

My name is Barbara and I am a recovering anorexic.

I was a chunky kid and I struggled with body image from a young age. I was made fun of at school for being heavy. Around age 10 I started developing eating disordered behaviors. I struggled through my teenage years trying to be comfortable in my own skin. My weight fluctuated wildly-always up and down.

By the time I was in my 20's I was very unhealthy. No matter how thin I got it was never good enough. I was skinny and weak. It got so bad that I was hospitalized several times and ended up in an eating disorder treatment program. I would do better for a while but always relapse into my self destructive behaviors.

Eventually (in my 30's) my weight somewhat stabilized but I was still unhappy with my body. I had developed osteopenia from years of malnutrition and starving myself. My eating disorder was slowly destroying my body.

I decided that I needed to change my ways if I wanted to have any kind of normal life. I started trying to eat normally and exercise in an effort to regain strength and repair some of the damage done to my body. Progress was slow.

At age 47, I established a walking routine. I was walking a lot of miles for exercise. Eventually I began getting bored with walking-it simply lost its appeal. So one day in November I decided to try to run. The first time I tried I could barely run half a mile, but I sure did enjoy the way it made me feel! I was hooked! The more I ran the better I felt! My mind had not been so clear in years. Running quickly became my new obsession.

I ran my first 5K the following March, and my first half-marathon in November.

Running has boosted my self-confidence and improved my body image. I feel strong and healthy now.

The running community has been a great source of encouragement and support and I am thankful for all the wonderful friends I have made.

At 48 I am stronger and healthier than I have ever been in my life. I still struggle with body image and eating issues, but running helps me deal more effectively with them. I have come to the realization that I would much rather be strong and healthy than sick and anorexic.

I am so much more than a number on a scale or the size of my jeans! The most important number to me now is my bib number for my next race!

I hope anyone who might be struggling with similar issues can find some hope in my story.

“The scale can only give you a numerical reflection of your relationship with gravity. That’s it. It cannot measure beauty, talent, purpose, life force, possibility, strength, or love”.