

"I hit my goal and shot right past it."



WEIGHT BEFORE
178

WEIGHT AFTER
123

VITALS Chelle Stafford, 38, Scottsdale, AZ
OCCUPATION Webmaster
HEIGHT 5'3"
TIME REQUIRED TO REACH GOAL
1 year, 10 months

LESSON LEARNED "Find someone to challenge and encourage you, even if it's just by e-mail."
SECRET WEAPON An Igloo Playmate cooler. "I cook healthy meals on Sundays and pack one each weekday so there's no excuse to hit the drive-thru."



THE GAIN

Chelle Stafford's weight had seesawed with her mood since college. In 2000, after her divorce, she dropped to a dangerous 98 pounds; six months later, she was fudging her weight on her driver's license as 145, knowing it was closer to 155 or 160. In December 2006, she hit 178, her highest non-pregnancy weight.

THE CHANGE

In 2006, Stafford was shopping for a New Year's Eve outfit, but nothing in her current size 16 fit. She called her new husband (she'd remarried earlier that year) from the dressing room, sobbing, but he couldn't console her. "My husband always found me

attractive, but every so often I'd look in the mirror and think, 'This is not attractive; this is not OK.'"

THE LIFESTYLE

Stafford went to her local Bally Total Fitness on January 2, 2007, and signed up with personal trainer Tabitha Citro. At first, she

struggled through two minutes on an elliptical machine, but with Citro's help, she worked up to regular 20-minute cardio sessions five times a week. She started strength training and kept a food diary. "My salt intake was the biggest shock," Stafford says. "I wondered why I hadn't had a heart attack yet." She kicked a fast-food habit by preparing healthy foods at home. In five months, Stafford dropped three sizes and was even too slim for her "skinny clothes." She hit her goal weight of 130 by March 2008 and had shed another seven pounds by November.

THE REWARD

Stafford can breathe easier, literally. An asthma sufferer who used to puff from an inhaler daily, she says, "Now I use it so rarely that half the time I don't even know where it is."

STAFFORD'S TIPS

Don't let injuries sideline you "When I tore my patellar tendon, I used a rowing machine, which didn't strain my knee, rather than quit exercising."
Chocolate is a right "I keep a bag of Godiva dark chocolate pearls to handle cravings."
Keep records "I'll look at my logs and photos and see how my attitude has changed along with my body." —Marnie Soman

TAKE A LOAD OFF



By Keri Glassman, R.D.

Q+A

From Maggie D., of Thurmont, MD:

Which is more accurate: a calorie-counting watch or the cardio machine's built-in monitor?

Machine tallies are often inflated by 10 to 15 percent because their calculations don't account for your heart rate or fat-to-muscle ratio. But watches like the Polar Activity Watch 200 (around \$200, polarusa.com) measure calories burned through oxygen consumption, which a study last year in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found to be more accurate. If you can't spring for a fancy gadget, use that red number as motivation to push harder or go farther—not as an excuse to eat more later.

From Kathy R., of Rochester, MN:

Is there an easy way to find meals that won't blow my diet when I dine out?

To avoid falling for "healthy selections" that aren't, stay away from dishes described as breaded, crispy, sautéed, or au gratin—all code for major fat and calories. In general, anything broiled, steamed, or grilled is the most belt-friendly. If you can't preview the gory details on a restaurant's website, check out nutritionist-run diningoutnutrition.com; it dishes up the info on 179 retail chains.

ASK THE EXPERT WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM /TAKEALOADOFF SEND GLASSMAN YOUR WEIGHT-LOSS QUESTIONS, AND VISIT HER AT NUTRITIOUSLIFE.COM.

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Eat This Not That!

For a toasty sandwich

 <p>Blimpie's Ultimate Club panini 1 sandwich</p> <p>480 calories 21 g fat (6 g sat) 47 g carbs 5 g sugar 1,538 mg sodium 2 g fiber 27 g protein</p>	 <p>Blimpie's Sicilian panini 1 sandwich</p> <p>637 calories 25 g fat (7 g sat) 68 g carbs 10 g sugar 2,520 mg sodium 3 g fiber 33 g protein</p>
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: BETH BISCHOFF; MITCH MANDEL (2); MARK PETERMAN; NO CREDIT