

Introduction

My name is Karen, and I am 100 pounds overweight.

100 pounds ago, I sat in front of my camera, hit record, and made that statement. That's how this project started in March of 2012. Back then, I had been thinking about losing weight for quite a while. Like many people, I had some success with weight loss for a short period of time, and then I'd gain it back.

For the entirety of my adult life, I was obese. Even though I enjoyed sports, I instead busied myself with other things, and didn't stay fit or develop sustainable, healthy habits. The cycle of losing weight and gaining it back was endless. I felt hopeless, like a failure, like another statistic. Things eventually caught up to me, and I found my life had gotten to a point where I'd have to do something about it. Emotional and physical stress were wreaking havoc on my body. My mind was a mess. The decisions I was making, relationships I was in and my environment were toxic. I was miserable. I was punishing myself and allowing myself to be abused by others. I *let* it happen; I routinely associated love with abuse. This had been a common theme in my life: the relationships I had with family and loved ones, my romantic relationships, my behavior with food, alcohol, drugs, sex, work, video games...anything I loved, I'd do or use it to excess. It always ended badly, and I continued to hurt myself and let others hurt me.

Change happens when we need it, not when we're ready for it. When I finally accepted that my life needed a makeover, I sure wasn't ready, but I knew it had to happen. It was time to get very uncomfortable. It was time to do something very challenging.

When this started, I weighed 257 pounds, and wanted to lose 100 pounds. At five feet six inches tall, I felt that 157 pounds would be an ideal, healthy weight for my shape and height.

My first action was writing "100 reasons to lose 100 pounds" in big bold letters on top of a sheet of paper. I tore that sheet of paper out of my notebook, wrote the number 1 followed by the first reason, and I kept that sheet of paper with me, adding more reasons as they came to mind. The first few reasons came pretty easily. The next few came with some time. The remaining reasons took a bit longer, and then eventually, I had several sheets of paper with 100 reasons total.

Some of my reasons are pretty obvious – health, happiness and well-being. Some of them are interest-based, like sports, wearing costumes, and improving endurance. There are several reasons that are silly, even laughable – you'll see! There are also reasons that were inspired by deep hurts, like addiction, family drama, relationships, and the stresses of work and school.

My plan was to shoot 100 videos, each discussing a reason why I wanted to lose 100 pounds. I hoped that I would lose the 100 pounds and document the process with 100 videos, one for each pound lost.

I did it. I lost 100 pounds, and I shot 100 videos (they are linked in each reason of this book).

Now that I'm on the other end, I can look back and say that it's been an amazing ride! Any time we do something difficult and succeed, there's a great story that goes with it. The whole point of having experiences is to relate to others by sharing our successes and stories.

I hope my story gives hope, inspiration, and courage to anyone struggling with body image, self-worth, excess tendencies, addiction, sexual orientation, anger, mental illness, or any of the other issues that make us feel horribly. There IS hope. There IS support. There IS love out there, and there are ways to spark it and keep it roaring within.

It's all about love; how to find it in ourselves, around us in others, and in everything we see and do. It's not easy to change our lifestyle and habits, but, it's definitely worth it! The hard work pays off. It's a struggle, and good habits make it doable.

Weight loss had always seemed like a helpless, losing battle, and now that I've sustained a healthy lifestyle, I can happily say that it works! Over time, even with mistakes, we can rise from each fall, and we learn from every experience, good and bad. Life gives us lessons and blessings. They're all conducive to our personal growth.

Change happens in moments, one at a time. Those moments all add up!

It's my hope and dream to use my story to encourage, inspire, and motivate anyone struggling to find that light within and realize that you CAN do this!

Wishing you love, prosperity, success, and abundance, now and always!

From my heart to yours,
Karen Petersen

Preface

Do you struggle with excess tendencies? Do you have a troublesome relationship with food, exercise, alcohol, drugs, family, work, anger, stress, anxiety, intimacy, sexuality, and a host of other things?

Do you want to create habits to change your life for the better?

This book was written to give an honest, from-the-gut-account of a transition into a healthy lifestyle. My journey – changing my life and documenting it on video and in this book – required humility, honesty, and a willingness to make mistakes, learn from them, to be accountable, and to make difficult choices every day, moment to moment. My intention has always been to be open and sincere about my struggles as well as my triumphs. I made many mistakes. Sometimes I still do! However, I also celebrate victories. These go hand-in-hand; the victories are worthy of celebration *because* of the struggles it took to get there.

When I recorded the videos for the series, I did my best to note the date I recorded the video as well as my weight that day. Some of the videos are missing all of the specifics; however, they all have a reason from the original list of 100 Reasons to Lose 100 Pounds.

Through my experience, I found some of the reasons applicable after I hit my goal. As I've said before, I also discovered that some of them turned out differently than I had expected. I also discovered new reasons to *stay* healthy. For me, that just goes to show that there can often be a vast difference between what we want and what we need. I needed to get healthy, and it's my hope and dream to help reduce the obesity rate in our country and worldwide, to save lives, to spread hope and encouragement to people who have been neglected, abused, and bullied, and to help cut down on preventative illness. If my good health turned out to be the **ONLY** outcome of this project, then that is reason enough to keep going.

The biggest lesson I've gotten from losing 100 pounds and staying fit and healthy was that the journey is more important than the goal, because what we learn in the journey keeps the goal sustainable. After all, the work doesn't end when we reach our goal. For me, hitting my goal was just the beginning!

Every day I face the same challenges that I've always had. The difference now is that I have habits to help me make better decisions and to live a prosperous, content, spiritual, and healthy life. Instead of focus on maintaining a healthy lifestyle forever, I personally find it best to just focus on today. If I can make good choices today, then I've honored my goal and my journey. Tomorrow is another day. Today, this moment, being in the present is what gets me through.

Every day presents additional opportunities to learn, to grow, and to share our blessings and lessons with others. Every day is a blessing, and we will always find a lesson. Stay willing, stay

committed, and document the process to remember what it was like, and to celebrate all the successes!

At the end of each reason in this book, there are some questions, assignments, activities or challenges. You may complete as many as you'd like. I suggest keeping a journal (a notebook works great!) to chronicle your own journey, and to address these questions. You can even start your own list of reasons! Remember to take it easy on yourself, and go at your own pace. After all, I'm not grading you and I'm certainly not judging you! If you can manage one reason a day and the corresponding challenge, that's wonderful! If that's too difficult, then do the best you can with the time you have. This is a journey, and an investment. Do what you can, when you can. As long as you're taking some time out for yourself every day and doing your very best, then you're already heading in an amazing direction!

We are in this together. You can do this. It CAN be done. It HAS been done!

Are you ready to change your life for the better? I'd LOVE to hear about your journey into wellness! I run a group called the [Army of 100](#). Our group is meant to support and encourage people, and we've seen people in our world-wide group do amazing things! Join us, and be the next Smashing Success Story!

All of the links to each reason, each video for the reason, and the resources mentioned in this book can be found at <http://mindheartswole.com/100reasonstolose100pounds/>

100 Tips for Developing a Healthy Lifestyle

1. Compile a list of why you want to embark on a healthy lifestyle
2. Plan for solid rest
3. Develop a sleep schedule
4. There is only one Monday per week, and there are six other days. Why wait until Monday when you can start today? Start at any time. You can start your next meal. Start right now. Start with one simple habit and build on from there
5. Start a workout routine by doing something you enjoy for just FIVE minutes, three days a week. Build on that and work up to 10 minutes three days a week, then keep adding on five minutes per week until you hit 20 minutes of exercise for three days a week. Add more gradually. The point is to whet the appetite; starting with 30 minutes of exercise can be overwhelming, and 5 minutes is totally do-able! Take it easy on yourself. Set small, manageable, and realistic goals.
6. Remove the word “can't” from your vocabulary. Every time you feel like saying you can't, say “I CAN!” The result? You WILL!
7. No more complaining. Instead, come up with an action step to take to remedy the complaint. If nothing comes to mind, write it down, put it in a jar, and when the jar gets full, burn all the notes. Major catharsis!
8. Proper planning produces results! Plan your meals, and if you must eat out, know what is available before you order. Avoid impulsively purchased meals! When we plan properly, we're optimizing our time to focus on what we're good at and what's worth our time. Plan and prepare your meals in advance to spend more of your time where you can be a genius, doing what you do best, and doing what you LOVE to do!
9. Practice daily gratitude. This helps us shift our mindset from how things “should” be to appreciating everything that we have.
10. Tell yourself “I want to do this” instead of “I have to do this” whenever facing a challenge. That shift will work wonders!
11. Plan at least one rest/active recovery day. This doesn't mean lounging around all day; you can take a quiet, slow, meditative walk or practice restorative yoga. Give your body rest, but avoid getting *too* restful.
12. Focus on daily goals and tasks. Instead of looking at the HUGE intimidating big picture, just focus on what can be done today. Habits are built over time and not established immediately. Pick one thing to start with.
13. Anything that sounds too good to be true very likely is. There is no easy way. The hard work is worth it, and it's done in moments, one at a time. Enjoy the journey instead of fixate on the destination!
14. Write an inspirational phrase on your mirror and say it daily. Some examples are:
 - “I'm worth it.”
 - “We are as good as our greatest day, even if we have not had it yet.”
 - “I'm a healthy and strong woman (or man).”
 - “I am absolutely fabulous!”
 - “Look how far I've come!”
 - “I've survived everything so far, I can now thrive.”Get creative and come up with some of your own!
15. Write your goals or type them up and print them. Hang them in places you'll see them

regularly.

16. Buy an outfit a few sizes smaller than your current size. Only a few sizes. Try it on after a few months. Once it fits, wear it proudly, and then buy another outfit a few sizes smaller. Do this routinely, a few sizes at a time, until you can buy an outfit in your goal size.
17. Break things down into simple tasks. Instead of dreading a workout, just put on your workout clothes. Then, stretch. Then, start warming up, get yourself through each moment by staying present and go through each motion, one by one.
18. Set yourself up for success by having your workout clothes set out the night before, or even sleeping in them. Setting the stage is as important as walking on it.
19. Take deep breaths when stressed. Avoid reacting angrily. Those two seconds will change your life (I promise)!
20. Growth happens outside the comfort zone. When we lift weights, we build muscle by doing one or two repetitions past what we think we're capable of. These are magic moments. The same thing happens when we rise to challenges.
21. Our bodies are machines, and way more evolved than our highly intelligent brains. Our bodies are more capable than our minds believe them to be. The limits in our brains are just the ego, wanting us to feel badly for ourselves, wanting us to feel significant because of the struggle. Meanwhile, your body grows *in spite* of the struggle. Your body grows *because* of the struggle. This is how we are conditioned, and this is how we have evolved.
22. Explore different workouts, group fitness classes, and all different types of sports and workouts. Take on a new hobby, like roller skating, dancing, and swimming. Mix things up as you go. Add variety to your routine. Explore. It will keep you curious, and it will engage your body in new and different ways!
23. Add one good habit at a time after you've mastered a new habit. By adding just one at a time, it becomes sustainable and you can build on from there. Give yourself at least a whole week of success with a new positive habit before adding another. Aim for one new healthy habit per month.
24. Give yourself lots of time. We hear the saccharine stories about "overnight success," but that is a complete and utter facade. The sensation was overnight; the success was the result of a lot of hard work, built over time. Even people who have had a lot of luck had a lot of tough breaks along the way. The good breaks are rare, and the tough times are plenty. That is why we celebrate the victories, and mourn the losses.
25. Choose to be a victor instead of a victim. Lots of things happen. When we shift our mentality into seeing it as an opportunity instead of a tragedy, we can then come up with solutions to deal with it. If we keep eating, drinking, and drugging our way through a pain, we can never really feel it and thus we cannot heal it. Feel. Then heal.
26. Think about what you can do and what you're capable of. Mobility issues, injuries, and certain limitations are not a handicap or a crutch; they present opportunities. You can still get fit and lose weight without full and comprehensive use of your body. There are plenty of athletes that are missing limbs, have health issues, and have plenty of challenges. Instead of feeling victimized by their situation, they've used it as an opportunity to grow. Make a list of all the things that you can do, as opposed to fixate on what you can't do. Fitness is also matter of mindset.
27. Open your heart, allow yourself to be vulnerable. You don't have to tough your way through it. It takes more strength and courage to allow yourself to be vulnerable than it

does to build up a wall. Strength is having the integrity to allow yourself to feel bad things.

28. Understand that good far outweighs the bad, and by opening ourselves up to better opportunities, we're able to walk away from the things that hurt us. Love doesn't hurt. Hurtful people hurt. Don't confuse codependency with love.
29. Make the right choice instead of the easy choice.
30. Put yourself as your priority. When you take care of yourself, everything else takes care of itself. Prioritize tasks. Make your health, wellness and fitness your priority.
31. Plan your day. Planning reduces stress because you're in charge and not merely reacting. Develop a schedule, plan your meals and workouts, and stick to your plan. Leave some room for the unexpected. Stay focused. Freedom comes from doing what you need to first, freeing time to do what you want to do later.
32. Dance, regardless of whether you're being watched, alone, or with others. It doesn't matter how it looks. Just have fun!
33. Throughout your day, breathe deeply and stretch often. Set timers on your phone to remind yourself (every hour or so).
34. Allow time for breaks in your busy/work times. Schedule breaks to breathe, go to the bathroom, refill your water, get fresh air, and so forth. Move a lot. It'll keep your body happy and your brain fresh!
35. Ask for help when you need it. Don't be shy. You've always got help available if you ask. Sometimes you may need to be persistent. Keep going!
36. Try a gym, fitness center and/or yoga studio before committing to a membership. Many have a buddy pass, guest pass or first class free option. Shop around. Go for a fitness center with a friendly and helpful staff, group fitness classes, accessible hours, plenty of variety, and fewer frills (the less stuff – like juice bars-- the better the value for you). Go somewhere you feel comfortable. Don't get sold or pressured into a membership. Try it out. Try LOTS of them out until you find your fit!
37. Evaluate your goals weekly, and adjust as needed to keep them attainable and measurable. This will encourage you to stay on track!
38. Believe in yourself. It's a very simple concept, and even if it is a challenge to live it out, remind yourself that you *can* do it.
39. Replace bad habits (overeating, skipping workouts) with new, healthy habits. For instance, when you feel stressed, take ten deep, cleansing breaths. When bored, take a break and walk stairs. Read a book for a few minutes. Keep your mind busy.
40. Give yourself pep talks every time you look in the mirror. Admire your assets. Love your body as it is.
41. Document your journey. Keep a journal. Shoot video. Take pictures.
42. Do your measurements every few months and note the changes. Weighing in can be a bit deceiving when we're losing fat and building muscle, and measurements are a great way to mark progress!
43. The little things add up, so soak them up and enjoy EVERY positive step you're taking!
44. Don't sweat the small stuff. It really is just that – small stuff. By doing this, you'll ultimately see that all the things we worry about are just small, temporary annoyances.
45. Make a list of healthy foods you enjoy. Focus on what you like and what you can have, instead of what you “shouldn't” have.
46. Give yourself some space and allowance for a cheat meal once to three times a week (if

you have three cheat meals, have them on separate, non-consecutive days). Keep portions in moderation. We tend to go all-out on both ends of the spectrum (too “healthy”/restrictive, and then overly excessive). The “secret” to sustainable healthy living is to find balance! Think in terms of moderation, instead of elimination. You don't have to give up your favorite things. Just do them more sensibly. For instance, you can have pizza, wings, burgers, fries, and ice cream. You can have these things, just not all in one sitting, or in one day! Leave room for cheat meals, and an occasional cheat day. Allow yourself to enjoy things that you regularly enjoy. By doing so in moderation, it will prevent the bad habit of over indulging.

47. A personal favorite trick – eat the biggest meal in the middle of the day. This gives your body the rest of the day to burn.
48. Eat your carbohydrates, especially earlier in your day! Forget crash-and-burn diets! NO DIETS! Eat reasonably. Our bodies need proteins, fats AND carbohydrates!
49. Eat lots of fruits and vegetables. When it comes to vegetables, eat as MANY as you'd like, especially leafy greens! Eat sweet potatoes and legumes (beans) in moderation.
50. For supper, eat lean proteins and vegetables. If you must have carbohydrates (for instance, if you're eating supper after a workout), make those carbohydrates simple, like vegetables and sweet potatoes (instead of white potatoes, pasta, rice, beans and sugary foods). Just watch your portions.
51. Limit alcohol consumption. Avoid drinking your calories. Personally I suggest eliminating alcohol altogether. Find what works best for you. If you cannot cut it out totally, limit yourself to one to two drinks maximum per week. Do this on the day before your rest day. Even one alcoholic drink will affect your workouts – guaranteed!
52. Eat slowly. Take small bites. Eat mindfully. Pray between fork/spoonfuls. Honor each meal. This is how we fuel our bodies. It's an act of self-love and maintenance. If we've abused food in the past, this is a great time to change how we view, consume, and think about food. Food is a necessity. Let's stop resenting it and develop better attitudes and habits with food.
53. It's much easier to resist temptation when there are only healthy food options in the house. Remove all unhealthy and trigger foods from the pantry, refrigerator and freezer. Stock only healthy options.
54. When obsessing about a specific food, question yourself: Is it available in single-serving? Can I split it with someone? Why am I craving this?
55. Slowly wean yourself off of sugary sweets and drinks. Don't sweat eliminating things completely. Switch from sodas to diet sodas if you must, preferably sparkling water with natural flavoring added, or to flavored non-carbonated water.
56. Keep your mouth busy by chewing gum, coffee stirrers or straws. Quite often the oral fixation is a psychological addiction.
57. Try all kinds of healthy recipes. Cut the recipe as needed, depending on how many people you're serving. If it's a 6-serving recipe and you're cooking for yourself, cut the recipe in half. Once you've made your plate, put the remaining two portions into two containers for meals later in the week!
58. Eat smaller portions of your favorite foods. Focus on moderation instead of total elimination.
59. Add healthy foods into your diet. Add variety by trying different fruits and vegetables.
60. Reduce portions and eat more often. Eat three small meals, with two to three snacks,

instead of two or three big meals per day.

61. Eat breakfast. This bears repeating - eat breakfast. I'll repeat it again. Eat. Breakfast.
62. Stay away from supplements. Supplements are a subsidiary of the diet industry, which is a multi-billion-dollar industry with a 95% failure rate. Avoid sensation, and focus on changing your lifestyle. There is no quick fix. Supplements are pushed on desperate people like drugs are pushed onto addicts. Sure, they give you a lot of stuff for free at first, but that is how they draw you in.
63. Avoid getting into any weight loss products, and especially avoid selling these products. Stay away from expensive wraps, pills, meal replacement supplements, energy products and other non-regulated items. Just eat healthy, exercise, and develop a mindfulness routine (like prayer and meditation).
64. If you really want to spend the money on health products, switch over to organic produce.
65. Think about textures, and replace go-to craving foods with healthier options. For instance, if you like crunchy things like chips, get lots of raw veggies, like carrots. Carrots are very healthy, inexpensive, & a great grab-and-go type food. Buy a bunch of carrots, peel them, and now you have a snack anytime. It's always better to overindulge in carrots instead of a bag of potato chips!
66. Learn to roast vegetables - it's very simple. Chop them up, mix with a bit of olive oil, salt and pepper. Roast them 425 Fahrenheit for at least 30 minutes, stirring and checking on them every 20 minutes or so until they are beautifully browned. Roasted vegetables are delicious, a great source of nutrients, and a guilt-free healthy meal!
67. If you tend to eat big portions, start adding healthy, homemade soups into your meal plans. Add lots of vegetables.
68. Salads are another great way to eat a lot of food without taking in excessive calories. Fill them with fresh vegetables and dress them simply with lemon juice or portioned homemade dressings.
69. End your meal with a big hot mug of tea. Herbal tea is a great way end of the evening.
70. Food is fuel, so treat your body like a high-performance machine. Feed yourself well, often, and plenty!
71. Read labels carefully. Often "natural" can be deceiving. Watch out for added sugars!
72. Avoid sugar-free and fat-free substitutes. Often sugar-free substitutes have added fat, and fat-free substitutes have added sugar.
73. Choose more foods with no labels and a short shelf-life: fresh produce, lean meats, and unprocessed whole foods.
74. Food that can be prepared in bulk, portioned into containers, and frozen are a great way to optimize your time and resources. Find loads of recipes that are healthy, simple, and appealing to you. Start with what you're familiar with and get curious.
75. Shop for in-season, local produce whenever possible. This will save you money and you'll get the best there is when produce is at its peak!
76. Research sale items, seasonal items and specials, and design your menu and meal plans around what's available to save money.
77. Log your meals and your moods each time you eat. This will help you notice patterns – especially cravings associated with moods!
78. Understand hunger versus boredom. Your mood, activity level and logs will help you notice this.
79. To understand what hunger feels like, have a meal in front of you, push it away, and think

about eating it. Imagine the first bite. Meditate on this for several moments, and then eat. Then, leave the last bite on the plate. That will give good perspective!

80. Remove trigger foods from your home. If you want a treat or are planning a cheat meal, go out and get it, and don't stock it in the house!
81. Surround yourself with people and things that inspire you. If something (or someone) is dragging you down, evaluate how important it is and how it contributes to your wellness. Sometimes, things have to go, and that's okay. Let them go.
82. Read daily inspiration! Fill your mind with motivational and encouraging words, pictures and phrases!
83. Tell your family and friends about your journey into a healthy lifestyle and ask for their support. Often our spouses, significant others, close family and friends may offer temptations and say things like, "you're great the way you are" (and you certainly are). They are trying to be supportive. Thank them for loving you. However, if this seems like sabotage, it may very well be. Politely decline any temptations that may cause you to over-indulge.
84. Listen to upbeat music, whether you are working out, planning your playlist for the next workout, or just doing things around the house! Listen to energizing music when you want to be energized – don't just save it for your workouts.
85. Laugh often. Read funny stories. Look up cat videos online. Read the comics. Find plenty of reasons to smile!
86. Develop a buddy system. Encourage others to join you in your quest. Call these people when things are challenging or when you have great news, or to lend an ear when they need to talk. We get outside of ourselves by finding the company of others. Curiosity cures loneliness.
87. Find mentors. Choose successful who have what you want. Offer to help them, and seek people who are willing to help you.
88. Follow social media of people you admire. Surround yourself with positive influence.
89. Limit contact with people who drain you, complain incessantly, and have horrible habits. This doesn't make them "bad people," it just makes them bad influences.
90. Ask the right questions to the right people. For instance, speak with a nutrition advisor about meal plans. Ask a personal trainer about a fitness plan. Go to the right people for the appropriate things.
91. When you meet people who have what you want, ask them lots of questions. Listen to their answers intently. Don't compare, complain, and rationalize why you "can't" (remember - we eliminated that word) to them! They have their own journey and you have yours. Just as they're great and successful at something, you are great and successful at something.
92. Try different mobile applications, websites and tools to help you in your journey. Some great ones are: Sparkpeople, My Fitness Pal, Endomondo, and WOD Box. Ask around and try a bunch!
93. Talk among your friends and family, and recruit them in your journey! Create a group, host dinners, crafting parties, group meetings and discussions! Plan meals together, have a group cooking day – crock pot swaps are great! Everyone brings a crock pot and ingredients, cooks their respective meal and when they're done, everyone takes home a variety of meals from everyone who participated!
94. Plan your work, and work your plan. Stick with it. Leave room for rest, recovery, and

rewards!

95. Treat yourself with rewards for hitting milestones! The only rule here – do not use food as a reward.
96. Experiences make for GREAT rewards!
97. Massages are a great reward!
98. Trips and vacations are another awesome reward!
99. Buying a new piece of fitness equipment is an excellent reward – a bicycle, free weights, a yoga mat and new sneakers are wonderful!
100. Print this list and add more ideas as you think of them!

100 Reasons To Lose 100 Pounds
A Smashing Transformation in Mind, Body and Spirit
by Karen Petersen



Reason #1: To heal and recover, physically and emotionally

Recorded on March 3, 2012

Weight: 257 pounds

When I started this series, all I had was an idea, the desire, and a list of 100 Reasons to Lose 100 pounds of excess body fat. At 257 pounds, losing 100 pounds of fat would put me at a healthy weight for my height and build.

On paper, I had gotten away with poor health for a while. Eventually, I wasn't getting away with it any longer. Stress, bad relationships, my job, and a lack of exercise combined with eating too much food (and unhealthy food) took its toll, and I realized that I wasn't taking care of myself. That needed to change.

Though I still struggled with accepting myself as a person (let alone a heavyset person), overall, I knew that I have a good soul and that I deserved to be loved, especially by myself. I wanted to let my huge, brilliant, inner light shine, and yet I knew the excess fat was holding me back from truly moving forward to where I wanted to be in my life.

I knew I wanted to lose the weight, and as hard as it would be and as long as it would take, it had to start somewhere.

Healing emotionally, I knew, would also be a huge building block to improving my health. For a long time, I was very angry. Anxiety had always been a huge part of my story, and I was living with constant stress. Life had presented me with bigger challenges and eventually, anger, frustration and anxiety started causing me physical issues. I decided that managing stress (especially my lifestyle) would be the key to get me healthy again. This time, I knew that if I wanted to feel well and have my energy back, I had to change my habits.

Physical movement has always been something I enjoy, and I can spend hours working out, doing outdoor tasks and generally getting hot and sweaty. The biggest problem for me has always been how I eat and what I eat. Unfortunately, it takes longer to work off excess calories than it does to ingest them. Ten minutes of bad food choices can make an hour-long workout go

down the drain. Once I got a good handle on my bad habits, the physical health benefits would naturally follow.

With all this in mind and armed with awareness, motivation, and 99 more reasons, this was the moment that I had enough and was ready for something better. I was ready to take ownership of how I allowed myself to be treated, especially by myself.

So, I got out my digital camera and started recording, without a clue about how I was going to do it. I just knew that I wanted to, and that I was capable of it.

[This is the first reason that I recorded](#), and every time I see a screen shot or watch it again, I'm so damn proud of myself for doing this. Can I believe that was me? Hell yeah I can! I still see that woman, I still think some of those thoughts, and sometimes, I still feel sadness like I did back then. However, now my lifestyle has adjusted, and so have my habits. The thoughts don't linger the same way because I am taking good care of myself.

We all have things we want to do to improve our lives, and the biggest step is to take the first step. Talking and thinking only go so far. Action gets things done.

It took me a long time to do it, and it's going to take a lifetime to keep going. It's worth the effort. It's worth doing it because I choose to. I want to!

Reason #1 is huge because it's when I finally understood that I have to take care of myself. I needed to focus on me. I was the only one that could do it.

The first step can be the hardest, and so many of us talk about it. Very few follow through. Even fewer keep going. It's those who persist who are successful.

I chose to give it hell!

I *still* do!

Questions:

How do you feel now?

How do you want to feel?

Is your lifestyle affecting your health?



Reason #2: [So I can find peace and a clear mind](#)

Recorded on April 17, 2012

Weight: 249 pounds

I've read that stressing an event is worse than the stress of the event itself, so I wanted to stop thinking the same, repetitive, damaging thoughts. Finding clarity had always been an issue for me, so I wanted to focus on acceptance and gratitude.

Things that have also helped me stay calm along the journey (and after as well):

1. Make good nutritional choices – they affect mood, overall outlook, sleep patterns and curb cravings
2. Don't push too hard – going at a steady pace keeps things sustainable
3. Keep realistic goals – expecting too much too soon only leads to disappointment and discouragement

Using these things, I started building good habits, and once I found consistency, I'd add more things, one at a time. I went from eating about once or twice a day (in vast portions and drinking sodas and coffee all day) to eating three to five smaller meals throughout the day. My soda consumption went from three to five a day down to one a day, then one a week, and then I cut them out totally. Coffee was eliminated as well. Portion control was also becoming a habit, and I was allowing myself an occasional indulgence. I was finding balance.

From the video for Reason #2:

Keeping calm and finding peace and a clear mind is a day by day, one day at a time process, just like this weight loss is. I'm hoping as I continue to be successful, it'll affect other components of my life, too. Here's to the next one, one day at a time.

It was, it has been, and I fully acknowledge that it will always be.

It's worth it!

Activity:

Read this, and then close your eyes and do the activity.

Imagine something that upsets you, stresses you out, and frustrates you. See this clearly in your mind. Take a deep breath in, and imagine putting that situation into a balloon. Fill the balloon in your mind, and as you exhale, imagine that balloon has been released. Take nine more breaths by slowly inhaling, imagining peace, love and light filling you. With each exhale, feel relief; accept it and receive it. When you finish the tenth breath, take one more deep breath in, eyes open, mind at ease, and exhale, feeling the release of whatever you've been holding onto. Let the positive energy replace that stress. Do this every time you feel stressed out about something. If you don't have time for ten breaths, take at least five.



Reason #3: [To look and feel great](#)
Recorded on April 24, 2012

When we see images promoting weight loss, diets, and gyms, we see fit, beautiful, ideal and sculpted people talking about how we can do it, too. That image tricks us into thinking we can look like that, and it engenders an idea that there is a certain *look* associated with health.

I bought into the idea that looks are an indication of overall well-being. I thought losing weight would make me look a certain way. Now I know that's definitely not the case. I see the merits of this reason, and I also know why I originally came up with it.

The reasons were written and the series was recorded as I was making a big transition in my life – particularly, after a break-up. I wanted to feel empowered, so I was fixated on looking hot so I could look and feel desirable. Now that I've done it, that attention, to be forthright, makes me super skeptical.

We all want people to be how we idealize them to be, and good-looking people are, on the whole, well-liked and given extra passes by society. Good-looking folks tend to get more of the things we desire – sex, power, getting away with things and given many, many extra chances. I wanted to get in on that.

Looking good was for my ego, but admitting that I want to feel great was for my soul. I wanted to feel healthy in mind, body and spirit. That happens not by “losing weight”, but by changing my *life* and my *thoughts*.

Now people tell me “you look so much better,” and ask me “who was that girl”?

I am and have always been the same person, so “looking good” now doesn't necessarily make me “feel great”. I look good because I feel good, and I feel good because I take good care of myself!

[When I shot Reason #3](#), I had just finished watching [Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead](#), and I wanted to follow Joe Cross's 10-day juice cleanse.

This was another endeavor that sounded so much better than the reality of it!

About the juice cleanse: To put it bluntly, I hated it! I did it for ten days total and felt tired, irritable, and SO hungry ALL the time! I needed at least ten hours of sleep per night, and my workouts were limited to short walks. I even bulked up my juices with banana, avocado and whole mangoes, and still didn't feel energized. It was on the eighth day out of ten that I finally started getting my energy back. In those ten days, I lost a LOT of weight. A LOT. Like 14 pounds!

After I got back on solid food, I gained some of it back immediately, and the rest of it compounded shortly after.

In short, it was good because it taught me about moderation and appreciating food. While I was on the fast, I was very dedicated and stuck with it. It helped me realize that when I set a goal, I see it through. It was bad for sustainability, satisfaction, feeling full (which, for me, is a necessary component to stick with a nutrition plan), and especially for my energy. The film said it would take about four days for the mood and energy to re-calibrate. For me, it took twice that time.

Since the cleanse, I have not gone on another juice cleanse, and I really don't want to again!

I'm glad I tried it, and it taught me what actually works for me: regular exercise, staying calm, eating clean, and allowing some indulgence in moderation (portion control is key!).

Assignment:

Put on your favorite outfit, get dressed up, do your hair, put on perfume/cologne and then stand in front of the mirror. Admire how amazing you look. Own that look! Look yourself in the eyes and just soak it all in. Spoil yourself for the sake of spoiling yourself. Look good for *you*. When we dress up and feel good, we attract positive attention because it's shining from within! Tell yourself positive things about how you feel and how you look. Give yourself a wink and say something to yourself that you like hearing others say to you. Some examples are:

“Hey gorgeous!”

“You look beautiful!”

“Hello, stud!”

“You are glowing!”

“Wow, look at you owning that! Rock on!”

Grab your notebook/journal and write how you feel. Accept and love yourself now, in this moment. Appreciate how good you look and feel.



Reason #4 – Because people will compliment me on my progress
Recorded on July 31, 2012

Eating right, exercising, and getting enough sleep.

This is from the video for Reason 4. These are common knowledge. We all know what we are *supposed* to do in order to be healthy. Knowing and doing are very different.

When I recorded this reason, I had implemented strategies and was getting compliments, and actually seeing the changes myself. Getting compliments are great, but in all honesty, it didn't turn out the way I expected it to.

Compliments were hard to accept. It was hard for me to allow all this good energy into my life when, for so long, I neglected to allow it in. I was fearful. My concept of love was always coupled with manipulation and abuse. So, when complimented, I felt like someone *wanted something from me*.

It's taken a long time for me to break out of my old thinking. Now, I know that I control how I receive compliments. People may say kind things for the sake of being kind. I can take it for what it is worth. That has eased the burden of expectation – I don't expect anything when kindness is shared, and they don't expect anything in return.

Questions:

How do you feel when you compliment someone?

How does it feel when people say nice things to you?

Would you like to be treated kindly?

Do you think you deserve to be treated with love and respect? Why?



Reason #5: [So I can share my experience and encourage people](#)

Recorded on September 17, 2012

Weight: 237 pounds

When I started writing my list, I knew that sharing my experience with others was going to be a big component. By sharing what I was going through, I hoped to relate to others who have also struggled with obesity. I wanted to help proliferate healthy lifestyles.

It's important to share our own successes so that others can learn how to do it. Being honest, real, and sincere about the victories as well as the setbacks is great encouragement to people, because mistakes teach us lessons. Sharing enables others to learn from our mistakes, and shows that it's okay to mess up. Successful people make mistakes all the time! Life is never a straightforward path, and we learn to adapt.

Even today, I have struggles. Sometimes, a cheat meal turns into a cheat day and a cheat weekend. Instead of give up, berate myself, or go to extremes, I just get back to healthy eating, working out and eating the right portions of the right foods. Mistakes happen! It's what we do after that makes a huge difference.

Sharing is also important for me because it keeps me accountable. Documenting and speaking about my journey are constant reminders of where I've been, and doing so keeps me headed in the right direction.

While going through the experience I needed all the encouragement I could get. I still do! I've been successful because of the work others before me have shared, because of what I've read (I keep an updated list on my website here: <http://mindheartswole.com/mind/>), and by listening to the stories of people who have what I want, and have worked hard to get it. I learned from others before me, and I realized that my story will help others write their own!

Activity:

If you haven't already, take a picture of yourself, as your “before” image. Be your true self – no

fake smiles, and no forced frowns. Just be real. Be in comfortable clothes, and allow yourself to be raw and authentic. Write down the day and time you've taken this picture, and print it out.

Go out and get a poster board, and put your picture on it. Write three key phrases on top, and make this your mantra (for instance, my three phrases are: moderation, loveable, acceptance. I'll say a mantra of, "I practice moderation in good nutrition, workouts, and work. I am loveable. I am accepted as I am"). Find images from magazines that appeal to you and are conducive to your goals. Pictures of healthy meals, fruits, salads, and snacks work great! Post these to your board. Leave spaces for in-progress pictures, and for noting the dates (and weights or measurements if you'd like). Have a big space reserved for your goal spot, and mark it. Have a path on your board leading to this spot. As you work toward your goal, fill the spaces with empowering, positive and uplifting things documenting your journey. Put your board in a highly visible area. Look at it every day. Say the mantra out loud every time you look at your board.

Share this activity with people and host a crafting day!

One of my visuals is my tracking board – this board represents my starting weight and each of the 100 pounds I wanted to lose to hit my goal weight. I still have it and it's a great reminder of where I've been, why I did this, and how I did it!

