

DULUTH-SUPERIOR MAGAZINE • VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 9
SEPTEMBER 2012

ART & SOUL

DULUTH AIRSHOW

DOOR COUNTY, WISCONSIN

MARTIAL ARTS

TOTAL TRANSFORMATION

GUADALUPE RESTAURANT

SPIRITUALITY & HEALTH: FEELING GOOD INSIDE AND OUT

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LOSING 200 POUNDS

One Woman's Amazing Transformation

CAN YOU FOLLOW
YOUR BLISS & PAY
YOUR MORTGAGE?

Three People Share
How They Did It

ART AND SOUL

Is There Life Without Art?

SNOWBIRDS!

Canada's Finest Soar
to Duluth's AirShow

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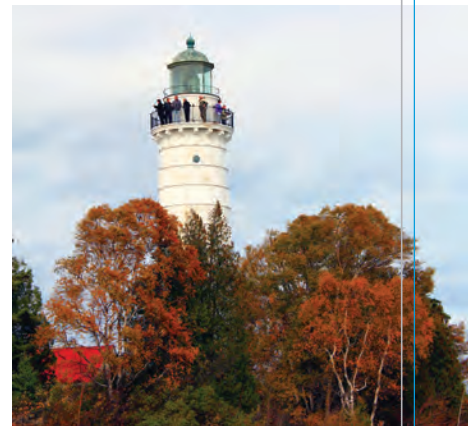
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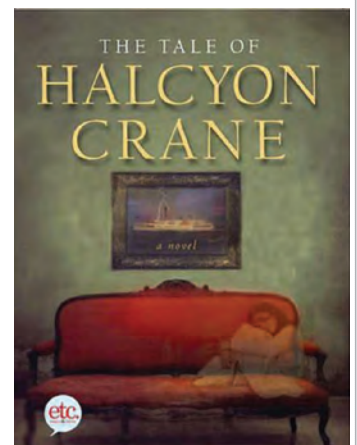
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CHANGING THE EQUATION

How I transformed my body and reignited my life

Lori Schaefer

PHOTOS Jean Voxland

It's June 11, 2012 and I'm deep into my morning cardio, power-hiking the Superior Hiking Trail alongside the Temperance River. While I have made this trek countless times, today I travel far faster and much deeper into the forest than ever before, stopped only by time and the threat of my looming day job.

If someone had told me a year and a half ago that I would be climbing mountains, deep into a training plan for a half marathon, and fully embracing life as a happy, fit and active girl, I would not have believed them. Yet today, I not only stand

atop mountains, I am living a full and balanced life – finally at the center of my own equation.

This wasn't always the case. As a girl who had struggled with her weight since toddlerhood, I had long given up the possibility of a balanced life. Instead, I threw myself into work. I spent 12 to 18 hours each day parked in an office chair, answering the needs of my clients, colleagues, family and friends. I was driven to solve every problem and exceed every expectation – all while ignoring my own needs and the creeping needle of the scale.

A few years after starting my marketing firm, I had ballooned to my heaviest weight on record: 381 pounds. Yes, bigger than many professional linebackers. I was so attuned to my to-do list that I had forgotten to put myself – or my health – on that list. I was living a sedentary lifestyle on a diet of processed and fast food. My stress levels were out of control. Everything, including my relationships, suffered. I was both literally and figuratively dying.


Friends noticed and tried to help. Worried that I would suffer a heart attack before age 50, my friend Jim urged me, “just walk to the end of your block, Lori. And the next day try to walk around the block.” But I always had an excuse. It felt too hard. I was too tired. The pressure was great and the excuses came easy. I didn't know how to change the equation.

Ironically, hope entered my life through the work door. One of my clients, the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts, was in talks to host a weight loss boot camp co-owned by O'Neal Hampton from NBC's reality TV show *The Biggest Loser*. The camp needed some marketing muscle, so as Bluefin Bay's marketing director I was brought into the discussions.

Meeting O'Neal Hampton changed everything. He made me believe again. He has a way of doing that for people. At that moment, I knew my life was about to change forever. I was finally ready.



IT'S VIRTUALLY EVERY WOMAN'S DREAM TO BE SWEEPED OFF HER FEET. MY TRAINER AND COACH LEIF ANDERSON LIFTED ME UP AND HELD ME TO CELEBRATE MY PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION. IT WAS A FITTING TRIBUTE TO THE NEW ME.

A woman with short brown hair, smiling, wearing a red long-sleeved dress with a knot at the waist. She is holding a bottle of wine in her left hand and a glass in her right hand. She is standing on a rocky beach with the ocean in the background. The image has a decorative blue wave graphic at the top.

A year and a half later, I've lost 211 lbs, 47.5 percent of my body fat, and 11 dress sizes, but even more importantly, I've changed on the inside.



PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE EQUATION

Lori Schaefer

When I started this journey at 350+ pounds, I had no illusions it would be easy. I knew my stomach would grumble, my muscles would ache and my courage might flag. To succeed, I adopted a new way of thinking and focused on the life I wanted to create.

1. Be Open. Because life opportunities rarely appear under blinking

neon signs, keep your eyes and heart open to the people and possibilities that come your way. And when you see them, don't be afraid to take the leap and grab hold. Leap—despite your fear—on faith, hope and courage. This is where the real transformation occurs.

2. Set yourself up for Success. Trust the experts. Build a solid foundation

of support by putting your team in place. I was successful because I followed the plan by working out and eating right. But without the right nutrition and fitness experts to guide me, a counselor to help me find my true self, and friends and family to encourage me, I would not have succeeded.

My nutrition included a calorie-restricted diet of high protein, low

carbohydrate and low/healthy fat foods. I ate lean protein like fish, chicken and lean sirloin, plus green vegetables. Healthy fats included olive oil, nuts and avocados, plus a few well planned and timed starchy carbohydrates. Most importantly, I changed my focus from living to eat to eating to live. Every time I plateaued, my nutrition expert adjusted the plan to jumpstart my metabolism.

3. Commit 100 percent - Go All In. You can't 'kind of' take this on. To succeed, I was honest about what

My transformation began at the Fitness North live-in boot camp in late November 2010. I committed to two weeks of working out seven to eight hours per day with intense cardio, hikes on area trails and mountains, circuit training, and more squats and planks than I care to remember. Each day I forced myself out of bed—aches, pains, and emotions in tow—knowing I would push my body, mind and spirit further than I imagined possible.

For the first time in my life, I spent time focused only on me. I learned how to eat to support my body's needs, how I react to the tough stuff, and how to take my newfound belief that I could do anything and my commitment to me back home.

The boot camp was the jumpstart I needed. I lost 21 pounds there and gained an internal strength and confidence that would carry me through my journey. When I got home, my plan was customized by nutritional consultant and personal trainer Leif Anderson. In addition to O'Neal and Leif, I surrounded myself with a team of people who supported me, including a personal trainer and a therapist.

Establishing a plan to get – and stay – at the center of my equation at the beginning of my journey was key to my success. I created a list of non-negotiables and stuck to them. In addition to making my diet and exercise my first priority, I committed to getting enough sleep, limiting my work hours, celebrating each success and asking for help when I needed it. I worked the plan with determination and focus. And when I faltered, I got right back on target.

A year and a half later, I've lost 211 lbs, 47.5 percent of my body fat, and 11 dress sizes, but even more importantly, I've changed on the inside. As I climb the last staircase to complete my Temperance River hike, I remember how difficult



ABOVE: WHEN I STARTED THIS TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY, I WEIGHED 381 POUNDS. THAT'S MORE THAN MANY LINEBACKERS. FACING PAGE: CELEBRATING MY TRANSFORMATION WITH COACHES O'NEAL HAMPTON JR. AND LEIF ANDERSON.

it was to hurl my body up the hills of these same wintry trails during boot camp. Each step was painstaking. I had to ask for help to strap on my snowshoes and I wanted to quit about fifty times per day. When I started this journey, my internal voice told me I couldn't do it...I wasn't strong enough, fast enough or thin enough. I was not good enough.

Today, I am not only good enough – I rock! My legs are strong and carry me up these hills. My arms are muscular and propel me along the trail. My heart is resilient and pumps the blood and oxygen necessary to take me as far as I want to go. And, perhaps best of all, my mind is powerful and positive. I push past doubt, pain, and fear to accomplish things I never thought possible. I know that I can do absolutely anything.

There is simply no stopping me now. Bring it on!

factors could derail me. Then I devised a set of non-negotiable rules to keep me on track, and I stuck to them. I am not perfect, so I didn't achieve 100 percent every time. But, I went 'all in' with an unwavering commitment and I consistently executed the plan over time. My training program incorporated cardiovascular and strength training with an emphasis on increasing muscle and utilizing stored fat as an energy source. I worked with a personal trainer, and did cardio five to six times per week and strength training three to four times a week.

My trainer adjusted the routine weekly to work in conjunction with the nutritional plan. Plus, it evolved as I became leaner and stronger. While I trained in the gym, I also took my cardio outside, as I love the outdoors and was more likely to do it. I walked area lakes, ran hills and hiked the trails of Minnesota's North Shore where I travel frequently for work.

4. Persevere. And when you falter, persevere. Losing 200+ pounds was tough but it was nowhere near as difficult as I imagined when I was

sitting in that office chair paralyzed to move forward. Whenever I got tired of my diet and the gym, or my emotions got the better of me, I always returned to the plan and focused on my long-term goal. Yes, you'll falter. However slips are an opportunity to step back and learn, not a sign that you can't do it. It's what you do when you slip that matters.

5. Celebrate the process. Your journey is about progress, not perfection. Have an end goal but it's important to also set milestones

along the way and celebrate them. Celebrate the big successes and the little ones. I will never forget what it felt like to be standing at my celebration party sans 200+ pounds in a sparkly dress overwhelmed with gratitude for this new body and life. It doesn't get much better than that. I hope my journey serves as an example for how you too can put yourself back into the equation of your life and achieve your wildest dreams. Follow my blog at www.intheequation.com.