



Above: Bridget Gilewski before in June of 2009, then after in July 2010.

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In her own words:

Words:

‘Now I never look at food as the enemy’

Bridget Gilewski, of North Tonawanda, shared with freelance writer Leslie Church her struggle with weight and weight loss, which lasted, Gilewski said, “pretty much my entire adult life.”

“Following a surgery in 2008, I began to put on more weight. I felt horrible. I felt I looked horrible. I never wanted to go anywhere because I didn’t want to try and find something to wear. Nothing ever fit the way I wanted it to.

“At my May 2009 annual physical, I asked my doctor about a weight loss plan. She referred me to Dr. Theo (at the Egea Medical Weight Loss Center). In the first two months I had no real temptations that were hard to fight off. My will power was enough then. When I started to lose a significant amount of weight, many people around me expressed their encouragement and this helped as well.

“For my 39th birthday I went skydiving. It was exhilarating and it catapulted me even further toward my weight-loss goals. I would have never gone skydiving if I hadn’t lost the weight. It made me realize all the other things that I had missed out on.

“Over time people around me — whether it was at work or home — would offer me treats, or my husband would bring home my favorite chocolates. I would ask myself, ‘Why are they doing this to me?’ Dr. Theo and I would discuss things like this. It was very hard to basically tell the people you love to stop trying to subconsciously

sabotage your weight-loss efforts. They don’t realize that’s what they’re doing.

“I also struggled with self sabotage. It was as if my mind was trying to test the waters and see what I could get away with without gaining weight. Fear is what saved me. I was so afraid of getting back to the old mindset.

“This is when the concept of ‘diet’ went out of my vocabulary and ‘way of life’ came in. It truly is a lifestyle change. No matter what people say, you have to do the work. You have to want it. You have to believe that you deserve it. You have to put yourself first and many times you just have to forgive yourself and start over at the next meal.

“To continue with my lifestyle change I knew physical fitness was a must. So I set a goal to keep myself on track: a triathlon. I again took a leap into an area that I had never been and had always wanted to go. I completed the triathlon at Evangola State Park on July 3 this year.

“Now I never look at food as the enemy. Dr. Theo has taught me to embrace food, just in moderation. In the beginning, I couldn’t fathom moderation, but over time I was able to incorporate some of my favorite foods back into my life. I usually eat some form of chocolate every day.

“This was a great year for me. I lost about 50 pounds, went skydiving, completed a triathlon, and turned 40. I now believe I can do anything I set my mind to!” ■