

Another Star McDougaller!



Star McDougaller: Cathy Stewart

In 1998, when I first began my FINAL attempt at weight loss, I weighed something over 300 pounds. I say "something over" because I really have no idea— my scale only went up to 300 pounds. I was in very, very bad health. I have suffered from chronic asthma since I was a small child. But as I grew older, it got progressively worse, and by the time I was 40 I literally couldn't say at the start of the day whether I would be in the hospital—or dead—by the end of it.

I wasn't always so fat. But the steroids I had to take for my asthma caused me to gain weight



Cathy - Before

and left me with brittle bones. Then I had a bad break in my ankle that put me in a cast for six months and left me in the care of my loving parents, who, alas, know only one way to cook: frying. Stuck in bed or a wheelchair, I turned to food to help cope with the boredom. By the time the cast came off, my weight had ballooned to over 250 pounds, and it kept climbing from there. My dress size was a 26, although I usually just wore 3X sweatshirts and stretch pants. I couldn't even find a pair of jeans large enough to fit me without going to a specialty store. I was so exhausted from carrying around 150 extra pounds I spent most nights in front of the TV in my extra large recliner.

I couldn't exercise—I couldn't even sleep at night. I was tied to my asthma inhaler just to keep breathing. Misplacing my inhaler became a matter of life and death. Often, I had to get up in the middle of the night to give myself breathing treatments. The final straw was when I had a lung embolism that nearly killed me. I had to lose

weight or die. I began by cutting out the fat. I made all the common mistakes by not eating whole starches; I just substituted Lean Cuisine and Snackwells for my previous diet. I lost about 60 pounds, but I was starving, chronically constipated and my asthma was as bad as ever. I had been a lacto-ovo vegetarian since back in the seventies and had picked up an original copy of the McDougall Plan at a Seventh Day Adventist restaurant in 1983 when it was first published. I still had that copy and, very reluctantly, reread it. I DID NOT want to give up my dairy, but I was desperate. I had thought it too radical at first, but the more I read, the more sense it made. I gave up dairy and almost immediately my asthma began to improve. With my doctors blessing I got off the steroids and started a walking and then a jogging program. I walked, I hiked, I lost more weight. I've started lifting weights. I GOT FIT. From beginning to end it took me four years to lose 155 pounds. I went from a size 26 to a size 8.



Dairy had been a major trigger for my asthma all my life, and not one doctor (until Dr. McDougall) ever suggested the possibility that eliminating it could be a virtual cure for me. In fact, when I asked my doctor point blank if a vegan diet would help my asthma, he said, "No." It's a good thing I didn't listen to him. Back when I was in college, when I was a lacto-ovo vegetarian, I ate a ton of cheese and drank a lot of milk. I realize now that I actually made myself sicker by replacing meat with dairy.

Skip ahead 10 years and I feel better now at age 54 than I did at 21. I've had to make a few changes over the years. As I've gotten older, it's become more and more important that I stay active or the weight tries to creep back on. I gained 25 pounds when I was caring for my father during his last year of life. I watched an active 90-year-old lose both his legs to poor circulation, knowing that this could have been prevented with proper nutrition and diet; but he refused to change his ways right up until the end. After he passed away, I got right back onto the McDougall support board and lost the weight again. Now I actually weigh less than I did 10 years ago.

I have a final picture to show anyone who still needs convincing. These two photos were



taken several years apart. Aside from the obvious weight difference, can you see the truly important change that has occurred? In the picture on the top there is an asthma inhaler (never far out of reach). In the picture on the bottom, the asthma inhaler has been replaced with a McDougall Right Foods soup cup. I think that sums it up nicely.



Here I am at my heaviest. Always first in line with fork in hand when there was free cake and ice cream at work.



This picture was taken when I got out of the

hospital after I had the embolism that caused my lung to collapse during an asthma attack. I was on a ton of prednisone at the time, hence the "moonface." I was also having migraines, which is why I have on sunglasses indoors.





This was taken a few weeks ago when I came back from the store with my brand new pair of size 10 jeans.

Below is a very cold, wet and happy me walking the five miles across the Mackinaw Bridge on Labor Day of this year. Something that never would have been possible 10 years ago.



Dr. McDougall's Comments

Real success is measured in years and decades, not in days, weeks, or months. Often I get an email that begins by telling me that he/she heard a lecture or radio broadcast or read a book of mine 25 or more years ago and started the McDougall Diet. Now, the writer tells me he/she is enjoying life and active at 60, 70, 80 or 90 years old. The letter continues with real life comparisons: Most of his/her friends of a similar age are confined to an assisted care facility, or worse yet, dead. They are all on a medicine chest full of drugs. The only common factor in all of these heartening letters I receive is the adoption of a starch-based diet.

Common belief in the wrong diet—one based on meat, dairy products and other junk-foods—has caused our current state of poor health. Look around and notice that people are fat and sick. To make matters worse, these lost souls believe they will be saved by medications. Faith in these false gods (meat and medicine) has meant that two-thirds of people are overweight, half have risk factors that predict a shorter, more miserable life, and more than one-third are on medications. Even children suffer: one-third of them are fat and 7% are on two or more [medications](#).

Nothing is of more importance for a healthy life than knowing what to eat. Everyone has been on a diet: a plan to lose weight, but not to restore health. These dieting experiences have upturned people's lives for a week or a month but left them with memories of hunger pains and tasteless meals accompanied by disappointment, guilt, and remorse. These diets fail for one common reason: They do not address the underlying malnutrition. The results are nothing for a patient or a "diet doctor" to be proud of. Bragging rights come after years of hearing hundreds of long-term success stories like Cathy Stewart's. I can look back over my more than 35 years of consistent teachings and say John and Mary McDougall teach a message that works for a lifetime.

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