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[BACK TO ISSUE SEVEN](#)

GUTS TO GLORY

Free to Climb Up Mountains!

By Bob Wilson ,BS,DTR

I lost 250 pounds and have kept it off for 32 years. I have been drug and alcohol-free for 16 years. When I started my journey, my lifestyle behaviors were out-of-control and unhealthy. I weighed 400 pounds in the eighth grade. I was always the fattest kid in school. My eating habits and lifestyle kept me that way. How did I do it? Read on.

For me, it turned out to be pretty easy to learn about new foods and to become more active in my daily life. I found the difficult areas to transform to be life-balance, self-esteem and self-talk, depression, emotional eating, and learning the skill of problem solving when things weren't going well. I found that success at losing weight and keeping it off requires learning a series of new lifestyle skills.

SKILL #1: Take time to create a new life. If I don't make the time to evaluate my patterns, select skills to try out, and practice them, I find myself stuck with the same old habits that kept me overweight and unhealthy.

The pattern of "over-commitment to others and under-commitment to myself" sets me up to make unhealthy choices in my life. This pattern has been a key obstacle to health. Does your brain and heart dream up commitments that your body can't keep?

SKILL #2: I couldn't change what I didn't observe. Keeping a food and lifestyle journal is like looking in a mirror. I can see the type and amounts of food I eat each day, and how my emotions, people, places, and events influence my choices. I can notice my problem eating and lifestyle patterns. I can also see the benefits of trying out new foods or different lifestyle choices. Keeping a journal allows me to "write away" the pounds. I discovered how to be my own lifestyle trainer and coach.

SKILL #3: Make great tasting, healthy eating a priority – even in the midst of a hectic lifestyle. Plan ahead. An ounce of preplanning is worth a pound of fat! I discovered menu planning that celebrates vegetables and use food to fuel my busy lifestyle and to provide energy for all the activities I enjoy. I found a new, healthful style of eating happy new recipe and new food idea at a time. Also, mouth fun, enjoying what I eat, is essential if I'm going to make my new choices a permanent part of my lifestyle and not just a "diet."

SKILL #4: The reward for consistent physical activity is vibrancy! I began to feel the power, to celebrate the inner strength and joy of well being that come from allowing my body to experience the joy of movement.

I make fitness a priority. I plan family and personal vacations around fitness, or invite a colleague to "do business" over a walk rather than lunch, coffee, or drinks. I walk to the bank to use the teller machine.

Bob's Workout

My normal workout is with daily activities — so I mow my own grass, edge the lawn (with a push edger!!), do my own gardening, the house, repairs, etc. Then there is the inside of the home too...mopping, scrubbing, cleaning...cooking! That burns off many extra calories, and saves \$\$\$ too. Even my garage door doesn't have an automatic opener — I'm IT!

I also blend two activities at once — take a 30-block walk as I head to the bank, post office or store, etc. I walk five to six times/week — just around the neighborhood — in a number of large loops, OR, plan walks in the many, beautiful Portland parks and green spaces. I love going on walks with friends — and plan them regularly. Instead of going out for dinner, we get together for activities, and perhaps bring along healthy snacks.



At 260 pounds — my high school graduation picture.



At my maximum, I weighed over 400 pounds more than shown here on a walk I could not have done before my weight loss.

Then, there are the weekly hikes to many of the beautiful sights in Washington or Oregon. Cheap fun! I get into my aerobic zone for hours — and it is enjoyable!

Then, lastly I make a date with — ME! I put my gym and yoga appointments on the calendar — twice a week —there I am at yoga to 7 am, then I do an hour of strength training, and 15 minutes on the stationary bike. I also plan another day — either on Saturday or Sunday mornings — for just strength training. I've done this for the last seven years and have raised my metabolism by 300 calories (I know this because I kept records of my calorie-weight-maintenance levels).

What's the benefit to me? Blending in regular physical exercise has been an important part of helping me maintain over a 200-pound weight loss for 32 years.

SKILL #5: Learn the skills for emotional nurturing. Learning and practicing these skills helped me transform emotional eating into self-esteem. I learned to celebrate my life! I became a compassionate and loving friend — to me.

SKILL #6: Counseling and support groups have been invaluable. I tried to fix the “unfixable family and friends.” This proved to be quite frustrating, unproductive, and self-destructive. I didn't have any role models about how to live a healthy life and to find out : wholesome relationships, problem solving, and conflict management. Through reading books, individual counseling, and various support groups, I was able to dismantle unproductive conditioning and responses to life events.

SKILL #7: Cultivating life-long health: Learning and practicing all these skills can bring friskiness and lifelong well being throughout all of the seasons of our lives. Weight is managed, not cured. It's an ongoing investment in you. It is similar to good dental hygiene. Making the investment in yourself pays rich dividends: you can chew foods of any texture without problems, you don't experience pain of gum disease or cavities, you save lots of money, and you feel self-empowered and capable because of your self-discipline.

As you learn about your choices and the patterns they form, make small changes, and learn new skills, then day-by-day, overtime form new habits. These new patterns gradually bring to you NEW RESULTS (being thinner, healthier, and happier). Over time, you discover what works and what doesn't work for you. You cultivate within yourself the answers and skills to manage the challenges you face.

To learn more about Bob and his weight management lifestyle, log on to www.balancedweightmanagement.com.

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