

Never Again:

MOVE![®] HELPS VETERAN EILEEN DEVER LOSE 58 POUNDS AND FEEL GOOD ABOUT HERSELF

After Veteran Eileen Dever was diagnosed with diabetes, it became increasingly hard to control as the years passed. Doctors could no longer properly manage her blood sugar with pills alone, and by July 2004, she needed to start taking insulin injections. By 2010, she was taking insulin three times a day!

Roller Coaster

Eileen had been on a roller coaster of weight loss and gain over the previous 25 years. In 1999, she weighed 200 pounds, but by 2010, her weight had crept up to 245 pounds. She had lost some weight on her own, but she wasn't really successful. Despite trying all of the fad diets, nothing lasted. The final program she tried was WeightWatchers[®] and she found the weekly weigh-ins to be helpful. But the meetings weren't effective or motivational for her because they were led by skinny people who talked "at" her.



Then, in March 2010, Eileen collapsed. Her blood sugar had dropped to 40 mg/dL and EMTs said she was within 10 minutes of going into a coma. After this life-changing event, Eileen realized that if she wanted to live, she needed to make some serious changes.

Serious Changes

While in the West Roxbury facility of the VA Boston Healthcare System, Eileen heard about VA's MOVE![®] Weight Management Program and decided to give it a try. Soon after her discharge, she received a call from Trish MacDonald, a dietitian at the facility. Eileen was struck by how enthusiastic and encouraging Trish was as she described MOVE![®] and having Eileen join it. So in April 2010, Eileen joined the program. Although the 90-minute trips to and from MOVE![®] meetings at the facility weren't easy for her, she knew she needed to keep going.

Real People

The MOVE!® groups worked for her, in part, because she had the accountability of a weekly weigh-in. But more importantly, the groups were interactive, smaller (only 12-18 people), more personal, and led by speakers with different areas of expertise—like Trish, a Registered Dietitian, Kinesiotherapist Jim Kelsey, and Dr. Ildiko Halasz. In the MOVE!® group, she learned the basics of nutrition and exercise. But participants also shared their healthy recipes, did taste tests, and had an open forum for questions. Eileen liked that the group leaders were “real people” whom she could identify with because they were different sizes and shapes.



Eileen slipped back into old habits many times while in MOVE!®, but she was determined to succeed this time. What kept her coming back were the connections she made with the other members of her MOVE!® group. They were always willing to share their struggles and successes, and were always there to support her on her journey. Eileen also found that the compassionate MOVE!® leaders were committed to the program, dedicated to each member of the group, and always ready to answer participants’ questions.

Better Choices

Eileen learned to track everything she ate and was shocked to learn what she’d been eating— without even realizing it, she was making poor choices in terms of portion size and calories. She also was able to identify and change one particularly bad food habit: picking at the food she was preparing and cooking. Now, a typical breakfast for her is cereal, oatmeal, or eggs. For lunch, she typically has a half-salad and yogurt. And for dinner, she eats whatever is prepared for the family, just in reasonable portions.

Eileen also learned how to make other simple, yet powerful changes. She now drinks at least two large bottles of water every day. She avoids carbonated drinks—except one glass of diet Pepsi with lime, as a treat once or twice a month. She’s also changed the way she prepares meals. Instead of frying foods, she now bakes, broils, or barbeques. She also uses egg whites in place of whole eggs, and makes her own marinade using a sugar substitute. She’s learned that she can still eat foods she really likes— if she does it only one or two times per month and is mindful of portion size.

High Energy

Eileen's also learned that moving even a little can have a big impact on her energy. She started walking on treadmill at 1.1 mph for 3 minutes as a warm-up, and has slowly increased her speed and distance. Now she's up to 1.4 mph for 45 minutes, 3 times per week, and she also does floor exercises several times each week. With a surprising improvement in her energy level, she's now able to tackle tough household cleaning jobs, walk to the grocery store and post office, and once again enjoy gardening.

Loss And Gain

Eileen now weighs 187 pounds—to date, a loss of 58 pounds! Instead of 3 insulin injections each day, she now only needs to take one. Her goal is to get down to 175 pounds. Although a recent back injury has limited her MOVE!® attendance and ability to exercise, she is determined to stay on track and has enrolled in the TeleMOVE program.

Eileen says that the self-esteem you gain when you lose the weight is amazing and unbelievable, and you “learn to like yourself again.” Although Eileen may not wear a bikini, she feels good about herself—especially when she goes shopping for regular size clothes at the store!

For anyone struggling with weight, Eileen has the following important tips for success:

- Don't give up if you cheat or go overboard with eating. Forgive yourself and get back on track!
- Put a picture of your heavier self on the refrigerator with the caption, “Never Again.”
- Don't cheat yourself if there is something you are craving. Instead, learn to eat everything in moderation.
- Read *every* label on *all* of your food.
- Cut meats to proper portion sizes before freezing.
- Learn to weigh or measure your foods.
- Use a baby spoon to eat dessert—you'll take smaller bites and it'll last longer!
- Realize that you need to do this for yourself. Family and friends can be supportive and encouraging, but ultimately you must support yourself.
- Be proud of every achievement you make—even if it's losing a half-pound or adding 1 minute to your walking.