

Karen's story

My journey to losing 35 kg and having the opportunity of learning how to look after my body in a healthier way began a year ago in October 2019. A number of different incidences pointed to the realisation that everything about me was “not as it should be”.

My scales had just registered 118kg! This was the heaviest I had ever been in my life. I was suffering from brain fog, mood swings, hot flushes, excessive bloating, painful heels and ankles, varicose veins, and had bags and black circles under the eyes. I physically felt like an 80 year old not a 50 year old.

I remember comments from people I worked with and friends: “You look stressed”, “What happened to your enthusiasm and spark in life”, “Your moods are crazy they are either extreme highs or extreme lows”.

Working full time and being a mum and caregiver to a 95 year old grandfather were my priorities. With all this BUSYness I had forgotten a very important fact: ***I was my first priority!***

Like the spiel in an aircraft safety instructions – put the lifejacket first before helping others. How could I continue caring for others, if I couldn't care for myself?

With each comment, concern, pain, and visual appearance of myself, was only confirming the reality of the need to start caring for my body, and in turn to try and live in a healthier way. All this drove me to the conclusion: ***“Enough is enough”***.

Losing weight was not a priority at this stage (although I was hoping to lose a little bit), I just needed to feel better.

For so long ignoring and putting up my problems was far easier than making myself vulnerable to discipline, and change. I knew that I would have to take (what I thought was) drastic measures.

The realisation of “drastic measures” gives rise to another word called FEAR. Fear seems to stop me in so many ways – the fear of the unknown, the fear of change, the fear of failing, the fear of letting people down. I soon learnt that fear was nothing to be feared. I decided not to look too far into the future, just deal with the moment.

I have always been the sort of person that would like to “think outside the square” particularly in relation to medicine and medical practitioners. I would rather my problems be fixed naturally, than to request a pill. My decision at this point was to consult my chiropractor, Nick Greene of Greene Chiropractic. This was the only option in my mind.

Asking for help was a definite hurdle for me. I really thought I would get the same response that I think most people would expect to hear – exercise, eat less! So, seeing my chiropractor and asking his advice was undertaken with a genuine fear.

I was pleasantly reassured during the consultation. He didn't judge, just listened and then offered the knowledge and guidance. He thought my symptoms sounded like I could have

food intolerances. I had never heard of that before! He suggested I take the IgG 200 food sensitivities test, and I thought I would be happy to try it.

It was non-invasive and simple to do. By the time I left his office I knew I could not turn backwards now. He was willing to support me and he also referred me to the professional care of Joanna Sochan, Nutritionist and Naturopath. I was not alone on the journey now!

By that same afternoon I had taken the test, and decided to start eliminating as much gluten and dairy from my diet as I could.

My husband has this saying: “the truth is sweeter when you find it out for yourself”. Finding out ALL of my intolerances was fascinating but when I got my blood test results for glucose, lacking vitamins and minerals, and other imbalances, it really was a wake-up call.

Seeing and being told the real facts about how my body was coping really boosted me into “I MUST DO THIS”. By this stage it was mid-February – 4 months since I had first realised I had to change.

I often look back and ask myself why it took me so long and why I procrastinated, and again it was fear. I was very fearful of hearing the truth. And I know when I did hear about the test results, I was very upset. It wasn’t pleasant to hear, but I felt even more determined to continue through.

COVID hit and while others were complaining of weight gain, I was keeping myself busy with researching new recipes, studying the benefits of different vegetables, trying to gain a better knowledge of the food I could eat, and finding substitutes for those I couldn’t.

I was determined NOT to miss out on what everyone else in the family was having, I would just cook mine using different ingredients, or find another substitution.

Having a family of 6 and working full time was my next hurdle. Falling into my old habit traps of easy dinners was something I had to plan hard to avoid. So, meal preps were my life saver, thinking ahead and having that “just in case” meal in the freezer helped. Educating my husband who likes to cook, was also a must.

Month by month passed and the routine became normal, the education about food and how my body works became more interesting, and seeing the visible signs of change became pleasant and even more motivating. My balanced mental state was also reassuring.

I was beginning to become more comfortable “reading labels”, ordering at cafes or restaurants with my “gluten vegan” style requirements. I was actually enjoying the taste of food, and experimenting of different ingredients.

At this point I could start seeing physical changes in my face hands, belly and even my feet! My menopause symptoms had decreased to hardly even noticing them. And the family accepted and embraced my dietary requirements, and didn’t mind if I brought my own “lunch pack” or “snack pack” with me.

Fear would have liked me to fail, but through the whole journey I would keep reminding myself why I was doing this and that ***I was my first priority!***

Looking back, I can't believe how simple and easy the whole processes was. There were no "drastic measures" to be fearful of. Yes, I don't deny there is will power needed, and also the discipline to keep trying even when you have had a "not so good" day.

All the fears that I first started with had been tackled in one way or another. Even if I did feel like I was unsure I knew I had a "phone a friend" in Joanna. Our consultations were conducted via Zoom which was very convenient, effective and time saving.

I look back on this last year and consider myself very fortunate to have been part of an amazing journey of self-discovery, physical and mental transformation. And to be able to gain my enthusiasm and spark of life back again. This obviously flows through to the family and work. It's amazing and fascinating how the IgG food sensitivities test is so customised to specifically deal with my issues!

I wrote down my experience not to boast, but to encourage. I know how hard it is, especially at the beginning.

I am reminded of my early part of the journey as I type, as my eldest daughter is also now starting this journey. I see her struggles and fears. As my chiropractor and nutritionist were my mentors along the way, I would like to also be her mentor, not pushing, but with gentle encouragement.

I hope the reader of this is also inspired. Do not give up, just keep focus on the goal, and when you fear something, talk to your trusted practitioners about the way forward, and you will notice the fear will soon be behind you.

The last little bit of advice I will give is to enjoy the journey, make it special.

See this as a new beginning, with SO many more opportunities, because **this IS the beginning of the Rest of Your Life!**

All the best

Karen

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