

Leo's Story

July last year I received my health wake-up call – a number of years earlier than I expected! I endured chest pains over a number of weeks, thinking that it may be related to a possible sprain or a case of the flu. It turned out I had a heart condition that needed addressing.

Being more than 25 kilograms over weight and carrying that load with an underperforming heart no longer seemed a sensible thing to do. As someone suggested to me, it was like going on an overseas holiday where you carry your 25 kilogram luggage everywhere with you!

So I decided to lose the excess luggage. I have always enjoyed eating healthy food (too much of it) and the not so healthy ones also – all without any exercise. So, I simply concentrated on eating healthy, watched the proportions and took up walking 30 minutes every day (and I mean every day). I set a target to lose the weight over six months, that is, about one kilogram a week. I made a point of not losing the weight too quickly

Having made the commitment to lose weight, I did nothing more than take heed of the advice, opportunities and important information on healthy living that surrounds us every-day at home and at work. It is all there on the radio, television, newspapers, magazines and our workplace.

I lost over twenty kilograms, the majority of it by the six month period – the last two or three kilograms was at a slower rate. Following my visit to the heart specialist three months ago, I was taken off the medication and advised that I did not need to see him for another five years. My challenge is to keep the weight off and keep fit through exercise. In the interest of seeking variety in exercises, I have started to participate in Main Roads Health and Lifestyle Program, namely boxing on Wednesday afternoons.

My advice is to not be like me and wait for a wake up call to get fit, because if you do you may not be as fortunate as me. The only thing stopping us from being fit is ourselves - we are surrounded by opportunities – all that is needed is the commitment to a healthy lifestyle.

Joanne Smith

My change towards leading a healthier lifestyle started in August 2009. I was overweight, stressed and my blood pressure was going all over the place with the doctor trying to control it with high dosage medication. I knew that it was time to make a change for the better now or it probably was never going to happen.

I made significant changes to my diet and exercise working with my local doctor for the first 3 months then I decided to join Weight Watchers in January 2010 and also make use of Main Roads health and fitness program. I made regular appointments with Fitness Coordinator Grant Henry that included blood pressure checks, weight checks, blood sugar, cholesterol checks and the dreaded measurements. Grant provided encouragement and support during my journey.

I have come a long way and have lost over 20kg since August 2009 and have reached my target goal weight. It has been a long journey but I guess I can say that for a year now I have been embracing a healthy lifestyle sharing my joys and sorrows with my family and trusted fellow work colleagues.

I was pleased to hear the doctor say recently that I can reduce my blood pressure tablets

dosage by half. I may never be able to stop them completely but the lower the dosage the better. He commented that being in the healthy weight range and exercising regularly has been the reason for the blood pressure dropping.

My favourite quote is "If you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you have always got". That is what has been in the back of my mind for the past year and I have made the changes and the results in my overall health are showing. I believe that finding exercise that you enjoy is the key to sticking to your plan so I would encourage people to experiment with lots of different exercise until you find something that you enjoy. The Main Roads health and fitness program offers many different exercise options through Trench Fitness and I was attending the Pilates classes for some time. I also regularly attend zumba dance class and I am back playing pennant tennis for my local tennis club.

My horror hour for snacking at work is in the afternoon. OSH Branch has provided great support to me and we now choose healthy snacks such as cut up fruit, almonds and crisp breads for afternoon snacks. Yes the occasional chocolate does sneak in but not every day.

I would encourage people to reflect on their own health and see where you can make the changes, any change can be good for overall health.

Murray Robinson

On 18 May 2010 I had an appointment with my GP to discuss a series of recent blood tests, which had been arranged in response to a history of increasing blood pressure over the last few years. Those tests showed the levels of bad cholesterol, triglycerides and glucose in my blood were at dangerously high levels which, combined with low levels of exercise, relatively high blood pressure and an unfavourable family medical history, were leading me down a path towards diabetes and possibly heart disease/stroke. I had two options – long term medication, or change my lifestyle and diet. This was a real wake-up call, one I'd never had before. I chose the latter option.

Prior to 18 May I ate whatever I liked (sometimes healthy, very often not) and although I drank very little alcohol, I was addicted to sugary fruit juices (several litres a week). I exercised when I could, but it wasn't enough and there were always excuses. Basically I didn't really care, because up until then I didn't have to. After 18 May I took responsibility for both my diet and my lifestyle. For the first time in my life I educated myself about nutrition, and made time to plan my meals and buy healthy fresh foods in advance so I was never left at dinner time with an empty fridge and easy takeaway options. I also made it a priority to properly make dinner every night, no matter how late it was or how tired I felt.

Now, five months later and 20kgs lighter, the focus is on fresh foods every day with lots of fresh fruits, nuts, wholegrains, fresh vegetables, fresh fish (especially salmon), lean meats and low fat dairy – and no sugary cereals, morning teas, fruit juices and fatty takeaways. I still have lots to eat, in fact I eat much more for breakfast than I did before and at least as much for dinner every night, but it's healthy, fresh and the right foods. My only remaining vice is a love of good coffee.

Although I used to ride my bike to work before on occasion, I started to do it every day if possible, so that it became the default means of commuting. No excuses, even if the weather was bad (which it most certainly was many times during winter!). By incorporating it into my commuting regime, it means I have already done enough exercise each day (at least 40kms of cycling) by the time I get home from work – I don't have to make time to go out and do more, e.g. at the gym. Now I try to only bring the car

if I have to, e.g. if going somewhere straight after work, or to give my body a necessary break from cycling. Main Roads is a very supportive employer in this regard, providing end-of-trip facilities (bike racks, showers, change rooms, etc) which make commuting by bike a realistic daily option.

So with the combination of regular exercise and, more importantly, proper nutrition, recent blood tests and blood pressure readings show me right back in the healthy range and I now actually enjoy all the good fresh foods I'm eating, and don't miss the sugary stuff – well, not much, anyway. But the key factor is I had to WANT to make the changes (motivated by some scary test results). I always knew I should eat healthily, but I didn't really care. Now I do care, and the big test is, obviously, to maintain and sustain it. Time will tell.

Peter Sewell

One of my roles as Regional Manager in Gascoyne is to ensure all staff have a balance within their working life and family. In my early days in the region it became apparent that not all staff had that balance with many working longer hours than me and most with hundreds of hours of flex time built up over time that was the norm. The way I addressed the issue was to explain to all staff my story going back 10 years to the day. I was working very long hours with a number of other senior staff negotiating a number of TNC contracts over a period of 12 months. One Friday night I found myself on the floor in the office, not sure how I got there. Not thinking much about it, I went home as normal, had the odd glass of wine as nothing had happened. I woke in the early hours of the morning not knowing where I was with blurred vision, thumping chest and staggering through the house, I thought I had a heart attack... Not a good look... I visited the doctor on the Saturday morning and underwent a complete physical with very ordinary results. My blood pressure was through the roof for a person of my age (45 at the time), my weight had blown out to 94kg the heaviest I ever been and I had more bad cloistral in my system about 8.5, in short a walking time bomb. My doctor diagnosed a physical breakdown and that was warning number 1. I was off work for 4 weeks. During the time off I developed further health issues due to my previous junk food eating habits and stress related lifestyle, warning number 2. On top of that the next 6 months was a nightmare with three family members hospitalised, two at the same time. I had to become a carer.

That's when I realised I had to change my life around. I resumed playing golf, started to swim and walked as often as I could. Eating healthy food was also a priority. Today I balance my work/life balance although at times I am working too many hours; you need to take a check once in a while.

The Gascoyne Region today is a better place to work with most staff balancing their work and home life. I take every opportunity to ensure staff leave the office at an appropriate time. "What can't be done today can be done tomorrow."

Kendall Carter

Coming to work at Main Roads in March 2010 and discovering the Health and Lifestyle Program was almost like a sign from God – exercise, exercise, EXERCISE!! I had been miserable for quite some time about my weight and the impact it was having on my lifestyle but was excellent at making excuses as to why I couldn't do anything about it. "I don't have time for the gym. I work full time and have 4 children that have sports and activities etc to go to." With the fitness classes during lunch time and straight after work, there could be no more excuses – I could work out whilst I was at work!

So that is exactly what I did. I started going to the various classes, went on a healthy eating regime and lost 26.8kgs. Aside from the positive comments from my family,

friends and colleagues I got to buy myself a whole new wardrobe of clothes!

I have worked at a number of Government agencies now and Main Roads is the only one to provide genuine opportunities for its staff to live a healthy lifestyle. We all lead busy lives so it's easy to forget about yourself and your health and well being. The ability to access professionally led fitness classes, or be able to actually shower and change after riding or walking to work means that you don't have the pressure of trying to find additional time in an already very full life to exercise.

I am convinced that the planets aligned for me back in March 2010 – I was in a frame of mind to do something about my health and fitness and Main Roads presented me with the opportunity to be able to act on it. Without that I'm sure I'd still be the overweight, unhappy person still making excuses as to why I couldn't.....