



Living a 360-Degree Life

Kristin Steede enjoys the rewards of being a “Biggest Loser”

Story by Lisa M. Schmelz / Photos by Shanna Wolf

Losing 167 pounds in front of millions of television viewers in the seventh season of NBC’s “The Biggest Loser” was certainly life-changing for Kristin Steede, 30, who appeared on the show with her mother, Cathy Skell, 50. But the real change came last July, two months after she returned to her Greenville, Wisconsin, home.

Alone in a supermarket on a rainy Sunday afternoon, Kristin was filling her cart with healthy fare for herself and her husband, Nick, a production supervisor for Wausau Paper. It was, she says, an uneventful grocery shopping trip until she approached the checkout stand.

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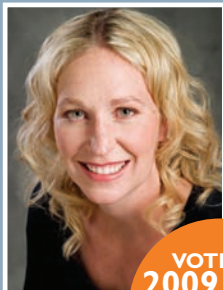
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MEET KRISTIN

Kristin Steede shares her inspiring journey of weight-loss as a contestant on NBC's "The Biggest Loser" at the WELL Expo, January 17, at 11 a.m., at the Alliant Energy Center. Admission is \$7. For more information about Kristin, go to www.kristinsteede.com.



"I have a real sweet tooth," recalls Kristin, a partner in a mortgage brokerage firm who also speaks about her reality show appearance and is now studying to be a personal trainer, "and as I got to the checkout stand, there was that wall of candy. I saw these M&Ms and I wanted them. I knew it wasn't a good choice, but I bought them anyway. I couldn't believe what I was doing, but yet I did it."

Once in her car, Kristin — who made it within two episodes of the \$250,000 grand prize before being sent home — says she ripped open the bag and began eating them before even starting the engine. But just like a 12-step program can ruin any future glasses of merlot for a recovering alcoholic, a nine-month stint at a sequestered California ranch filming a weight-loss reality show can ruin a 1.69-ounce bag of plain M&Ms.

But a few seconds into that bag of colorful chocolate, Kristin says something happened that had never happened to her before. "For the first time in my life,

in the middle of a mindless food binge, I stopped. Prior to 'The Biggest Loser,' I'd eat whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted, and that led to me being 360 pounds. If I started a binge, I'd finish eating whatever it was.

"But this time, I stopped. It was a big moment for me. It was the first time I felt I had some control and was able to stop the behavior in the middle of it and gain control. It's almost empowering to know you can have control again even when you get so far into a negative behavior like this."

Both Kristin and Cathy, a recovering alcoholic who says she's been sober for more than 20 years, say that food was their drug of choice. "Little by little, I found myself replacing food for the alcohol," says Cathy, who lost 95 pounds on the show. "You can abstain from alcohol, but you can't abstain from food."

Though Kristin was young when her mom got sober, she says she still managed to pick up some of her

patterns. "I used to do with my food wrappers what my mom did with her vodka bottles," Kristin says. "I ate in secret like she drank in secret."

Still, weighing 360 pounds, didn't keep Kristin from living a 360-degree life. A college graduate and successful business owner, she married her high school sweetheart and was active in a number of local civic groups. "I was proud of her before the show," says Nick of his wife of five years. "She's just always been a vibrant person and she brings that out in other people. It takes a special person to do that ... I'm proud of her for what she's done on the show, but she's really the same great person she always was."

But with the loss of nearly half her body weight, and pounds still falling from her daily workouts, Kristin says she notices just as much change on the inside as she does on the outside. "I felt like I had a very happy life before 'The Biggest Loser.' I felt like I didn't let my weight stand in the way of my goals or in front of the things I wanted. But since I've lost the weight, I do feel more confident and I look at situations and the world with more clarity. It's a good feeling."

Kristin's weight-loss tips

Kristin knows firsthand that losing weight isn't nearly as hard as keeping it off. To that end, she offers the following advice for anyone looking to shed excess pounds permanently.

Self Evaluation: You know what you're doing right and what you're not doing right. Identify the things that need to change, the things that you're ashamed of or embarrassed about.

Let go of limitations: This is especially important when it comes to the exercise realm. In order to change, you have to be able to push yourself physically.

Don't compare yourself to other people: This will only lead to frustration. When you start comparing yourself to someone else, stop immediately. Train yourself to look inward instead. **mb**

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