

# "I Lost Half My Body Weight!"

SARAH MONTAGUE *went from emotional eater to 3-time triathlete and lost 136 pounds along the way*

■ PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNA KNOT

## MY STORY

When I was a young girl in England, my parents went through a difficult divorce. I learned early on to medicate my feelings with food. I found comfort in feeling full and gorged myself on potato chips, chocolate, and cheese. So it's no surprise that when the pressure from my first job kicked in, I headed for the cupboard. Within 3 years, I gained 100 pounds, developed obesity-related asthma, and dislocated both knees. During that same time, I met my future husband. As we planned our wedding, it never occurred to me to try to lose the weight—instead, I had my wedding dress custom made.



POUNDS  
LOST  
136

## STATS

AGE

40

HEIGHT

5'3"

WEIGHT  
NOW

136

POUNDS

WEIGHT  
THEN  
272





When I was 30, my husband and I moved across the Atlantic to Chicago. Within 6 months, I gained another 20 pounds. At a routine medical checkup, my doctor suggested I try Weight Watchers. I was shocked. Nobody had ever confronted me about my size, but it was the wake-up call I needed.

#### GOOD-BYE TO BINGEING

I started attending weekly Weight Watchers meetings and chose 136 pounds as my goal weight. I worried that it would be too difficult to drop a lifetime of bad habits, but I counted my points carefully and paid close attention to why I was eating: emotions or hunger. I began working out, and the more weight I lost, the easier—and more fun—it became.

It took me 6 years to reach 136 pounds. Even then, I didn't consider myself athletic. So when friends approached me to train with them for a triathlon, I was hesitant. But I realized that losing so much weight was a huge accomplishment, and I needed a new challenge. I signed up for the race and finished in the middle of the pack but beaming with pride. For the first time, I was a player in the game—not a sideline spectator.

#### AN ATHLETE AT 40

I've competed in three triathlons so far—and when I see the athletes at these events, it still amazes me that I'm one of them. I recently turned 40, and to mark the milestone, I participated in the Chicago Triathlon, my hardest race to date. I aimed to finish in 4 hours, but I did it in 3 hours, 22 minutes. Training can be grueling, but I love working hard—I'll never numb my feelings with food again.

—Reported by Lauren A. Greene



## MY TOP TIPS

**Think before you bite.** Before I take seconds or have dessert, I remind myself that I won't regret what I don't eat.

**Plan, plan, plan.** On busy days, I always pack a lunch—otherwise, it's too likely that I'll rely on junk from the vending machines. I also stash stocked gym bags in my car and under my desk so I'm always ready to work out.

**Celebrate small victories.** Competing has boosted my self-esteem, but smaller tests—like passing on the bread basket—are just as empowering.

**Stick to a routine.** I buy similar groceries weekly—that way, I get in and out with no temptation from the snack aisle.

**Think big picture.** I used to fill up without thinking about the consequences. Now I approach the week as a whole and make adjustments as needed. If I'm planning on a big dinner, I'm perfectly happy eating a light lunch.



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