



Success Stories

Healthy Living Matters. Prevention Works.

Jodi's Success Story

NAVY VETERAN JODI RICH DISCUSSES HOW MOVE! AND BARIATRIC SURGERY HELPED HIM LOSE 278 POUNDS AND RECLAIM A "NORMAL" LIFE

"In 2010, everything came to a head while I was watching TV at home. I passed out and later, in the ER at the VA San Diego HCS, I learned I was in atrial fibrillation and needed a heart procedure. Years of poor eating, a sedentary lifestyle, and not taking care of my body had finally led me to the possibility of dying. But even then, my first thought was, 'where would they find a pine box big enough for me?'



That year, I'd reached my heaviest—478 pounds and a BMI well over 50. I'd gone from a 30-inch waist after an honorable discharge from the Navy, to a whopping 62 inches! My life was dismal at best, but I continued to fool myself. I told myself and others that "I hold my weight well." To hide my shame, I spent exorbitant amounts of money on expensive, 8X clothes, only to soil them with fried foods.

I was eating processed and fast foods in large amounts, drinking lots of soda, and bingeing at night. I was sitting in front of the TV all the time, eating. I knew the weight was taxing my body, but just put it out of my mind. My body was starting to break down—I had diabetes, crushing foot syndrome, neuropathy, and cellulitis.

Normal life didn't seem possible—I couldn't drive, sit in a restaurant booth, spend time with my god-children, or even walk my dog! But I met Dr. Leda Felicio, the first of many 'angels' in my journey. She helped me understand that I was killing myself with food. After she said I needed cardioversion, I made a promise to do everything possible to lose weight if I survived the procedure. I did, and with the help of the La Jolla MOVE! Team, the drug topiramate, Zumba Gold Classes, and dietary changes, I lost 228 pounds in the next 2 years. My plastic surgeon, Dr. Bodor, recommended that I lose more weight before doing surgery to remove my loose skin. I took his advice and went back to MOVE!, as I also wanted to have gastric sleeve surgery.

But I hit a plateau, and soon started secretly binge eating again. I gained back almost 90 pounds, but luckily the MOVE Team recognized I was struggling. They had me retake MOVE! classes and continue seeing a psychologist, who helped me realize that personal issues were preventing my success. During a short break from MOVE!, I educated myself more about food. I also decided to become a pescatarian, and have continued to follow a primarily plant-based diet.

When I was ready, I came back to MOVE! and lost 30 pounds. I learned as much as I could about healthy eating and weight loss surgery, then had a sleeve gastrectomy in May 2015. Dr. Sandler, my bariatric surgeon, provided me with excellent care, treating me with great respect and professionalism. He helped give me back the quality of life I'd missed for 20 years.

Now, about 1 year post-surgery, I'm down from 310 to 200 pounds—bringing my total weight reduction to 278 pounds! Soon, I'll be undergoing skin removal surgery and expect that I will once again be truly blessed.

“...the MOVE!
Program works if you
believe in
yourself...every day
you move forward with
MOVE!, your efforts
will pay off.”

— Jodi Rich

I have much love for the many people who helped me—when you get obese, it truly 'takes a village' to help you get your life back. Susan Leckband was my pharmacist and great advocate. My PCP Gary Pfeifer introduced me to the wonderful people from MOVE!. Kathy Ober and Cindy Gerlan taught me to log my food and eat normal portions, and provided insights on what I was eating. MOVE! Psychologist Tom Rutledge helped me build my self-esteem, while my primary psychiatrist Dr. Kevin Flood took personal time to be my walking partner. He believed in me when I even I didn't. Dietitian Lisa Post helped me re-learn how to eat my favorite foods. Audrey Lolis embraced me and kept a close eye on me while I exercised. And I found the MOVE! literature and book—my weight-loss 'bible'—to be invaluable.

If you're starting your weight-loss journey, the MOVE! Program will work if you believe in yourself. You are worth more than you'll ever know and every day you move forward with MOVE!, your efforts will pay off.”