuba dive on the Great Barrier Reef. I'm doing so many things I simply could not have done at almost 400 pounds. Losing the weight and learning how to fuel my body with healthy food changed my life.