



How I Lost 120 Pounds and Transformed My Life

By Richard Wendel
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After a lifetime of health issues since the age of 3, my life took a turn for the worse. At age 40, I went from being an active trumpet player with a full schedule to a 300-pound zombie. I began experiencing severe health symptoms including nerve pain, chronic fatigue, severe body aches, and overwhelming anxiety. For almost ten years I was hospitalized frequently, pumped with a never-ending stream of prescription medications, and subjected to numerous invasive tests. Despite all the tests, my doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong.

I have to admit, I hadn't been the healthiest eater. In fact, if I had written a cookbook it would have been called *It Doesn't Get Any Fatter Than This*. Also, my workload at the time kept me pushing myself, to the detriment of my system. Finally, my medical condition rendered me almost immobile, and work became intolerable. Things needed to change.

In 2010, I weighed 290 pounds. My marriage had ended by then, and I realized I had lost everything — work, health, and love. My family stepped in, and with the support of my nephews Brian and Josh, I improved my diet by giving up white bread, white flour, and added sugar. Gradually, my health started to return, and so did my music career. It felt good, and liberating.

In 2013, I was 50 pounds lighter than I was a few years earlier. I went to live in Costa Rica, where my nephew Josh has a yoga retreat. Josh educated me and provided me with the tools to live a cleaner, healthier life by leaving out animal foods and consuming whole plant-based foods instead. I began experiencing dramatic changes in my weight and my health got even better. By the time I left, most of my symptoms were gone. I lost another 70 pounds or so and achieved my goal weight of 170 pounds.

Today, having eaten only fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes for more than a year (no processed foods, dairy, or meat at all), my body has changed drastically. By eating only plants, my waist size has slimmed to 32 inches. My energy has increased, and I have better sex and more stamina to play my music. I now climb 1,000-foot cliffs, where before I had trouble walking through my house. And the benefits to my mind are tenfold, particularly my improved attitude and mood.

I owe this all to my family and love them very much. I want my story to be an example of change for others — to show people how beautiful life is and inspire them to eat healthfully and live in wellness.