

I have struggled with my weight my entire life. Over the years, I guess I had come to terms with the fact that I was always going to be a fat girl. For the most part, though, I was a happy person with a pretty great life as a wife, mom of two, and teacher. Then, four years ago, my dad got cancer. I was with him when he took his last breath, and at that moment I felt my life completely fall apart. Compounding my grief was an additional deep sadness, as I had also experienced yet another miscarriage, my third, during my dad's last weeks. I felt alone, defeated, and helpless. In the years after I experienced these losses, I gained over 90 pounds. My body now matched how miserable I was feeling on the inside. I was unmotivated, depressed, anxious, and unhappy with my life.

Just before the two-year anniversary of my dad's death, a friend persuaded me to join Farrell's. The day of my initial testing was when I truly became aware of what I had allowed to happen to myself. Taking the before picture and seeing that number of 284 on the scale forced me to come face-to-face with the reality of how unhealthy I had become. I cried tears that were as intense as the pain I had felt the day I lost my dad. That was when I realized that the day my dad lost his life, I had also given up on mine. I knew that now was the time to get my life back.

During my year-long challenge at Farrell's, I learned many things. Very early on in my journey I recognized the importance of having a support system. Every other time I had tried to lose weight, I had gone it alone. What I believe made the true difference this time was that I was a part of a family at Farrell's who held me accountable, encouraged me, motivated me, and supported me at every step of my journey. I had such pain from my losses that it makes sense that surrounding myself with support would be the biggest contributor to my success. Yes, it was me alone that could do the work, but I knew I was never alone at Farrell's.

I also learned the importance of setting goals. If you would have told me that my goal at the end of this challenge was to lose almost 130 pounds, I would have quit right then and there. That would have seemed impossible. Instead, my coaches and instructors helped me set small, attainable goals that would keep me on track and motivated. I looked at each day as its own challenge. I did everything I could do each day to work toward my goals. The days added up, and the goals were met. With each accomplishment, it added more fuel to my fire as I looked ahead to the next steps in my journey. Each small goal led me to a place I never even would have imagined or believed was attainable.

A difficult, but crucial, lesson I have grown to accept and embrace is the absolute necessity of being persistent and consistent. I learned that each day I had to put my health as a priority and do the work needed to achieve the results I desired. I decided that no meal or extra hour of sleep was more important than my health and happiness. When I hit plateaus or felt unmotivated, I didn't look to find an excuse. I just kept going. I knew that if I was consistent, results would come. I discovered that being persistent and never allowing myself to give less than my absolute best each and every day was the key to getting the results I desired.

This past year has taught me to never give up. It can be super easy to find an excuse not to do the work needed to reach the goals you have for yourself. I've learned, though, that when life gets tough, giving up on yourself doesn't make it any easier. A few months into my Farrell's challenge, I had another miscarriage. This easily could have been my reason to quit, as that had been my habit in the past. But this time I decided that giving up on myself was not an option and that putting my health as a priority was how I would choose to live.

The most unexpected and rewarding aspect of this life transformation has been the impact my journey has made on those around me. Around the eight month mark I decided to share my story and goals on social media. The amount of support and encouragement was unbelievable, but even better was the countless friends, family members, and acquaintances who then started reaching out to share their own struggles and looking for support. It showed me that this journey was now so much bigger than just bettering myself; it was a way that I could use my story to inspire and help others.

I have lost almost half of the person I used to be physically, but I have gained back my whole self. My grief had left me broken and empty. Out of great loss, came an even greater gain. My year at Farrell's has given me my life back and has allowed me to look to my future with excitement, determination, and promise. I now know that my mind is the most powerful muscle that I have, and there is nothing I can't do.