

Living the Dream

By: Pamela Courtemanche

I can hardly remember a time when I was not struggling with excessive weight. At a very early age, I experienced my first disappointment with dieting, but I did not give up. As time passed, I tried everything I could in order to lose, from deliberately making myself sick, to laxatives, to diet pills. You name it—I tried it. Despite all of my efforts, I remained obese, when all I desperately wanted was to be skinny. As it turned out, my problems got even worse.

As I continued with unsuccessful attempts to lose weight, I endured some devastating things in my life, and as a result, I fell into a deep depression, making it difficult for me to manage little more than getting through my day to day life. Consequently, I started gaining a lot of weight, and before I knew it, my weight ballooned to 302 pounds. I was now morbidly obese (heavier than I had ever been), and I hated the way I looked. In addition to my weight gain, I now suffered with high blood pressure and a couple of other medical problems. Worse still, I was having pain over my entire body.

One night as I dressed for church, I looked in the mirror, and for the first time in a long time, I truly saw myself: all the weight gain, the health problems, the sadness and the anger. My life was a total mess, and something had to be done; I just didn't know what. I suddenly realized that getting *skinny* was a nice dream to have, but the really important goal was to just get healthy, physically and emotionally.

While talking with one of my girlfriends a short while later, I found out that she, as well as one of my other girlfriends, had gastric bypass surgery through NeWeigh's surgical weight-loss



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program. By the end of our conversation, I had NeWeigh's contact information, thinking that I might give them a call—if I could just find the courage.

Over the next few days, I thought of very little else. I looked at everything I could find online: surgeon profiles, the different procedures, and the risks involved. I then presented all of this information to my husband and asked him to tell me whether or not I should have the surgery. He told me that this decision was mine alone; that I was not doing it for him, but for myself. He went on to assure me, however, that he would support whatever decision I made.

After praying for guidance, I decided to go ahead and call NeWeigh. The first people my husband and I met at NeWeigh were Paula, Celia and Kathryn. They were all so friendly, warm and easy to talk to that I quickly became very comfortable. I went there thinking that my preferred physician could perform the surgery. Celia told me this doctor was not associated with NeWeigh, but that she would do everything possible to get him for me. Over the next week or so, I received a *sign*. I immediately called Celia and told her that I no longer wanted the doctor I had originally chosen; instead, I asked her to set up a consultation with Dr. Leiva, a surgeon associated with the NeWeigh program who was in my plan.

I eventually met with Dr. Leiva; he was very friendly and answered all of my questions. I didn't feel rushed as he explained the procedure and possible complications: If this happens then we do this; if this goes wrong then I can do this, etc. That really calmed my fears because I thought that if anything went wrong, I would die. I decided to stop thinking in those terms. Once the meeting was over, my husband and I sat in the car, turned and looked at each other, and at the exact same time said, "That's my doctor". So, I took that as another *sign*.

Much to my surprise, the process went smoothly, and everything happened more quickly than I thought possible. Within the next couple of months, I received insurance approval, and I took that as yet another *sign* from God that my surgery was meant to be.

During the time between the scheduling of my procedure and the actual day of my operation, however, my fears returned. I kept praying for God to put peace into my spirit, for if I did not feel it, then I wasn't going through with the operation. I even told my husband the night before my surgery that I didn't know if I could go through with it. The next morning I remember waking up in such peace, with absolutely no fear of any kind. I knew, then, that I was truly ready.

Now, two years later, it is very difficult for me to put into words how much (and in how many ways) my life has changed. Having surgery is one of the best decisions that I have ever made, and I would make the same choice a million times over. I no longer have any health problems, and for the first time, that I can recall, I am not over weight.

I remember talking to Celia about shopping for clothes, and how unreal it seems that when I started this journey, I was a size 28, and to be a size 4, now. I remember her asking, "Did you ever dream that you would be so skinny?" My response to her was, "Yes I did. I just never thought that the dream would come true". I am so thankful to be healthy, and to actually be living the dream.



TASTY TOPICS.... All New for the New Year

By: Kim Lynn, RD, LD

Get ready for a new year of Tasty Topics. Kathryn and I have a delightful agenda in store for you: yummy foods to sample, easy tips for creating bariatric-friendly recipes, great new products to try, as well as the chance to "dish" about any food or nutrition-related issues. When making your New Year Resolutions, include one to participate in the Tasty Topics Group. Be sure to mark these dates down in your 2012 NeWeigh Calendar.

February: "Love and Laughter"...
Delectable delights for Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras
2nd - N. Stadium 8th - The Woodlands

March: "No Blarney - Saving Some Green"...
Budget-friendly protein suggestions, ways to stock your pantry,
and of course, something green for St. Patrick's Day
1st - N. Stadium 7th - The Woodlands

April: "Spring is in the Air"...
Celebrating Easter and the spring seasons with some fresh
menu ideas
5th - N. Stadium 4th - The Woodlands

The January Tasty Topics participants were treated to a hearty serving of Game Day Turkey Chili (Refer to recipe section). Of course, this tasty dish is not limited to college bowl games or The Super Bowl. This thick, satisfying soup can be enjoyed anytime of the year.

Achieving Goals..... the SMART way!

by: Kim Lynn, RD, LD

The greeting cards have all been sent....the Christmas rush is over. For whatever reason, even the most disciplined person has a tendency to deviate from a healthy routine during the holidays. We sometimes slough off exercise, skip meals, eat too much, consume richer foods and resort to fast food when crunched for time. It is now time, however, to settle down from the excitement of the holidays (the parties, family gatherings, marathon shopping excursions) and return to a more normal routine.

At this time of year, making New Year's resolutions is on everyone's mind. Despite our good intentions, however, the majority of these oaths fall by the wayside in just a few months. This is primarily due to the temptation to set lofty goals and rapidly commit to achieving them—a daunting proposition. To help you avoid the frustration and disappointment with this tactic, I recommend that you set achievable goals. This is easily accomplished when you follow the SMART formula. Simply stated, goals should be:

SPECIFIC – Goals should be concrete and tangible. Rather than promising to take your lunch to work more often, for example, plan on taking your lunch 4 days per week. Specific goals should be written down, making you accountable to yourself. You can use the 2012 NeWeigh Calendar to schedule your activity.

MEASURABLE – In order to track your progress toward a goal (note above example), check the item off your planner as you complete each day's activity. At the end of the week, you can measure your progress.

ATTAINABLE – Goals that are slightly difficult, but not so lofty as to be impossible to attain, will make you stretch as a person. If you want to resume an exercise routine after being idle for awhile, don't get frustrated. Try walking for 15 minutes, 3 times per week, instead of jogging for an hour, 5 days per week.

REALISTIC – Attainable goals and realistic ones go hand-in-hand. It may sound like a good idea at the time you set it, but jogging for an hour might be impossible if you work 10-hour days and commute an hour each way. Go ahead and stretch your abilities, but be realistic, and set goals that are compatible with your lifestyle.

TIME-SENSITIVE – Avoid procrastination by setting time limits; this helps keep you focused on the task at hand. If brown-bagging is on your to-do list, you might start with taking lunch at least 3 days per week for the month of January and add a fourth day beginning in February.



While our lives are subject to fluctuation and interruptions, this should not prevent us from achieving our goals. Just remember: be flexible, and when necessary, be prepared to re-focus or form a new plan of action. Now, go ahead; make resolutions that will work for this New Year, and serve as a course for change that can last a lifetime!

With goals in place, you should be ready to master these simple healthy tips:

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1: PLAN on preparing 3 meals per day and 1-2 high protein snacks to kick-start your metabolism. Skipping breakfast can hurt your metabolism and initiate cravings throughout the day.

2: CONSUME PROTEIN in adequate amounts of lean and low-fat sources. Not only is protein important in revving up metabolism, it is filling and satisfying. Goals should consist of 70 to 80-grams for a woman and 80 to 100-grams for a man, depending on your surgical procedure. This equates to 20 grams at meals and 10 grams at snacks.

Choose lean meat: chicken, turkey and fish; low-fat dairy products: skim milk, plain Greek yogurt and low-fat cheese; eggs, specifically egg whites, and nut butters. You can also get a boost by incorporating a high protein supplement drink such as Muscle Milk, Lean Body, etc. or by adding a scoop of protein powder to a favorite recipe or drink. Protein bars can also be useful; just watch for the appropriate numbers. The protein content of drinks or bars should be around 20-grams or more, and the sugar content should be 5-grams or less.

3: DRINK water or water-based beverages. It is fine to mix a flavor enhancer like Crystal Light, Mio or decaffeinated tea to some of your water during the day. You can also include sugar-free gelatin, popsicles and broth that contain a high liquid content. Set a goal of 64 ounces per day.

4: AVOID simple carbs that may have crept back into your diet during the holidays: white flour products, white rice and refined sugars provide additional calories without much nutritive value. They are responsible for the spikes and drops of blood sugar levels. Instead, choose fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables that provide fiber and an array of natural vitamins and minerals.



5: PREPARE your own meals and snacks rather than dining out or relying on fast foods. This is especially important if you resorted to these quick alternatives during the hectic holiday season. Refer to NeWeigh's Fall 2011 Newsletter for quick, healthy meals that can be created with the help of a crock-pot or George Foreman Grill. You may also wish to utilize some time-saving measures such as using rotisserie chicken or frozen items.

6: Keep a journal, or utilize NeWeigh's 2012 Calendar to track your food intake, protein and fluid consumption. This will allow you to measure your progress as you work toward achieving your goals.

As you get your eating plan back on track, for best results, you should be exercising at least 3 times per week and attending support groups. Following the **SMART** formula, and setting realistic, attainable goals is an intelligent way to start the year.

NOTICE:

**BEGINNING JANUARY 15, 2012,
THE WOODLANDS OFFICE WILL BE OPENED
MONDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY, ONLY.**

BOUNCING BACK

from the Holiday Blues

By: Kathryn Blanchard, LCSW

If you are feeling a let down following the holiday, it is a fairly safe bet that you are experiencing the *holiday blues*. This genuine emotional state affects quite a large number of people every year. The symptoms, wide and varied, can be brought on by the stress, fatigue and the tension that often occur at this season.

There are several obvious reasons for these blues: being without family or friends; being with family that you have difficulty with; insecurity and anxiety about the future and finances; feelings of inadequacy or disappointment in not having achieved important goals, and over-committing your time. If there is an absence of exciting things to look forward to until the next holiday, facing the new year can further dampen your spirits. Don't despair. To help you bounce back and regain your equilibrium, try following these simple suggestions:

- 1:** Realize that you are not alone in the way that you are feeling. Most of us experience a letdown following holidays that come and go so fast.
- 2:** Don't compare last year with the present one, even if it was good, and the present year has started with a disappointment.
- 3:** Begin anew. Make a list; focus on something positive every day: your pleasant smile, nice hands, a cool car, and a roof over your head, are examples. This exercise will help you retrain your brain chemicals to flow in a more positive and happy direction.
- 4:** Post your list on the mirror in your bathroom, on the refrigerator door and in your car. Read the list aloud to yourself several times a day.
- 5:** Stay active, keep expectations realistic as to what you can do, but don't over book yourself. Here are a few ideas:

- Connect with a local charity group or outreach program. There is Make-A-Wish, The Salvation Army, Jaycees, The Red Cross and many soup kitchens around the area. Helping others should help you feel better about yourself, brighten your outlook for the rest of this year and improve your attitude, in general. When your involvement becomes a permanent habit, long-term rewards result.
- Exercise. It has been proven that exercise promotes the release of natural hormones [endorphins]. These hormones help reduce pain, and elevate mood.
- Join a social club or group. When you participate in NeWeigh's Aftercare Support Groups, you will meet like-minded individuals with common goals. **Note:** Research has shown that active participation in support groups following weight-loss surgery results in long-term, weight loss success.

The truth of the matter is that this year is yours to shape, but this will not happen until you completely ditch the holiday blues. Once you get a move on, it becomes easier—so get moving!



WARM UP WITH THESE RECIPES

By: Kim Lynn, RD, LD

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When the winter chill sets in, nothing compares to a hot, hearty meal or beverage to warm us from the inside out. The recipes being featured at Tasty Topics this winter really hit the spot. We hope that you will enjoy our high protein coffee drink, turkey chili and black bean soup recipes. They are simple to prepare, and the pay-offs are tremendous!

Who needs Starbucks® when you can make your own delicious, steaming latte that provides 20 grams of protein? The recipe calls for a large scoop of UnJury® protein powder. You may need to adjust the recipe if you use a different brand.



The following recipe is so simple, and requires only a few key ingredients! Be sure to keep these items on hand in your well-stocked pantry. That way....you can enjoy a quick, nutritious meal in just a few minutes.

UnJury® Winter Spice Latte

Ingredients:

- 1 scoop Vanilla UnJury®
- ½ cup skim milk
- ½ cup coffee (regular or decaf)
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ginger

Directions:

Measure the skim milk into a microwave safe mug, and heat to approximately 130 degrees (at higher temperature, protein powder will be lumpy). Stir the coffee (below 130 degrees) into the warm milk.

Slowly add the scoop of UnJury® and stir until dissolved. Sprinkle in the cinnamon and ginger according to your personal tastes, and mix well. Top with Sugar-Free Cool Whip if desired.

Nutritional Information: Per latte

Calories: 149; **Protein:** 24 gm; **Carbs:** 12 gm;
Sugars: 9 gm (mostly natural)

South of the Border Black Bean Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 cup fresh tomato salsa (in jar)
- 2 15 ½ ounce cans black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- Light or fat free sour cream OR plain Greek yogurt (1 dollop per serving)
- 1 lime (optional)
- Extra salsa for garnish (if desired)

Directions:

Heat the salsa in a large saucepan over medium heat, stirring frequently, for about 5 minutes. Stir in the beans and broth, then heat to boiling. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Cool slightly, and then spoon half of the soup into a food processor or blender and puree. Return the pureed soup to the saucepan and heat through.

Serving Suggestion – Serve with dollop of sour cream, additional salsa and a squeeze of fresh lime juice.

Nutritional Information: (serving size: 8 oz -1 cup)

Calories: 159, **Protein:** 14gm, **Carbohydrates:** 28gm,
Fat: 2.5gm, **Fiber:** 10gm



Game Day Turkey Chili

Ingredients:

1 pound lean ground turkey
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 large onion, chopped
Non-stick cooking spray
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 can (4 ounces) chopped, mild, green chile peppers, undrained
2 tablespoons chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon dried oregano leaves
1 can (14.5 ounces) petite diced tomatoes, undrained
1 can (6 ounce) tomato paste
½ cup chicken broth
1 can (15 ounce) kidney beans, undrained
Salt to taste

Directions:

Spray a large skillet with non-stick cooking spray. Drizzle the olive oil into pan, turning to coat the bottom. Cook the ground turkey, garlic powder and onions, stirring and breaking up large chunks of meat, until no longer pink. Drain liquid and transfer meat mixture to Dutch oven. Add green Chile peppers, chili powder, cumin, oregano, tomatoes, tomato paste and broth; cover. Simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Add beans and salt; simmer an additional 30 minutes, adding more liquid if needed.

Nutritional Information: (serving size: 8 oz -1 cup)
Calories: 165, **Protein:** 19 gms, **Carbs:** 9 gm,
Fat: 8 gm, **Fiber:** 8 gm



Houston Location

8111 N. Stadium Dr. Ste. 200

Houston, TX 77054

Phone: 713.795.0200

Fax: 713.795.0300

Woodlands Location

101 Vision Park Blvd. Ste. 200

Shenandoah, TX 77384

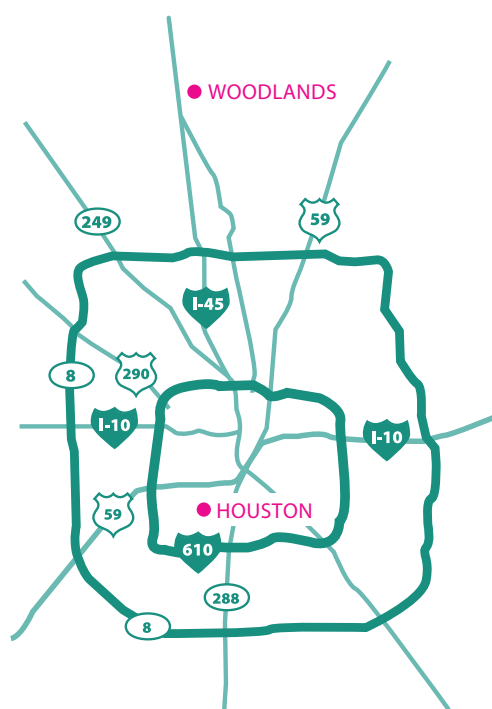
Phone: 936.271.2200

Fax: 936.271.2210

Toll Free: 1.877.266.0686

www.NeWeighWeb.com

Looking for Help? You'll find it at



Two Convenient Locations

Houston Location Meetings

Pre-Surgical Preparatory Group meets Thursdays from 5:30 to 6:15 pm and every third Saturday from 10:30 to 11:15am.

General Support Group meets the 3rd Saturday of each month from 11:15 to 12 noon.

Basic Principles Group meets Wednesdays from 6:00 to 7:00pm.

Lap Band Group meets the 3rd Thursday of the month from 6:15 to 7:15pm.

Back on Track Group meets on the last Thursday of the month from 6:15 to 7:15pm.

Intermediate Support Group meets Thursdays from 6:15 to 7:15pm.

Advanced Support Group meets Thursdays from 7:15 to 8:15pm, except for the last Thursday of the month.

The NeWeigh Walking Group meets on the last Thursday of the month from 7:15 to 8:15pm.

Tasty Topics gatherings are held the 1st Thursday of the month from 6:15 to 8:15pm for the Intermediate and Advanced Support Group.

Woodlands Location Meetings

Pre-Surgical Preparatory Group meets every other Wednesday from 5:30 to 6:15pm.

General Support Group meets every other Wednesday from 6:15 to 7:15pm.

Tasty Topics will be held on the 1st regularly scheduled meeting of each month. Please call at the beginning of each month for the schedule.