

ANYTHING

Is Possible

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My name is Ralph Hveen. I am 32 years old and had fought the fight of obesity my whole life. I grew up in a household where eating was just what you did. I was always a heavy child and as I got older, it got worse and worse. I weighed around 300 pounds in high school.



My mother was diagnosed with cancer in the mid 80's, and although fought it for years, she passed away in 1989. She had cancer of the lymph nodes and could not beat it. This left my father, a single man attempting to raise a family, by himself. He also suffered from obesity and was not the vision of health when I was younger. He was a New York City police officer and spent much of his time out of the house. I was raised by my older sister and grandparents, who believed food was the answer to life's problems. Our life consisted of family and food, and we grew more and more unhealthy.

My sister, who was morbidly obese herself, could not get her weight under control, and her obesity finally ended her life at age 27. She had a massive heart attack in her sleep and that was enough to take her life. As crazy as it might sound, it was a blessing in disguise. She no longer had to suffer the pains of living in a world where people socially out casted you, and my brother and I realized how precious life was. My brother decided that he would undergo a gastric bypass in 2004 to control his weight problem. I was still bitter about the passing of my sister and wanted nothing to do with "getting healthy." My brother and I were both weighing about 550 pounds each and we were knocking on death's door. My brother's wife was my sister's best friend and she could not bear to see the man she loved passing away like his sister did. My Brother went through great lengths to have the bypass. His weight made it a very dangerous procedure to perform. His surgery was both a huge success and a very eye opening experience for me.

The death of my sister sent me to a very bad place both mentally and physically. I had turned my life over to the streets and was doing all kinds of things that any person with half a brain would stay away from. Although I am not proud of the place life had brought me, I know now that everything happens for a reason. My lifestyle landed me in a set of handcuffs and I didn't know what was going to happen to me. With a pending sentence hanging over my head, I decided to undergo the bypass, both to save my life and to make what was about to happen to me a little easier.

In 2007, I went to see Dr. Vohra, who told me that I needed to lose significant weight if he was

going to consider operating on me. He put me on a liquid diet for about 12 weeks, and finally, although not completely willingly, he proceeded with the surgery. By God's grace, I had no complications and the weight began falling off. On the downside of life, my legal complications caught up to me and I found myself in the prison system of New York. I became driven to get the weight off me and really had nothing but time to get it done. From 2008 through 2010, I focused on getting myself both physically and mentally ready for the world I would return to. I had changed in so many ways. I did not know how people would react to me.

In 2010, I walked out of the gates of the prison system and returned home to my family, who did not recognize me in the least bit. I have assimilated back to the world we live in and am back to work. I am in the gym five days a week and run at least three miles a day, four times a week. I have lost a staggering 310 pounds and keep myself around 240 pounds. The journey was hard fought and believe me, not pleasant at all, but the end justified the means. My brother is seven years removed from his surgery and maintaining a weight that hovers around the 250 pound mark. He fights the good fight every day, and it is a never ending battle. I am now trying to battle this last 20 pounds to get myself in the 220-225 area, at which time I am going to explore the option for cosmetic skin removal.

I want the world to know that humans are capable of doing whatever they put their mind to. I really just want to get my story into the hands of the person who is sitting home thinking that there is no way out of the body you are trapped in. Believe me, as a former 550 pound man, change is not only possible, but easily attainable with the proper mindset. If you are sitting there ready to give up on life, I urge you to read and re-read this article, anything is possible—anything. Don't give up or get discouraged, keep focused on the end result. I hope that this story inspires even one reader. An inspired reader saves a life. Pay it forward though, don't ever forget where you came from and the struggles that we encounter in everyday life as obese individuals.