

Smart Choices

Yield Sustainable Results for Lisa Rivas

Consultant Achieves Long-Term Weight Loss Success

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Lisa Rivas, who continues to keep off the weight she lost two years ago, says, “It sure is nice to get up every morning and know that all of the clothes in my closet actually fit me.” Lisa’s weight loss achievement brings a range of lifestyle and health improvements. “There are physical improvements such as better agility and getting more restful sleep, but others are more psychological,” she says. “Previously, I didn’t feel good about myself. I didn’t have much energy, so I was less inclined to go out and be active.” Attaining long-term success was not without challenges for the busy working mother of two teen boys. With the guidance of the Sansum Clinic Doctors’ Weight Management Program, Lisa defined realistic goals, identified program options that were feasible for her lifestyle, and established supportive strategies.

Both of Lisa’s parents struggled with their weight while Lisa was growing up. Her mother lost 100 pounds through the program some years ago. But the victory was fleeting. “I watched my mom continue the same lifestyle she had when she was heavy, and she put the weight back on,” Lisa shares. “Consequently, I was hesitant to go into the program because I thought it wasn’t sustainable. I thought it might deliver a quick loss but without lifelong results.” Despite her hesitation, Lisa committed to the program.

Lisa first enrolled in Phase One of the program in 2010. She lost 50 pounds in six months on the HMR Decision Free® diet. “I felt I needed an aggressive plan that would give me no choices,” she says. The Decision Free diet uses meal replacements along with behavior-based classes, coaching, and medical supervision. She eventually regained most of the weight because she didn’t continue with the Phase Two classes, which is where people learn to keep the weight off. “I didn’t understand the value of Phase Two, so I left,” she explains. “Without that guidance, I fell back into my old lifestyle and eating habits.”

“Phase Two of the program gives people the tools and support they need to take weight loss beyond a short-term achievement and make it a sustainable lifestyle,” says Donna Gill, manager of the Doctors’ Weight Management Program. “Through coaching, goal setting, accountability, and sharing with peers, Phase Two provides people with practical strategies about how to make the right choices to maintain the success they achieve in Phase One.”



Lisa Rivas with family

Refining Her Approach

Eight years later, Lisa returned to Phase One of the program. This time she was able to maintain her weight loss results over the long term. “When I went into the program the second time, I did it with different intentions,” she says. “I knew I needed to learn to include more fruit and vegetables in my diet than I had previously. That led me to select the Healthy Solutions® option in the program.”

“While the Decision Free diet is the most aggressive diet we offer, utilizing solely HMR meal replacements, the Healthy Solutions option is a moderate diet that incorporates fruits and vegetables in addition to HMR meal replacements,” Donna explains. “It is a structured plan that is easy to follow.”

Lisa says other key differences in her second experience with the program included defining a target weight that was reasonable for her lifestyle and following up with a commitment to attend the weekly Phase Two classes. “The program’s health coaches helped me establish a weight goal that I can manage and successfully sustain,” she says. “In Phase Two, they help patients develop a focus that includes insights such as knowing the difference between when we are making excuses and when we are truly challenged by our environment or ourselves. And they do it in a very caring way.”

The Phase Two classes, like Phase One classes, meet once a week in a group setting. “I love my health class,” Lisa says of the Phase Two meetings. “It gives me the tools I need to keep me focused on maintaining my 28-pound loss. They are there to catch me when I fall into old habits such as late night eating and not measuring my portions. The struggle some of us have with our weight doesn’t have to do with hunger. It has to do with what is in our hearts and minds when we rely on food in an unhealthy way. The classes remind us that this occurs and to use our own personal accountability tools to meet our goals. Accountability is key. If I’m cheating, I’m cheating myself.”

The Ability to Make Lasting Change

“Being active outdoors is my happy place,” Lisa says. “I love exercise and now it’s more enjoyable than ever.” She cites an example. “When we recently went to Mammoth Mountain ski resort, I noticed that the elevation didn’t hit me as hard as it did others, which I attribute to carrying less weight. Had I been the weight I was two years earlier, I probably would have had trouble getting outdoors and being active at the higher elevation.”

Lisa shares advice for people who are considering the Doctors’ Weight Management Program. “After working to lose weight in Phase One, I urge you to give yourself the gift of Phase Two,” she says. “In Phase Two, a five-pound gain is only a five-pound gain, and you can take it off again. I learned in my first attempt that without the support of Phase Two, a five-pound gain could turn into ten, and then fifteen, and more. Suddenly all the hard work from Phase One is gone. Phase Two provides the tools you need for long-term success in keeping the weight off. And it’s not only about maintaining. I lost an additional four pounds in Phase Two.”

She adds that it is important for people to choose the diet that is appropriate for them. “There are two markedly different options and they are both very effective,” she explains. “The health coaches will help you decide which is the better choice depending on your lifestyle and the types of food you prefer. If you need to learn to limit your calorie intake while keeping fruits and vegetables in your diet, choose the Healthy Solutions option.”

She says that while on the Healthy Solutions plan in Phase One, you can order something from a restaurant menu that includes only fruits and vegetables, which worked well for her. “But for people who are eating too much of everything, I would advise that they choose the Decision Free option,” she cautions. “This plan makes it easier, given the deluge of food choices available.”

“People often think this program is only for people who have a lot of weight to lose,” Lisa says. “It’s not just for people who want to lose a hundred pounds. Catch the weight gain at twenty-five pounds before it gets to fifty. Give yourself the ability to make lasting change. Get help to lose the weight and support to keep it off.” 🌻

Lisa Rivas is an independent consultant and journalist. Her work is focused on public relations, government relations, and non-profit management. She was raised in Santa Barbara, California, and enjoys outdoor activities including running, walking, hiking, and biking.

To learn more about the Doctors’ Weight Management Program, please call (805) 563-6190 or sign up to attend an informational orientation session, offered twice weekly at 51 Hitchcock Way, Santa Barbara, California.

Average weight loss for the in-clinic Healthy Solutions® plan is 28-37.5 lbs. based on research studies conducted in people who completed between 12-26 weeks.

Nine-Week Fast Track to Weight Loss

The Doctors’ Weight Management Fast Track session participants follow the HMR Program, a research-based program ranked #1 by U.S. News and World Report for fast weight loss in the 2019 Best Diets ratings.



The diet consists of a low-calorie meal plan which includes fruits, vegetables and HMR meal replacements.

Sign up to attend an information session by January 6 to reserve your spot in the upcoming Fast Track Session which begins January 15, located at our Hitchcock clinic in Santa Barbara.

Session dates:

Wednesday, January 15 - Wednesday, March 25

Call, email or sign up online:

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