

“we did it”



Main picture: Jane Evans

If you think creating the body of your dreams is beyond your reach you're wrong. These three did it and you can too, says **Janie Lamour.**

Let's face it – losing weight is a pain in the butt. It means mountains of hard work and determination and there are plenty of times when it can seem easier to throw in the towel and grab the biscuits instead. But unfortunately the alternative to shilling those pounds is even more depressing. For starters being overweight is uncomfortable. It limits what you can do (who wants to hit the beach when they're struggling with their weight?) and it can make you feel bad about yourself.

Clearly, being fit and healthy is a better option. But how do you get there? Well, there are a variety of ways. The main trick is to find a weight loss plan that works for you. Choose wisely and your specific plan will be a success if you stick with it long enough. Got your doubts? So did these three Sydneysiders, but take a look at them now.

weight loss rules

Most trainers agree that when it comes to getting in shape, it all starts with the mind. If you're mentally fit your diet and exercise routine will fall into place much more easily.

rule 1 Anyone can lose weight.

rule 2 Don't make excuses – refuse to accept being overweight.

rule 3 Believe you can do it and visualize your new body.

rule 4 Have a reason why you want to lose weight. Ensure your reason is emotionally inspiring to you, not anybody else.

rule 6 Spend time with fit and healthy people. They'll inspire you.

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personal TRAINER
Exercise physiologist Damien Kelly will answer your fitness questions each week

Q I recently did my first weight lifting class and could hardly move for a few days afterwards. Is this pain normal and will it happen every time I lift weights?
 Joyns, Peri Medford

A Whenever you try a new exercise or class, some soreness occurs. While some soreness is to be expected, the pain you experienced sounds extreme and isn't best avoided. Lifting weights does cause micro tears in the muscles. When they repair themselves they end up stronger, creating increased strength and muscle tone. This means that you should go easy in your early sessions, so your muscles can adjust. Then you can progressively build up the weights. Bear in mind that you need to be extra careful with this style of classes. Ensure you warm up and cool down for five to 10 minutes and stretch before and after your exercise. Also, drink plenty of water to flush your system.

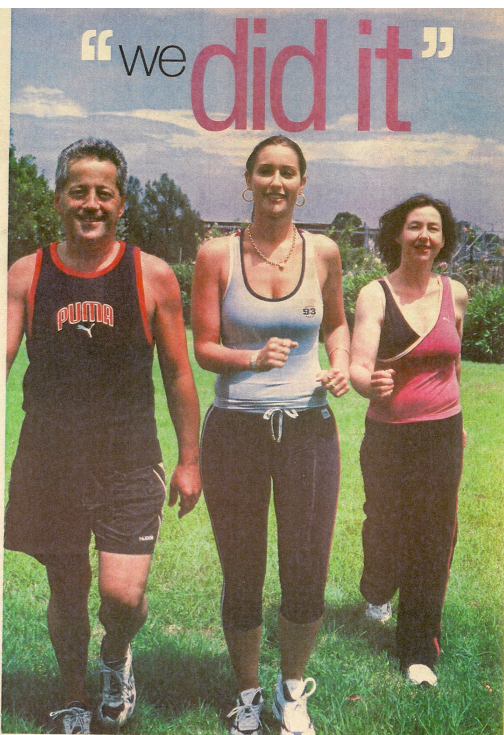
Q In a recent column, you spoke against fast dieting. Can you tell me what separates a fast diet from a sensible weight loss plan?
 Santos, Allan

A The most common claim that fast diets of fat weight loss products make is that they can produce fast and dramatic results. As tempting as this sounds, rapid weight loss is usually followed by rapid weight gain due to disturbances to your metabolic rate. Another indicator of a fast diet is the promotion or banning of a certain food or food group. Small manageable lifestyle changes, such as reducing portion sizes and making time for home-cooked meals, are more effective because they create long lasting results.

Q What type of exercise is best during pregnancy, and what are the benefits?
 Rilla, via email

A Weight training, swimming, aqua aerobics, walking and yoga are just some of the types of exercise that can enhance your mental and physical wellbeing during pregnancy. They also help birth and recovery. Rachel Livingstone, an exercise and pregnancy specialist with Growing Expectations in Surry Hills, NSW, points out that when carrying the extra weight of a baby even ordinary tasks, such as getting up from a chair, require strength. Strong abdominal muscles support the "bump" during daily life, reduce back pain and help during labour by keeping up muscle tone, you'll also find it easier to get back into shape after the birth. Also, you'll feel more positive and confident and you may find new friendships in a time of exciting change.

Damien Kelly is a qualified exercise physiologist. Please email your health and fitness questions to damiengkelly@health.com.au



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paul margolin
 age 46
 occupation: radiologist
 height: 169cm
 how he did it: behavioural changes and exercise

before

then	now
waist: 96.5cm	81cm
size: pants 38	pants 32
weight: 88kg	73kg

"I started putting on weight in my mid 30s due to plenty of bad food and no exercise. I had no idea about health or nutrition and I ate out for every breakfast, lunch and dinner. I made a lot of money, so I could afford to eat whatever I wanted and buy clothes to accommodate my growing size. I don't realise at the time, but I wasn't happy with my business or most of the people in my life. My problems got worse and to make myself feel better I ate more. I didn't look after myself. I eventually closed my business, broke up with my girlfriend, had a huge fight with my best friend and my dog died. One morning soon after I woke up almost crippled. My doctor put me on anti-inflammatories and other prescription drugs. But then I was struck by headaches, heartburn and digestive problems. When I looked up my medication on the internet, I discovered it was making me worse. So I decided to try to become healthy by using alternative methods. I started by reading books about nutrition. My wife changed, I started eating healthy food and walking all the time. It wasn't hard because I had to do it. Having supportive people around me was essential to stay on course. I never looked at it as losing weight but about becoming healthy. I've also found it's about my mind and my lifestyle as well. It's the happiest I've ever been."

best moment: "The sense of absolute vitality and being as fast as I knew I could be."

bianca harris
 age 25
 occupation: client service officer
 height: 178cm
 how she did it: weekly weigh-ins and pre-packaged food

before

then	now
waist: 80cm	72cm
size: 14-16	10-12
weight: 83kg	68kg

"I'd been a bit chubby since I was a teenager, though it didn't seem to bother me much. But when I was pregnant I ballooned from 78kg to 100kg. After giving birth, I managed to lose 10kg but after that I found I just couldn't shed any more weight. By the time my son was five, I could no longer use pregnancy as an excuse. I could still squeeze into fashionable clothes but I didn't look good in them. I went to Jenny Craig for help. Going there meant I learned about nutrition and I could buy the food. I followed a food plan and I was great not having to decide what to eat. I went in once a week for a one-on-one consultation. When I was there I'd be weighed and we'd discuss any problems I was having. The hardest part was not going to my regular weekly lunch with my friends at work. Surprisingly, I found exercising the easiest part. I loved going for a walk or a jog before work. I found it so motivating. After a while I was eating a day of my food and six days of treats and then I worked up to two days of my foods and five of treats, and so on. By that stage I was educated about food, and I could go out to lunch or dinner and know how to eat well. Now I go to the gym four times a week and I feel so much healthier and happier. I don't get that fat feeling and I'm more energetic. I've now kept the weight off for a year and I still get compliments."

best moment: "Being able to wear a beautiful black strapless dress."

mira carney
 age 36
 occupation: housewife and full-time mum
 height: 166cm
 how she did it: educating herself and eating healthy

before

then	now
waist: 105cm	78cm
size: 18-20	10-12
weight: 98kg	66kg

"I started to put on weight when I was 10 years old. I loved my food and I didn't exercise. As I got older, I managed to lose up to 15kg using fat diets, but afterwards I'd pile it back on. For the most part I was happy, but sometimes I felt. When I went to my school formal outfit the sales assistant told me I had to lose weight. She said, 'You can't go about like that. It's all a wild memory for me. After having my two children, my doctor told me I had hypertension and would be on medication for the rest of my life if I didn't lose weight. I was 98kg. On top of that, one day I was pushing my daughter on the swings at playground and another little girl said to her, 'your mum's big and fat'. My daughter giggled but my son said, 'don't say that about my mum'. I realised I had to do something, even if it was only for my children. I went to Weight Watchers and loved it because they had meetings where I learned about healthy eating. I got to hear others' stories and realised I wasn't alone. I could always get support. At WW, each type of food is given a certain amount of points. You get a points allowance according to your weight. If you exercise, you get bonus points and you can save them up to go out. As long as you stick to the 'low food' group range, you can eat whatever you like. The hardest part was adjusting to my new lifestyle. I had to be organised for shopping and make sure I had healthy snacks for those cravings. I was able to cook normal food so the whole family had the same meals. My husband lost 30kg! My blood pressure is normal now, so he ditched the medication. It's so good to look in the mirror and see that I've achieved something I thought was impossible. When I stepped on the scales and I finally reached my goal weight, well... that was an amazing moment!"

best moment: "When a friend of many, many years didn't recognise me."



Paul wears: Puma singlet, \$24.95, available from Grace Bros. (Paul's own shorts).

Bianca wears: Bella Bustiere Poolside Action Back Singlet, \$49.99, and Running Bare yoga pants, \$59.99, available from Rebel Sport.

Mira wears: Puma Performer Crossover Singlet, \$44.99, and Running Bare yoga pants, \$59.99, available from Rebel Sport.

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22 February 2004

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how he did it
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