



I Was Tired of Being the Fat Dad

My wake-up call came a few years ago when my family was vacationing in Florida. I heard about a new ride at Sea World called The Manta, and I was really looking forward to going on the ride with my son. When we got to Sea World, my son and I waited with anticipation for 45 minutes before we got into the loading area. I tried to get in the seat, but I didn't fit. The employees tried to get the seatbelt over my stomach, but it just wouldn't go. There I was, in front of hundreds of people, too fat to fit in the ride. It was humiliating for me, but more importantly, it embarrassed my son. I had to get off the ride and leave through a separate gate while my son and my friend went on the ride. I felt people looking at me, heard them snickering about the fat guy who couldn't fit on the ride. I decided that wasn't going to happen to me again.

As a kid, I was involved in a lot of activities and different sports. After high school, I went to college and stayed in reasonably good shape. I played rugby, which helped keep my weight in check, but I still wasn't as active as I had been before. As I took school more seriously, I moved around less. I spent more time reading and studying. After college I went to law school and that's when my weight really started to increase.

In 1999, my wife and I were lucky enough to have a son. I was worried about being able to do things with him because of my size. Fast-forward a few years and my son was involved in sports and I was coaching. The kids I coached would listen to me, but I knew I could be a better coach if I were at a healthy weight. It was heartbreaking to know that my son was starting to get teased about having a fat dad. I never wanted that for him. Being a kid is hard enough without being teased about how your dad looks. My son and I are also involved in Boy Scouts, and in 2012 we signed up to go to Sea Base (*a high adventure camp in the Florida Keys*) for a week of sailing. It would mean that we would be staying on a small sailing yacht for a week. I was told that I needed to be less than 290 lbs. to go. I was over 380 lbs. when we signed up. I believed I could lose enough weight in the two-year time frame, but really didn't have a plan or know what to do.

My 50th birthday was March 13, 2013. As I was approaching this birthday I was getting sick and tired of feeling like a lump. I was worried that my diabetes would become unmanageable and I was tired of being the fat dad. My son was getting older and was becoming more interested in activities I had enjoyed as a kid. I tried skiing again but being as heavy as I was, it was really hard to do. I hurt my knee playing soccer in high school and I just couldn't ski for any length of time. My wife would say that it hurt her to listen to me try to walk up stairs because of my knee and my weight. I was done with feeling that way.

Finally in March of 2013, I hit my wall. I came home from work and told my wife that I had to do something or I would start having serious health problems (*like diabetes wasn't serious enough*).

My wife said, "Well maybe we should check this out," and handed me a Farrell's flyer (a new workout place that would be opening soon very close to our home). I was game to try anything, but honestly didn't think we would stick with it.

We called and talked to Jillian Faber, one of the owners, and then met with Justin Gordon, one of the other owners. They were great to talk to and very understanding, but I remember thinking that Justin must have taken one look at me and thought there is no way this dude is going to stick with this. It wouldn't have surprised me since, like I said, I was thinking the same thing. We tried to think of a good reason why we shouldn't do the program and couldn't find one, so we signed up.

April 20, 2013—Orientation Day—is a day I will never forget. They took my measurements and my picture. There went my pride. The hardest thing for me though, was the four-minute step test. I thought that I was certainly in good enough shape to step up a few inches and back down again for four minutes. I was wrong. I barely made it through the test. Another 10-Weeker, Lauretta Hassan, was taking the step test next to me and cheered me on the whole time. That's when I realized I wouldn't be in this journey alone. I know Jillian, Justin and Randy Sampson, the other owner, were watching me and were having their doubts, but they stuck with me too.

The initial classes were really hard but something clicked with me. I immediately changed how I ate and made sure I made every class. I was sore all of the time at first but I felt changed for the better right away. By the end of the initial ten weeks, I had lost 49 lbs. Part of the reason it worked for me was I focused on how I felt and how my clothes fit rather than on how far I had to go. By August of 2013, I had lost enough weight to start buying 2X size shirts instead of 4X on my trip to the Black Hills for the annual motorcycle rally (*the 2x shirts are all too big for me now!*).

When my family and I went to the Minnesota State Fair later that month, my son wanted to go to the "adventure park" and ride the rides. I decided it was time to try this ride thing again. There wasn't a line and the ride operators discreetly let me try the seat to see if I fit. I did! My son and I went on that ride twice, one right after another! It felt great!

By November of 2013, I had lost 100 lbs. with the Farrell's program. In January, a columnist from one of our local papers, the Pioneer Press, did an article about my weight-loss. I still get people coming to me and asking if I'm the guy from the paper. One lady asked me to sign her copy!

This past winter, I tried skiing again. It was like I was in high school! My knee didn't hurt or get tired and now I can't wait to hit the slopes again next winter! Everything is better. I want to, and can, do more than I could before. Even riding my Harley-Davidson is better. My health has never been better. When I started the program my A1c, a measurement important to diabetics, was at 10. It is supposed to be below 7. Mine is

now at 5. After making sure it was okay with my doctor, I have stopped taking the pills I was taking for my diabetes. I no longer need them.

I have since lost 182 lbs., finishing my year out at 190.8 lbs. and I can honestly say it has all been through Farrell's eXtreme Bodyshaping and the excellent support and coaching I received from Jillian, Justin and Randy. They will never know how much I appreciate all they have done for me.

Just a couple of weeks before the final testing for the 10k challenge, I hit an animal while riding my motorcycle home from teaching a class at FXB White Bear. I had some road rash, but the most significant injury was deep muscle bruising to my chest and shoulder. It's still sore today. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to test out for the challenge. I hadn't been able to do any sit-ups since the accident but still managed to knock out 51 sit-ups when I tested, up from 10 when I started the program. I give all the credit to core-building work we had done through the past year.

I am doing my best to pay it forward now. People I have known for years literally don't recognize me. Many have said I have inspired them to get back into shape. Some have taken my pictures and hung them around their homes, claiming they're inspirational. I'm now instructing at FXB White Bear. I have heard the term "ripped" used to describe my arms and muscles, something I never thought I would ever hear and I am looking forward to seeing what more I can do! Not bad for someone that didn't think he would last the first week! I am so glad I did.

My wife could see the difference in each of my pictures, not just in my physique, but also in my attitude. I went from a *"whatever, take the picture, this won't work anyway"* look to *"bring it on!"*

I tell everyone I meet about Farrell's. It made such a profound change in my life that I don't think it would be fair to keep it to myself. People are sometimes concerned that they won't be able to follow the program, being worried that the workouts are just too hard. I tell them about how I started and where I am now and how they can modify the exercises to fit their ability.

This is truly a program almost anyone can follow. Farrell's works because there is a real feeling of *community* when you're there. People are actually concerned for you and extremely supportive, like family. You're not alone.

I have made some great friends at Farrell's and I want everyone to have the same experience. Farrell's has taken my son's *"fat dad"* away and replaced him with someone that wants to get out and do things. Farrell's has given my wife the guy she married back and Farrell's has given me my life back.

Kurtis Berg, Farrell's eXtreme Bodyshaping 2014 National Challenge Winner