



Lose It!

Why I Decided to Lose 10 Pounds Even Though I Didn't Need To.



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Starting Weight: 180 lbs

Waist: 35 inches

Five Weeks Later: 170 lbs

Five Weeks Later: 34 inches

My name is Michael Sylvester and I am a Personal Trainer. I graduated from the University of Massachusetts and received an Exercise Physiology degree in 1994. I also graduated from Becker College with a Physical Therapist Assistant degree. I received my Physical Therapy license in 1999.

I give my qualifications, not to boast, but to highlight the fact that although education is important, it can't take the place of personal experience and how it relates to helping others achieve their fitness goals.

I've been training individuals since the 1980s and have come to the realization that it is the people I've trained who have educated me the most. What a student learns in school isn't always preparation enough for dealing with the challenges that their individual clients struggle with—in particular, the multidisciplinary problem of obesity.

Recently, I was training an individual who was trying to lose weight. I recited to this person everything I had learned over the years from my formal education regarding diet and exercise. This was not enough for the client I was counseling. She asked, "What do you know about weight loss?" I said, "A lot, I've been studying this topic and lecturing on weight control for years."

She continued to challenge me, “Have you ever been overweight? Have you ever been on a weight-loss diet?”

I answered, “Not really.” She said, “I’m sick of so-called ‘professionals’ counseling people like myself regarding weight control, and they don’t know the first thing about the struggles I face on a day-to-day basis.” She continued, “You ask me to write down everything I eat, to count my calories, fat, carbohydrates, and protein; it’s just not realistic.”

It was then I stepped up to the plate and told her that I would embrace the struggles she encounters and walk with her each step of the way. I put aside the educator in me and put a different “hat” on and decided to go on a diet to see how it feels. Did I need to lose weight? No, although I admit I wasn’t completely satisfied with my waistline.

Before I embarked on this journey, I had an inclination that I was going to be successful, which I think is important toward achieving success. I am pretty disciplined when it comes to reaching a goal (or more specifically a goal body-fat, as I did in my bodybuilding days). With that in mind, I started being a detective regarding what went in my mouth on August 1, 2009.

Before I get into the details of the dietary practices I followed, I want to say that I realize that everyone’s body is different and therefore responds differently to dieting. Women, in particular, often find it harder to lose weight due to cyclical fluctuations and hormonal factors. Nevertheless, male or female, if you are ready to change, you *can* beat the odds.

For 5 weeks I followed the dietary strategy that you’re about to read. You may ask, Why not follow it for life, since a diet should be a lifestyle? I would, except I lost 10 pounds (that I didn’t need to lose) in 5 weeks,

even though I was very pleased to have lost an inch off my waist. What I will follow for life are the lessons I learned from this experience, especially how to eat mindfully (as I discuss later) and what greater insights I now have to share with my clients.

Many people who saw me after the diet were wondering how I lost the weight. Unfortunately, many other people criticized me for losing weight, insisting that I looked gaunt and unhealthy. I ignored these people because I knew that what I was doing was for a greater purpose—to bond with those individuals I counsel on a daily basis who want to lose weight. I wanted to be in the trenches with them.

On the following pages, I've outlined the food I consumed (as well as the nutritional information for each item). I am not advocating that each individual consume the same amount of calories as I did, but rather to learn the basic principles of nutrition, the difference between “visceral hunger” versus cravings, and the importance of dietary fat in your diet.

In the past (and to some extent today), individuals who wanted to lose weight avoided fat in their diet. Granted, saturated fat and trans fat are no-no's, but monounsaturated fats (like peanut butter [preferably fresh ground], nuts, seeds, olive oil, etc.) are the dieter's best friend since they curb the appetite. Remember, you will never be successful on a dietary plan if you are hungry.

I think the real culprit is *refined carbohydrates* (foods that have been processed by machinery that strips the bran and the germ from the whole grain). Although this process gives the food a finer texture and prolongs shelf life, it removes important nutrients, such as B-vitamins, fiber, and iron. Foods that fall into this category include white breads, white rice, and pasta made

with white flour. These foods typically raise blood sugars rapidly, then cause a rapid decrease that can induce hunger, which translates to an endless cycle of cravings.

This is why my eating plan limits these types of foods. We've all heard about carbohydrates being the enemy—they're NOT! The enemy is the refined carbohydrates. Without getting too technical, I tried to consume carbohydrates that were not refined and were full of fiber (usually 3-4 grams of fiber per 80-100 calories, which is usually one serving of carbohydrates).

I also took a zigzag approach to this dietary plan. Some days I consumed a low amount of calories, while other days I consumed more calories, making sure I never allowed my body to adapt to eating the same amount of food. This, I believe, discouraged my body from going into "starvation mode" and thus prevented my metabolic rate from declining.

I did draw upon my scientific background regarding calorie restriction and protein consumption. Many studies indicate that when dieting individuals restrict their calories, they need to make sure they are getting enough protein, something many dieters do not do. I was taking in approximately 1.2-1.5 grams of protein per kilogram of my bodyweight per day. If you don't consume enough protein during caloric restriction, you risk the chance of losing lean body mass (muscle). Another benefit of increasing your protein is that it can curb your appetite.

For the record, I rarely took any protein shakes or protein supplements; all my protein was from actual food sources.

As you will see, some days I consumed only 1,200 calories, which is low for someone like me who weighs 180 lbs. Surprisingly, I wasn't hungry. I believe this was due to the generous portions of good fats in my diet. On other days, I ate much more, up to approximately 2,200 calories.

As far as the use of energy bars is concerned, there are hundreds of bars that dieters turn to. The best advice I have to give is from personal experience. If your hunger is curbed for 3-4 hours, it's a good bar. Many bars I consumed left me hungry an hour later. One in particular was the Zone Perfect Bar (Double Dark Chocolate). I was told to consume an 8-ounce glass of water with the bar. Unfortunately, even with the water, this bar "struck out." In defense of Dr. Barry Sears, author of *The Zone Diet*, this is not his bar. The company that distributes the bars that are found in stores is Abbott Labs, which he has no part of. You can get his bars ONLY online. Enough said about that bar.

The Atkins and South Beach bars would satiate me for 4 hours. Apparently, they have the right amount of fat, protein, and carbohydrates to keep your appetite from going out of control. They also have a good amount of protein in them. There are some sugar alcohols in those bars, though, especially the South Beach Bar. Some people may get gastric distress and gas from sugar alcohols; luckily, I didn't.

Also, some of these bars are sweetened with sucralose (Splenda[®]), which is 600 times sweeter than sucrose (table sugar). It provides essentially no calories and is not fully absorbed. Some of the side effects of Splenda[®] are gastrointestinal problems such as bloating, gas, diarrhea, and nausea. When I first tried sucralose years ago, I did experience some of those side effects, but not this time.

You may want to get a blood test before you start your new dietary plan so you can see your baseline numbers. Include in it total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, glucose, triglycerides, and BUN (blood urea nitrogen) levels. BUN levels can increase when protein intake is high, and increased BUN levels suggest impaired kidney function. Fortunately, my BUN levels have remained normal.

Many individuals may be concerned about consuming eggs, especially the yolk. Yes, the yolk contains fat and cholesterol. However, of the 6 grams of fat in a large egg, only 2 grams are saturated. The other 4 are unsaturated. One gram of the saturated fat results from stearic acid, which behaves like monounsaturated fat. The bottom line: Only 1 gram of the 6 is the unhealthy kind; the other 5 grams of healthy fat more than offset this 1 gram, according to cholesterol-disorders specialist Michael Mogadam, MD, an assistant professor of medicine at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

As always, anyone starting a new dietary plan should consult with his/her primary care physician or a registered dietitian before modifying daily eating habits.

The meal plans on the following pages are just suggestions. You don't necessarily need to follow them precisely, as everyone's caloric needs are different. My hope is that you extract the basic nutritional principles toward designing your own meal plans. I also recommend, if you are interested in creating a personalized dietary plan, that you refer to my website, www.CoreEssentials.biz, and click on the first link, "Nutrition."

One very important component of my success was writing down everything I ate each day for the 5 weeks. I was fortunate to have a convenient method of logging my food: the “Lose It!” program, an application on the iPhone. In any event, I can’t emphasize enough the importance of writing down everything you consume each day, immediately after you consume it.

Another factor tied into journaling is discipline. Many years ago, I read the book *The Road Less Traveled* by M. Scott Peck. He wrote a lot about discipline in his book, as he considers discipline essential for emotional, spiritual, and psychological health. The elements of discipline that make for such health include the ability to delay gratification, accepting responsibility for oneself and one's actions, and a dedication to truth and balancing. In the context of eating, I felt a sense of power when I became disciplined about controlling my portions. By contrast, eating without “boundaries” (as most of us tend to do) seemed uncomfortable—it made me feel less responsible in some way. Being more aware of what I was feeling during each meal was an empowering experience that I rarely knew prior to doing this experiment. I learned that it’s not about denying yourself of food, but rather being totally present during each meal and NOT being on automatic pilot. This is called *mindfulness*, being totally engaged during any activity you are doing. In the case of food consumption, I was very aware of when my body had enough food and I would stop at that point. I got full very quickly when eating good fat, as was the case when I consumed peanut butter.

Listen to your body, and try to distinguish between a mental or oral craving for food and a real hunger that comes from deep in the belly (“visceral hunger”). I felt very few cravings on this diet.

Although dietary practices are very important in controlling one's weight, don't forget the other factors that regulate weight—metabolic disorders, hormonal factors, medications, and the psychological readiness of an individual to make changes in his/her lifestyle.

On the following pages, I present sample menus that I designed. It is important for me to repeat that during the 5-week period, I experienced very little hunger, even on the days I consumed very few calories. It is my belief, based on my experience, that when you consume a low-calorie diet BUT consume a generous amount of healthy fat and protein, you will not be hungry. As Dr. Louis Aronne, author of the book *The Skinny*, says, "It's not about willpower, it's about full power."



Monday, August 1, 2009 (all nutrients, except calories, are in grams)

Food	Amt	Calories	Carbs	Fat	Sat fat	Protein	Fiber	Sugar
Breakfast:								
Egg (hard-boiled)	2	155	1.1	10.6	3.3	12.6	0	1.1
Bagel (cinnamon raisin)	1/2	121	24.6	.8	.1	4.4	1	2.7
Water	8 oz	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals for B-fast		276	25.7	11.4	3.4	17	1	3.9
Lunch:								
Salad (small):								
Lettuce (Romaine)		27	5.1	.5	0	1.9	3.3	1.9
Tomatoes		35	7	.5	0	1	1	4
Cauliflower		12	2.6	0	0	1	1.2	1.2
Onions		21	5	.1	0	.6	.9	2.3
Cucumbers		10	2.5	.1	0	.5	.3	1.2
Turkey	3oz	168	0	7.1	2	24.3	0	0
Tuna Fish	2oz	70	0	0	0	15	0	0
Mayonnaise	1.5tsp	67	0	7.3	1	0	0	0
Soy Milk, Vanilla	10 oz	137	14.8	4.6	.6	8	1.1	9.1
Totals for Lunch:		547	37	20.2	3.6	52.3	7.8	30.5
Dinner:								
Egg (hard-boiled)	1	78	.6	5.3	1.6	6.3	0	.6
Soy Milk, Vanilla	7 oz	105	11.4	3.5	.4	6.1	.9	7
Totals for Dinner:		183	12	8.8	2	12.4	.9	7.6
Snacks:								
Granola Bar	1 bar	280	42	10	1	10	8	12
Peanut Butter	1Tbs	94	3.1	8.1	1.7	4	1	1.5
Cereal (Go Lean)	1/2 cup	100	18	1.5	.1	4.6	4	6.5
Peanuts in shells	1/4 cup	103	2.9	9	1.2	4.7	1.6	.7
Totals for Snacks:		577	66	28.6	4.9	23.3	14.6	20.7
Totals for the Day:		1,583	140	69	13.9	105	24.3	62.7
% Macro Nutrients			35%	39%	7.9%	27%		
			<i>Carbs</i>	<i>Fat</i>	<i>Sat fat</i>	<i>Protein</i>		

Monday, August 16, 2009 (All Nutrients, Except Calories, are in Grams)

Food	Amt	Calories	Carbs	Fat	Sat fat	Protein	Fiber	Sugar
Breakfast:								
Egg (hard-boiled)	2	155	1.1	10.6	3.3	12.6	0	0
Ezekiel Bread	1 slice	80	14	0	0	4	3	n/a
Almond Butter	1Tbs	110	3	9	.5	4	1.5	1
Soy Milk, Plain	8 oz	98	11.4	3.2	.8	6.5	0	6.5
<i>Totals for B-fast</i>		<i>442</i>	<i>29.6</i>	<i>13.89</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>27.1</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>7.5</i>
Lunch:								
Tuna fish		97	0	2.2	.6	17.9	0	0
Protein Shake	12 oz	180	9	3	1	30	3	n/a
<i>Totals for Lunch:</i>		<i>277</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>5.2</i>	<i>1.6</i>	<i>47.9</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>
Dinner:								
Ezekiel Bread	1 slice	80	14	0	0	4	3	n/a
Almond Butter	1Tbs	110	3	9	.5	4	1.5	1
Soy Milk, Vanilla	10 oz	105	11.4	3.5	.4	6.1	.9	7
<i>Totals for Dinner:</i>		<i>295</i>	<i>28.4</i>	<i>12.5</i>	<i>5.4</i>	<i>14.1</i>	<i>5.4</i>	<i>8</i>
Snacks:								
Plum	2	60	15	.4	0	1	1.8	13
Zucchini	1 cup	25	5.2	.3	0	2.1	2.2	3
Soy Milk Vanilla	10 oz	105	11.4	3.5	4	6.1	.9	7
<i>Totals for Snacks:</i>		<i>190</i>	<i>31.6</i>	<i>4.2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>9.2</i>	<i>4.9</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Totals for the Day:</i>		<i>1,204</i>	<i>98.6</i>	<i>35.79</i>	<i>15.6</i>	<i>113.9</i>	<i>17.9</i>	<i>38.5</i>
<i>% Macro Nutrients</i>			<i>33%</i> <i>Carbs</i>	<i>27%</i> <i>Fat</i>	<i>11.6%</i> <i>Sat fat</i>	<i>38%</i> <i>Protein</i>		

Tuesday August 25, 2009 (All Nutrients, Except Calories, are in Grams)

Food	Amt	Calories	Carbs	Fat	Sat fat	Protein	Fiber	Sugar
Breakfast:								
Egg (hard-boiled)	2	155	1.1	10.6	3.3	12.6	0	0
Bagel(cinnamon raisin)	1/2	121	24.6	.8	.1	4.4	1	2.7
Almond Butter	1Tbs	110	3	9	.5	4	1.5	1
Water	8 oz	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals for B-fast		386	28.7	20.4	3.9	21	2.5	3.7
Lunch:								
Cheese Havarti	2 oz	154	0	10	8	16	0	0
Soy Milk	8 oz	135	14.6	4.5	.6	8	1.1	9
:Salad								
Fresh Tomato	1 med	26	5.2	.4	0	.8	.8	3
Fresh Cucumber	1/4 cup	11	.23	0	0	.8	.8	1.5
Fresh Cauliflower	1/2 cup	12	2.6	0	0	1	1.2	1.2
Garbanzo Beans	1Tbs	43	7.3	.7	0	2.3	1	1.3
Light Dressing	1Tbs	20	3	1	0	0	0	1.5
Totals for Lunch:		401	35	16.6	8.6	28.9	4.9	17.3
Dinner								
Tuna Fish	6 oz	218	0	5.1	1.3	40.2	0	0
Mayo Light	3Tbs	60	6	4.5	0	0	0	n/a
Ezekiel Bread	1 slice	80	14	0	0	4	3	
Totals for Dinner		358	20	9.6	1.3	44.2	3	0
Snacks:								
Plum	2	30	7.5	.2	0	.5	.9	6.5
Dark Chocolate	1 bar	190	30	5	3	10	2	n/a
Cashews	1/4cup	187	9.7	15.4	2.7	5.4	1.1	1.6
Peanut Butter	1Tbs	90	3	7.5	1.2	3.5	1	n/a
Totals for Snacks:		497	50.2	28.1	6.9	19.4	5	8.1
Totals for the Day:		1,642	133.9	74.7	20.7	113.5	15.4	N/A
% Macro Nutrients			33%	41%	11.3%	28%		
			<i>Carbs</i>	<i>Fat</i>	<i>Sat fat</i>	<i>Protein</i>		

NOTES: