

FEMALE

DIVISION 1, 2ND PLACE

I JOINED TOPS IN JANUARY, 1995. OVER THE YEARS, MY GAINS OUTNUMBERED MY LOSSES, AND MY HEALTH DETERIORATED TO AN ALARMING POINT. ON AUGUST 25, 2008, I STARTED SEARCHING THROUGH EMPTY ICE CREAM CARTONS, POTATO CHIP BAGS, AND CANDY BAR WRAPPERS TO FIND SOMETHING I LOST AND I FOUND IT. FAITH! FAITH, THAT GOD WILL HELP ME IN THE TIMES THAT I AM OUT OF CONTROL. FAITH THAT I CAN DO THIS IN HIS STRENGTH. FAITH THAT I AM WORTH IT! I BEGAN A JOURNEY THAT I NEVER DREAMED I WOULD TRAVEL.

I HAVE LEARNED MANY THINGS, CHANGED MANY THINGS AND HAVE RECEIVED MANY WONDERFUL CHANGES TO ME. SINCE I AM A VERY PICKY EATER, I CHOSE NOT TO MAKE TOO MANY FOOD CHANGES TO START WITH. I BEGAN BY EATING HALF OF WHAT I WOULD NORMALLY EAT. THAT WAS FOLLOWED BY MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES. THEN I STARTED REDUCING PORTIONS A BIT MORE. I PUT A “VALUE” ON FOOD. IF I WANTED A TREAT, I WOULD WEIGH THE OPTIONS. WAS IT WORTH IT? IS IT WORTH A POSSIBLE GAIN AT WEIGH IN? IF I THOUGHT IT WAS, I HAD SOME. A SMALL PORTION. I ATE IT SLOWLY, ENJOYING EVERY BITE, SAVORING IT. THEN I MOVED ON. NO SECONDS, NO GUILT, NO REMORSE OF “OH NO I BLEW IT!” THEN THE NEXT MEAL WAS HEALTHY WITH GOOD CHOICES. I TRIED TO EAT ONLY WHEN I WAS PHYSICALLY HUNGRY. IF I DETERMINED I HAD THE MUNCHIES, I ASK WHAT WAS BOTHERING ME AND I CHOSE TO DEAL WITH THAT EMOTION OR FRUSTRATION WITH A NON FOOD

PAGE 2

SOLUTION. IF I DID HAVE A SLIP, I GOT BACK ON TRACK THE VERY NEXT MEAL. NO MORE WAITING TO START OVER TILL MONDAY SYNDROME. I AM DEFINITELY NOT PERFECT WITH THIS BUT AM SUCCESSFUL MOST OF THE TIME.

I ALSO BEGIN EXERCISING. WALKING AND GOING TO CURVES. WHEN I STARTED OUT, I COULD ONLY DO A LITTLE BIT AT A TIME. NOW I WALK 2 OR 3 MILES MOST EVERY DAY AND I GO TO CURVES 3-4 TIMES A WEEK. AGAIN, I AM NOT PERFECT, BUT I HAVE LEARNED PERSISTENCE NOT PERFECTION. NOW I CAN EVEN CLIMB STEPS WITHOUT HEAVY BREATHING.

BEFORE THIS JOURNED, I WAS VERY UNHAPPY. I HAD NO SELF-ESTEEM AND NO ENERGY. I HAD CLOSED MY HEART AND WOULDN'T LET ANYONE IN EXCEPT A SELECT FEW. I WAS AFRAID. I DIDN'T THINK ANYONE CARED. AS THIS JOURNEY PROGRESSES, I AM HAPPY AGAIN AND BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM. I HAVE OPENED MY HEART AND FOUND MANY PEOPLE THAT CARE ABOUT ME AND WAS JUST WAITING FOR THE CHANCE TO SHOW ME IF I WOULD LET THEM. I AM NOT AFRAID ANYMORE. I LOVE LIFE EVERY MINUTE AND CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT NEW ADVENTURE IS COMING MY WAY! MY BLOOD SUGARS ARE BACK IN THE NORMAL RANGE, MY BLOOD PRESSURE IS NORMAL AND MY FATTY LIVER HAS RESOLVED ITSELF, ALL WITHOUT MEDICATION.

I STARTED OUT WITH A SIZE 5X TOP FITTING VERY TIGHT AND SIZE 30 PANTS. NOW I WEAR A 1X TOP AND SIZE 18 PANTS. I AM NOW AT GOAL AND LOOKING FORWARD TO MY NEW JOURNEY IN LIFE.

**Barbara Bragg
TOPS #IN 247**