

Personal Essay

My "A-HA" Moment

Air under my feet. Levitating. Higher. Higher still. Faster. Sweat pouring. The sound of my own raspy breath filling my ears. Heart pounding, thighs screaming. Tears welling up in my eyes, easily mistaken for sweat. Not tears of pain. Or agony. Or defeat. But joy. Joy tinged with sadness.

That was my "a-ha moment." The moment I realized who I had become – who I had changed myself back into – how hard I had worked – and what I had lost in the process. I was now someone strong and capable, physically and mentally fit. I was there, in the moment, with 200 other fitness professionals, sweating, breathing and moving. I had fought for this. Hard. Gained a lot and lost even more. But I had triumphed. I was there and I was doing it. All my hard work and all that I lost, both physically and personally, wrapped up into the one moment. I sweated. And then I cried.

Many of us have an "a-ha moment." Mine was at a fitness instructor convention in an athletic skills and drills workshop. Not much of a place for a revelation. There were no lights from heavens above – no angels singing. Just a single blue BOSU half stability ball, propulsion....and me.

In August of 2003 I weighed **198 pounds**. I wore a size 20. I could not walk very far, I could not climb stairs. My feet hurt all the time. I had spent years staring into the bottoms of empty ice cream containers, spoon in hand, wondering what had happened to me and my life. Where did I go? Who was this unhappy creature eating away her days, passing time, waiting until she died? I had no answers. The young, fit, happy, passionate, hopeful 20-year-old I once knew was gone. She had been replaced by a sad, fat, dispirited, hopeless 37-year-old – one who could not even reach her feet to tie her shoelaces.

When I made my decision to give myself one last chance, to make one final effort after thousands of failures, it was the beginning of a new life – but also the end of an old. My resolution to better my health, reduce my cholesterol, strengthen my "bad valve"-plagued heart, and reduce the excess weight that caused me so much physical pain ended up costing me my marriage and much of my life.

"I had spent years staring into the bottoms of empty ice cream containers, spoon in hand, wondering what had happened to me and my life."



School event in '02



After 62 mile bike ride in '06

continued

Personal Essay

My "A-HA" Moment continued

Losing weight for me was never about looking better or being attractive to the opposite sex. I couldn't care less – I still don't. I wanted to feel my body move again, to feel alive again. Wanted to have less pain, to not have people look at me in pity. "Poor

fat girl. No self-control." I used to be strong. I used to be healthy. I needed to feel that again. To show my children exercise is good, and that our bodies are meant

to move. That it feels great to work and stretch your muscles and that it builds you from the inside, providing mental strength and fortitude, purpose and passion.

I fought hard to get healthy. I would get up early before my kids rose and strength train. I would walk them to school. I tried to squeeze exercise in without compromising too much time with my family. I gave up television completely and sacrificed any other recreational activities so I could participate in Spinning classes (indoor cycling). But fighting hard for my health became the problem, because I had started fighting for something. Myself. Finally standing up for me, becoming who I used to be. And standing up for me meant developing a backbone, which was the beginning of the end of my marriage.

By "finding myself" I lost the life I was used to. But I also gained purpose and meaning: helping others, by becoming a personal trainer and Spinning instructor. Helping them get healthier and stronger, lowering their cholesterol and strengthening their hearts through exercise.

a reader says:

"I felt like I was right there with you in the class of 200! Your new passion for health, and wanting to help others is infectious. After reading about your 'A Ha' moment, I long to find my 'moment.' After reading this, I feel I am closer to achieving this." ~Deborah

Making them laugh and getting them motivated to work out and stick with it. I could finally contribute something to the world and give positive energy back instead of draining it, as I had before.

My "a-ha moment" was bittersweet. I had made huge physical and mental gains. I was healthy again and I could keep up with a room full of other fitness professionals, feeling my body working and moving, joints smooth and bones strong. I could sense all that I had sacrificed to get there, and all that I had lost, from my weight to my marriage.

But for one moment, that magical moment, I was the "original" me, free of problems. I was in a convention hall - yes - but soaring, body and soul. Free to be me. To feel my body move. Just for minute, be that 20-year-old again. *And flying.* ✨