

David Stout's Work in Progress



Like many people, without meaning to or really realizing it, I found myself overweight and stressed. Before arriving at CWRU, I was working retail jobs, just trying to get by. My personal health intentions weren't bad, but if there was an eating or exercise mistake to make, I likely did it. I was just making poor choices.

Those bad choices started to catch up with me: acid reflux, shortness of breath, weight gain. Just every small but annoying misery you can imagine. I accepted it as normal. Little did I know things would be changing soon after arriving at Case.

Very grateful to be hired as the PCard Administrator, I soon got my biometric screening results and saw that two-thirds were in the red zone. In my hourly retail experience there were zero benefits, so I got habituated to not going to the doctor or dentist, to say nothing of a nutritionist, dermatologist, or physical therapist. Now at CWRU I started to take advantage of benefits that were given to me.

I started to assemble a team, beginning with my supervisor who hired me and actively encouraged me to take better care of myself. Through my every day PCard Admin duties I worked with colleagues in HR and the various health and wellness departments. I started asking my new contacts for advice about how to get started. I followed their suggestions and I received wonderful personal and nutritional counseling through our EAP program, Ease@Work. I am completing the Couch 2 Confidence program at 121. With my increase in earnings going from retail to Case I went, on my own, to Weight Watchers in late 2015. While the meetings and new points system are not for me, I really like tracking my eating and using the 2015-era Points system.

From my heaviest at 225 pounds, right now I am halfway to my (previously unimaginable) goal of 175 pounds

For those who understand the old Weight Watchers point system, just six months ago I was routinely eating 80 to 100 points a day, far more than my allotted 45 points (even 45 points is lots of food). Since I reduced my pop consumption, it is natural for me to come in the high 30s each day. Sometimes a 50.

Small example of change: I suddenly understand the modern fit clothes at Express Men! I always lumbered around in office drone clothes, baggy shirts. I can't explain how, but my clothes fit better now and I move differently.

I also feel better than ever, at age 41. I can't know what the future holds, but I can control certain things, I can take specific actions. I have adopted these personal health principles:

1% Better - If I see someone who is one percent better than me at anything, I observe them and will ask how they do it. For example, my physical therapist is in great shape and looks like a million bucks. He happened to mention, once, in passing, about veggie burgers. I immediately made a mental note to get some and I now like veggie burgers! I am 1% closer to carrying myself like my awesome doctor.

“Yes, now” - Go for what you want, start now. No parsing, no dithering. Just accept the choices, experience the good and bad consequences, and plan to do a little better next time.

Goldilocks, My Role Model - I am willing to try any good healthy idea. I will just as quickly reject anything that doesn't work for me. I will accept a good new idea with equal rapidity. For example, talking to my new friend behind the deli counter, I found out fit people don't eat many cold cuts, they eat turkey. I thanked my deli expert for his generous advice, and quickly walked to the turkey. That day, I purchased roast turkey and ground turkey. I hated the roast turkey and never bought it again. But I like ground turkey so much, I buy it often.

A Partial Victory Is A Victory - Will anyone sit here and say angel food cake is good? No. But is it better than the cake/donuts/pastries I ate all the time? Yes, probably. If I know I'm going to want cake every day at 2 pm, I might as well have plain angel food cake. I record my points, facing facts, and move on with my day.

Listen To My Body - If it hurts, I don't do it. I go back to my team and ask for alternatives.

Follow Instructions, But Trust My Gut - I will immediately implement any good advice, but only if it serves me.

Risk Feeling Ridiculous - I felt completely weird the first time I bought caffeinated water (to replace pop) and now it is a totally normal experience.

While I am humbled to be asked to submit this, I am more than a little embarrassed to call my experience a “Success Story”; I'd be much more comfortable with “Work In Progress”.