

How I Lost 75lbs

By Bria Pittman

My name is Bria Pittman, and I am so thrilled that you are reading my story. I hope that my story will inspire you and motivate you to take action on your weight loss goals. I hope that my story will inspire you to make this the year you finally lose the weight.



Since Dec. 2011, I have lost 75lbs. Now, I blog about healthy eating, fitness, and weight loss. Since losing the weight, I have made it my mission to help as many other people as possible to lose weight. I am not an expert, and I don't know everything, but I have a strong desire to help, and that is good enough for me.

I hope that you will enjoy this book and it will get you started on the road to achieving your goals. Don't hesitate to reach out.

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Part I: The Journey

The Weight Gain

I was not always overweight. In high school I was a cheerleader My twin sister was a basketball player. I was fit. I was in shape. Not only was I a cheerleader, but I ran cross country as well. I was small in high school. I was in a size nine.

Eventually, I quit cheerleading and cross country and decided to get a job. My junior year of high school I got my first job as a hostess for Red Lobster. Looking back I can say without a doubt this is the point where things started to go downhill and I started to gain weight. If you know anything about Red Lobster you know their food is amazing! Not only is their food amazing but the cheddar bay biscuits are ridiculously good. It didn't take me long to get hooked on cheddar bay biscuits, creamy blackened chicken alfredo, and shrimp scampi. Cheddar bay biscuits were my downfall though. I would easily eat three or four of those in a four hour span. They are 150 calories each. If I ate four in a shift that is 600 calories. Not only would I eat the bread during my shift, but I would always eat when I got off too, and it did not resemble anything healthy.

The year I started working at Red Lobster I also met my husband. We started dating and of course he wanted to take me out all the time. When we got married in 2008, neither of us knew how to cook because we ate out so much. It was pretty sad.

The combination of eating Red Lobster, or some other fast food every day, (Chris and I were newlyweds, we did not cook) and my lack of exercise caused the weight to pile on. When I started at Red Lobster I was in a size 10, by the time I quit for good in 2010 I was in a size 16, pushing an 18. Now, I'm not blaming Red Lobster, it all falls on me.



Things Need to Change

In 2009, I quit Red Lobster and started working at an upscale restaurant called *The Flatiron Grille*. I distinctly remember 2009 being the first year I realized I needed to start losing weight. I was huge and I knew it. At *Flatiron* the wait staff wore chef coats. The owner had these cleaned and pressed for us every day. When we got to work, we would go in the back and pick a chef coat from the rack. Let's just say when I first started working there I was embarrassed every single day. Why? Because my chef coat was an extra-large. I was the only extra-large girl working there, so there were not many of those. It was always embarrassing when they were out of extra-large chef coats and I had to fit into a large. I prayed every day when I went in that I would be able to find an extra-large.

That was the first time I realized I needed to start losing weight.

My very first attempt at losing weight was in 2009. I told my husband I wanted to start exercising. In my mind, if I just worked out I would lose weight. So I started walking, and my sweet husband would walk with me every day. I didn't walk fast. My husband would try to get me to walk faster because he said it would burn more calories, but I was so uneducated about how exercising actually worked that I thought I would be just fine walking at the pace I was walking.

That very first experience with exercising was tough. Each time we went walking I would be sweating like I was running a marathon and Chris would look like he could do it all day. He didn't sweat and he sure as heck wasn't breathing hard.

A couple of days after Chris and I started walking I was telling a friend at work that I wanted to lose weight. I will never forget what he said to me, he was an older man. He said, **"Bria you are 19, if you don't lose the weight now you never will."** His words were meant to spur me to action but instead they hurt and discouraged me. Needless to say I gave up walking before I ever really got started. My first mistake, I didn't have a plan. My second mistake, I didn't take the time to educate myself. When you don't have a plan, losing weight can seem extremely overwhelming. You don't know which way to go and what to do to get you to your goal.

My Pregnancy

Towards the end of the year, Chris and I, more me than Chris decided we wanted to have a baby. I got pregnant at the end of November 2009. I remember because I was so sick from morning sickness that I couldn't eat Thanksgiving dinner. I would soon learn that being pregnant was hard enough, but being pregnant and overweight was miserable. When I got pregnant I didn't have a very good relationship with food. My unhealthy relationship with food got worse when I was pregnant. Being pregnant was good enough reason for me to eat whatever the heck I wanted to. I weighed 220lbs when I got pregnant. I gained another forty lbs. during my pregnancy. Looking back, it was a very painful pregnancy.

When I was six months pregnant I looked like I was nine months. I'll never forget one day I was waiting on a family of seven people. The Dad in the group said "dang girl when are you due?" I replied "not for another ten weeks." He said "Dang are you having twins!" I said "NO, I'm not," and I slammed his glass down on the table and walked away. As if you don't feel fat enough when you're pregnant people have to make comments like that and make you want to take their head off their shoulders. I went to the walk in cooler and cried for five minutes. The good news is the man knew he hurt my feelings and he left me a \$20 tip.

Not only did I suffer the constant "are you pregnant with twins" question, but **my health during my pregnancy started to go downhill fast.** I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes and preeclampsia. My feet were so swollen they looked like someone stuck me with an air gun and pumped them full of air. Swollen feet are a normal part of pregnancy, but because of my gestational diabetes mine were swollen more than normal. My feet were so swollen that I had to quit working earlier than I intended because I couldn't fit my feet into my work shoes.

Not only that, but my preeclampsia was getting worse and I was put on bed rest for three weeks. To be honest, I am ashamed that I put my baby through that. I am ashamed that I didn't take care of myself for the sake of my child. Looking back on my pregnancy, I hardly ever drank water and I sure as heck didn't exercise. My preeclampsia and my blood high blood pressure started to affect Manny and so they induced me at 37 weeks.



The Breaking Point

By December of 2012 I was the heaviest I had ever been in my entire life at 236lbs. When you're heavy, at least this was my case, I preferred to avoid cameras. So, that entire year I had managed to avoid having my picture taken. Well mid-December we went out with some friends to celebrate the Christmas holiday together. I let my guard down and we snapped a lot of pictures that night. The next day I was looking at those pictures on Facebook, and I couldn't believe how big I had gotten. Honestly, I couldn't believe I was so much bigger than my

husband. I was embarrassed. I was embarrassed the way my belly hung over my pants in one picture where I was sitting down. This may be shallow but I don't care, but I was so frustrated by the fact that I was fat and my husband was thin.



I realized at that moment it was time to get serious. I cut out sweets, except on preplanned days, and I started doing Jillian Michaels 30 day shred. In a month I lost 16 lbs. That is a lot of weight, but I was heavier, and I believe a lot of that was water weight.

By this point, it had been about a year that I had been watching Jennifer Hudson tout her new weight loss success she had achieved from a program called Weight Watchers. I was inspired by her story not only because she had lost the weight, but she looked like me and she had lost the weight. I really believed in my head that as African American women we are supposed to be thicker. I believed that it was in my genes. I mean everybody in my family is a little stout. But to see someone who was as heavy as me at one point, Jennifer's highest weight was 236 lbs, lose the weight in a natural way was encouraging. Not only that, but she was a celebrity who had lost weight on Weight Watchers.

I decided I would try it for a month. If I didn't like it I could cancel my membership, no commitment. I signed up for Weight Watchers online in January 2012. The first week I lost four lbs. I was sold.

What is Weight Watchers?

Let me preface this by saying this is the nutrition plan that worked for me. It may not work for you. This is not a one size fits all world. We all have different preferences and learning styles. I do not believe one nutrition plan is better than the other. I do however believe that you should pick a nutrition plan that is sustainable. A nutrition plan that forces you to cut out one food group in my opinion is not sustainable. Can you keep that up forever?

I needed a plan that would teach me how to eat better, but that was not so restrictive I couldn't have anything. That is the type of plan that will make me give up in a hurry. I LOVE Weight

Watchers. I learned to focus on the foods that are good for me, and eat more of those to support my body.

To learn more about Weight Watchers visit their website www.weightwatchers.com.

The process wasn't all success all the time. It was hard. It is hard changing who you are and becoming a new person.

I read a lot of quotes to keep me motivated. My favorite two are **"Someone busier than you is running right now,"** and **"If it is important to you, you will find a way, if not, you will find an excuse."** I love reading quotes and motivational stuff to keep me going. Motivational quotes and blogs were especially helpful when I would have a bad day and wanted to give up completely.



Embracing the New Me

Although I lost weight, it soon became apparent to me that I had a lot of mental baggage I needed to lose as well. I had a lot of false opinions of myself. I started to have issues with how my body looked. Constantly staring at myself in the mirror everyday thinking I needed to lose more or tone this and that. I struggled bad with body image after losing the weight. Why? Because of my stretch marks. My stomach is stuck in a perpetual sad face. I have loose skin on my stomach as well. Those are all hard things for me to deal with. But my struggle with body image has led me to the point where I know it is so important to love and accept myself. I realized that getting skinny didn't automatically make me love myself, it had to be a conscious process. **My message to you:** While you are losing weight, learn to LOVE YOURSELF as well. It will make all the difference.

Things I had to start telling myself so I would learn to love myself:

- I love my excess skin.
- I love my thick hips.
- I love the person I have become.

Losing weight and getting healthy changed my life. Now, I am on a mission to help as many other people as possible achieve their weight loss goals. I hope that my story has inspired you in some way. I am not where I want to be just yet, and that is okay, I plan to keep working on me. Although I am not where I want to be just yet, I realize how far I have come and I give myself a serious pat on the back. From 236 lbs, size 16 almost 18 jeans down to a size 8. Now it is your turn.

Part II Tips to Get You Started

I am no expert on weight loss, and I don't pretend to know everything. I can only share the things that I know worked for me to help me start my weight loss journey and continue it without giving up. I'm outlining some of my favorite weight loss advice. Remember, there is no one right way to lose weight. We are all different. We are not a one size fits all world. That being said, I want you to take what works for you and leave what doesn't. Eat the meat and leave the bone.

I. What is Your Why?

This may be the single most important step when you are starting your weight loss journey. A lot of people start losing weight without a clear idea of why they are even starting. Sure reasons like "my doctor said I need to lose some weight," and "I'm in a wedding this summer," are all valid reasons, but they are not enough. Those are surface reasons. Those are the kind of reasons that make you lose weight and gain it all back. You first need to be doing it for you. So why do you want to lose weight? For me I wanted to lose weight so I could go shopping for clothes and not cry every time I left because I couldn't fit anything. I wanted to be able to look in the mirror and like what I saw. I wanted to be healthy for my son, how could I tell him growing up that he needs to take care of himself and be healthy when I wasn't even taking care of myself. I wanted to look good for my husband. No, I didn't do it just to look good for him. Looking good for my husband would make me feel better about myself as well. I wouldn't feel gross every time he looked at me. No, I don't have one of those husbands who told me I needed to "lose some weight." My husband never once mentioned my weight to me. He never once said anything about how I would eat all of my food and the rest of his too if there was any left on his plate. He loved me no matter what, and that was more motivation for me to change. He didn't deserve that.

Knowing your why will keep you motivated when you want to quit. It is the anchor that you cling to when you want to say to hell with it.

II. Have a Plan

"Failing to plan is planning to fail." I attribute a lot of my weight loss success to planning and preparation. My life was busy. I couldn't just wake up and wing it every day. I couldn't just wake up and go with the flow, I would have been screwed, and I also wouldn't have lost any weight.

My Motto: Plan. Practice. Review. “Plan your work and work your plan.” (Les Brown) This is the three step process I use to help me be successful. On Saturdays, I sit down and plan my week out. I ask myself questions like: When am I working out this week? How many days do I plan on working out this week? (My motto: I don’t go more than two days without working out, that way if something happens there is room for me to get back on the wagon). What meals have I planned? What does my calendar look like? Are there any hectic days that I can plan ahead for?

Things you can plan: plan meals, plan workouts, plan rest days.

Now that you have your planning done, it is time to practice your plan. You practice your plan all week long, and then at the end of the week you review your plan.

I review my plan on Sundays. I look at how my week went overall. Did I lose any weight? If not, what challenged me? What threw me off? By reviewing the past week’s plan, I am better equipped to plan out the coming week. I am more aware of the things that throw me off or sabotage me.

Having a plan will alleviate a lot of stress. If that sounds like too much work, then keep struggling. You don’t have to have a detailed twelve step plan of how your week is going to go, but being intentional about at least having an idea of how you want your week to go is beneficial.

III. Buy a Scale and Pick a Weigh in Day

You need a scale, buy one! Now pick a weigh in day. This is the day you will weigh in every week. You need a weigh in day to hold you accountable and keep you on track. Weighing yourself everyday will drive you crazy because your body fluctuates throughout the week. Pick a weigh in day, and then try to only weigh yourself on that day.

My initial weigh in day was Mondays. I would weight myself every Monday, but good times on the weekend would throw me off a little so I move it to Friday. Friday is a good weigh in day for me because my week is so structured I generally stick to my plan and have a little room for error on the weekends.

IV. Track Your Food

Losing weight is calories in calories out. If you are eating more calories than you need, it will be very difficult to lose weight. On the reverse side of that, if you are not eating enough calories you will not lose weight. The starvation diet doesn’t work for several reasons. If your body thinks it won’t get food for a long time it will hold on to all excess weight to keep you from starving to death. Reason number two, a starvation diet is not sustainable. You can only do that for so long, and while you may be able to lose some weight starving yourself, the minute you start eating again you will gain it all back. Be smart. Know how many calories you need a day and try to stick to that.

There are several apps you can use to help lose weight. My favorite app is called Loselt, the icon for this app is a picture of a scale. This is the one I am currently using. Some people like the app

MyFitnessPal, and it is a good one too. When I first started losing weight however, I tracked my food with the Weight Watchers app. Weight Watchers costs \$18.95 per month, and I knew that was what I needed to use, because if I was paying for something I felt obligated to use it. I would recommend Weight Watchers. It is easier to quit when you are using a free app.

When I first started losing weight I didn't want to be one of "those people" who tracked their calories. I thought it was unfair that I had to pay attention to what I ate. But it came down to a simple question I asked myself, "Do you want to lose weight or not?" "Yes," I always answered. Good then suck it up and do it!

V. Eat Real Food

Sixteen hundred calories of Smart Ones, Lean Cuisines, Granola Bars, Crackers, etc. does something completely different for your body than sixteen hundred calories of lean protein, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds. The second listing of food will be more filling I guarantee you. It isn't just quantity that matters, the quality of the food you are eating is equally important.

Foods I always have in my house: chicken breast, romaine hearts, apples, oranges, celery, spinach, carrots, salad dressing, a bag of potatoes, hummus, nature valley granola bars, and Greek yogurt.

I try to stay away from overly processed food. I fail at that sometimes, but I'm not perfect.

I'm working hard to lose these last 10lbs. So, I think it is time I get really serious about focusing on eating clean.

I like the clean eating plan for a number of reasons. 1. It is simple and easy to follow. 2. If you are focusing on the right foods, which clean eating encourages, you don't have to be so worried about counting every single calorie you put in.

What exactly is clean eating?

Well for starters, it is not a diet. It is a lifestyle. Instead of focusing on the foods you can't have, you focus on the foods you can have. Stop telling yourself you're on a diet!! Let's be honest, we all know dieting just sets you up for failure. Yet people still diet hoping they will find "the one" that will help them get thin quick. Don't do it! Focus on putting more good in than bad.

Clean Eating

1. Eat Whole Foods

Whole foods are typically foods straight from the farm. So fruits, vegetables, whole grains, unsalted nuts and seeds.

2. Eat lean protein.

Chicken, Fish, Lean Beef, Ground Turkey etc.

3. Avoid Processed Foods.

Avoiding overly processed foods is going to require you to start reading food labels.

If a food has multiple ingredients on the box that you can barely read and don't have the first clue as to what it is, that means it isn't clean. Goodbye Wheat Thins and Triscuits, you were good friends to me.

I may also be cutting out granola bars. I have not been able to find a brand that isn't super processed. I guess I could make my own.

4. Eat 5-6 Small Meals per day

I'm going to be honest, clean eating is not easy, and I won't be doing it 100% of the time. I'm going for 80% clean 20% unclean. The first week it will probably look more like 70% clean 30% unclean. *Again, I am not perfect and if you are then we can't be friends mkay, mkay. ;)*

I plan to do a lot more juicing while I am focusing on clean eating.

The end goal: to eat less processed food and to eat more whole foods.

I am still in the beginning stages of understanding clean eating, so I need to do some more research. On Thursday I will post a list of clean foods to eat.

VI. Stay Motivated

"People often say motivation doesn't last, well neither does showering, that is why we recommend it daily." ~Zig Ziglar

Believe it or not, the initial excitement you had when you started your weight loss journey will wear off, and you will want to quit. To keep from quitting, you need to remember your why, but you also need to find ways to stay motivated.

I recommend you read other weight loss success stories. The internet is full of them. These stories could inspire you, or give you the push you need to keep going. Another way you could stay motivated is to join a community of like-minded people. My community: facebook.com/fromfluff2fit. We will keep you motivated.

Part III: Your Call to Action

If you are ready to get serious about losing weight, I would recommend you do two things.

1. Join our Facebook community: facebook.com/fluff2fit. Like the page, and you will get updates that include motivational quotes, challenges, support, and daily encouragement to help you reach your goals.
2. I'm here to help you. Email me at bria.pittan@gmail.com to schedule a free one on one coaching call with me. On the call we will identify why you want to lose weight, talk about what has been holding you back, and develop a plan to help you move forward.



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