

How Did You Do That?

By Dina Sanders, B.S.; CFT Personal Trainer and Nutrition Coach



Like an amazing magic trick or feat of unprecedented skill, I hear those words regularly. They never fail to bring a full dimpled grin to my face and a sparkle of enthusiasm to my eyes. Those who know me best are likely sick of hearing my exuberant “Guess what I did today!” They already know...I worked out and managed to accomplish something new that was unthinkable a short two years ago.

I haven't always had this joy, this confidence, this utter pride in myself. In fact, two and a half years ago, I was just like many of you reading this now. At five feet one and a half inches tall, I weighed in at 152 pounds; way more weight than my height and small skeletal system needed to cart around. More importantly, I was so unhappy! That person looking back at me in the mirror just wasn't me. She didn't look like me. She didn't dress like me. She didn't act like me. She didn't feel like me. So, I stopped looking at her. I avoided cameras whenever possible, submitting only when the consequences of refusing were too dire—like my in-laws' 50th wedding anniversary complete with the rare gathering of all six Sanders Boys, their wives, and all 25 or so grandchildren.

One day, late in July of 2006, I decided enough was enough. I was tired of waiting for the weight to miraculously disappear. Having been slender most of my life, it was time to admit that I had let myself go over the last 5–8 years. I suppose I could have simply admitted defeat and gone with it. It sure would have been easier...and included way yummiier food. But, there was that whole thing about the face in the mirror not being me. Defeat just was not an option.



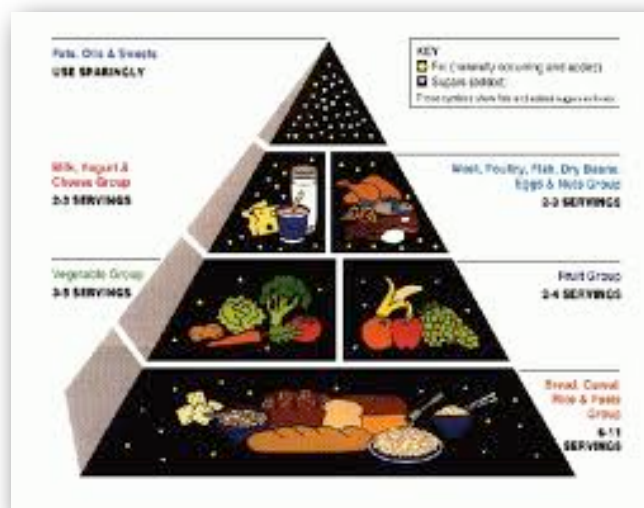
So, back to the original question—“How did you do that?” I would love to tell you that it was easy. It wasn’t. I would love to tell you about a magic pill. I don’t have one. But, I can tell you that it was really fun! Yes, there were a few hurdles along the way.

Some people find controlling their food intake the hardest part. Others find working out to be the hardest. For me, it was the food. It wasn’t that I ate constantly. In fact, I didn’t. I simply ate when I was hungry but ate what I wanted to eat...cheeseburgers, French fries, burritos smothered in guacamole and sour cream, ice cream...whatever sounded good at the moment. Working out was great! I loved feeling my muscles tone up. I loved the realization that I could do more today than yesterday. I loved it all...well, okay, not the pain but everything else.

The first and most important step I took was to make a commitment. I cannot stress this enough. Commitment is imperative. I’m not talking about promising your doctor you will lose ten pounds (or 20, 30, 40...). I’m not talking about shedding some weight so the special person in your life will look at you with that interesting gleam. I’m not talking about getting thinner so your teenagers aren’t embarrassed to be seen with you. No, none of those will result in the changes I made. This commitment absolutely has to be for you, about you. Sacrificing your current lifestyle for a healthier, better you simply won’t last long if it is for anyone other than you.

The commitment is not just to follow a diet until X number of pounds are lost or adding more exercise to your week. Studies have proven over and over that “diets” don’t work long term because most diets are not sustainable for a lifetime.

Wait—did she say lifetime? Yes, a lifetime commitment is what I’m talking about. Somewhere, somehow, probably passively and without conscious thought, we all developed a lifestyle. If you are like I was, the lifestyle just isn’t working for you. It’s easy because



it is known and comfortable. Chances are, though, that it isn't A) as healthy as it could be and, since you are still reading this, B) probably isn't making you happy. So, if A and/or B is true, why not decide to change the lifestyle you didn't choose but rather fell into to one that is healthy and makes you happy?

The next step is to come up with a plan of action. I'm the first to admit that I really had no idea of what I was getting myself into. I made a commitment to myself for myself that I wanted to lose 30 pounds. Notice that I said wanted, not should. So, I found a friend to workout with and joined a gym with the idea that we would motivate and encourage one another. I had the right idea, wrong method. Why? Unless your friend is as committed and determined as you are, he or she will flake out on you. Mine sure did!



The best thing I did was engage with a professional Personal Trainer in April 2007. Prior to that, I worked my butt off with minimal success. The trainers I ended up enlisting offered a free class at the gym I had my membership with. So, I was getting into shape—slowly. However, I was on my own as far as my diet was concerned. I made all the classic mistakes—the first and worst was holding on to the belief that calories are calories. You know what I'm talking about.

The belief that it doesn't matter what you eat so long as you cut back on your intake. I've even heard a nutritionist say this (in fairness, she very possibly said more but I stopped listening when I heard the part I wanted to hear). By April, I was tired of losing only one or two pounds a month. I wanted clothes that fit me for more than a couple of months and I just wanted to be "done". I got lucky because, at the same time, my trainers left the gym to start their own business, offering a program that I could afford and similar to the class they offered at the gym only better.

Michael told us all the first day in his new studio what he wanted us to do with our meals. To my knowledge, I was the first and only one of that original group who agreed to try it and followed through. In two months, I had lost another 12 pounds and was almost at my target weight. Happy with where I was, I decided losing those last four pounds wasn't necessary. I was ready to go to a

maintenance plan. My body wasn't. It was so hard to keep those four pounds on that I decided to let my body decide—to a point. The last four pounds went away and two more kept trying to slip off. I drew the line and put the two back on.

So, here I am. Two years later and I'm a slimmer, fitter me. The strangest part was that, up until recently, I still had moments when I would catch a glimpse of my reflection and be surprised all over again. That first spring, in 2007, I had lost enough weight and become fit enough that shedding the bulky winter clothes was like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. Even people who saw me on a daily basis were shocked by the change. By the time I hit my goal, I regularly had to defend myself from frequent, concerned comments about losing too much weight. I even began telling people how much I weighed to quiet their concerns.



Now, the question is, how can you do that, too? It is actually pretty easy. The only difficult part is getting your commitment to yourself solidified and following through. Remember, commitment is first, the plan of action is second.

1. Make a commitment to yourself, for yourself.
2. Form a plan of action. Include diet and exercise.
3. Find a professional trainer to help you. It will be the best money you'll ever spend on your health. A good trainer will help you formulate your plan of action. He/She will be your cheering squad, your slave driver, and your go to person. Friends and family love you but they will unwittingly undermine and sabotage your efforts because they love you. I know, it doesn't make sense but it is true. Sore today? Take a day off, you deserve it. Chocolate? Come on, you've earned a treat and it's your favorite. They don't mean to sabotage (usually) but they do it



anyway. A word about trainers: Look for a certified trainer that gets results safely and efficiently. He or she should also make you feel good about yourself. You should like this person. After all, you will be spending 2–3 hours a week with him/her and paying a decent amount of money for their time.

4. Set goals. You need both short term or interim goals and long term goals. The achievement of the smaller goals serve to encourage and motivate you while you work toward the harder, long term goals.
5. Give yourself rules to follow. Some must be unbreakable. Some can be flexible. My personal unbreakable rule is this: the days that I really don't want to workout are the days that I absolutely have to workout. It is a rule that I follow to this day. Why? Because once I give myself an inch...you know the rest. Most wars are lost in increments not in one major battle.
6. Understand that for long term success you must make a permanent change to live a healthier, more active lifestyle.
7. To lose weight, you must take in less than you put out.
8. Eat frequent, small meals throughout the day. Five to six is ideal, counting snacks as a meal. One trick that worked for me was to break a normal-sized meal into two meals. A sandwich and apple for lunch easily becomes two meals at 11:00 and 1:00.
9. Understand that diet is 80% of the equation. Eat better, get better results. Do like I did, eating less of the same fatty foods, and you may see results but you'll get frustrated with the slow speed of those results as well as retain more body fat which doesn't look so hot over all those beautiful muscles you are building.
10. Carbohydrates are your body's primary source of energy. Do not opt for a low carb diet and try to workout. It won't make you happy! Instead, shift away from processed carbohydrates (white bread, white rice, white potatoes, seeing a pattern?) to complex carbohydrates (whole wheat breads and pastas, brown rice, etc.). Simply put,



carbohydrates are sugar. Processed or simple carbs convert immediately into simple sugars in the body which burn fast and often leave you feeling tired once your body stores or uses them. Complex carbs take more work for your body to break down and burn. That means they stay in your system, working for you, longer and more efficiently.

11. Fat in your diet is not necessarily the enemy. We need fat to carry vitamins A, D, E and K through our system. We just typically eat too much of the wrong type. Stick to small amounts of unsaturated fats like those found in olive oil, avocados, and nuts to name a few.

12. A good exercise program includes both cardiovascular work and weight/resistance training.

13. Remember muscles burn fat faster. Don't be afraid to get stronger. My other classic mistake was believing that all I needed was cardio workouts. Aerobic workouts of an endurance nature do burn fat. However, your body will first breakdown the protein in your muscles before resorting to stored fat for energy. Like many women, I was afraid to work my muscles too hard because I believed I would "bulk up". Today, total strangers compliment the definition of my 9.5 inch upper arms. A few have even copped a quick feel of said arms. Yes, it's unnerving. However, the stronger I get the more efficiently my muscles work to burn the fat I consume.



14. Plan to exercise at least 3 days a week. Plan some sort of physical activity for the other days of the week—no, strolling the mall does not count! Physical activity needs to be a part of your new, consciously developed lifestyle. Take a hike. Walk the dog. Several studies have shown that people with dogs get more exercise and weigh less than those who don't have dogs. The key here is that you walk the dog; the dog doesn't walk you. Fido doesn't really need to stop every five feet to pee on every twig his nose finds! Keep him and you moving. He'll be healthier and so will you!

Need more reasons to start? How about some of these?

- Numerous studies worldwide have proven that virtually every disease we consider to be “age related” has a closer correlation to exercise than age. In other words, those who exercise regularly are less likely to develop diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, etc.
- Exercise is the closest thing to a fountain of youth that scientists have discovered. People are shocked to learn I have 3 daughters in college!
- A strong, healthy body feels better to lug around than a flabby, overweight body.
- Shopping is fun when everything you try on looks good on you!
- Exercise is a fabulous stress reliever.
- We are living longer regardless of whether we are living better. Who wants to live longer in a body that just won't do stuff? A fit body equates to an active body. An active body equates to a higher quality of life as we age.



•Despite the fact that you are doing this for you, about you; your doctor will be pleased with your results (mine asks me how I did it!!). The special person in your life will look at you with that interesting gleam. And, your teenagers will not only not be embarrassed to be seen with you, they may actually demonstrate pride in your accomplishment. The New YOU!

Note: Contact Dina Sanders for Personal Training & Nutrition Coaching at dinams1@aol.com for online, webcam training or tele-coaching. If you are in the Bay Area, Dina is located at [Perfect Balance](#), Fremont, CA.

 **Perfect Balance**
= (Water + Oxygen + Food) × Exercise