

Giving it his all instead of giving up

BRIAN ROTSZTEIN WAS TOLD it was probably too late to change his life, but he had the determination to prove his doctor wrong



JUNE THOMPSON

SHAPING UP

It's been said that behind every great man is a great woman.

And in most cases, I'm sure those women are not only great, but proud and supportive as well.

That's certainly the case for Brian Rotsztein, whose wife, Bonnie Share, wrote to me to say how incredibly proud she is of her husband.

In just over a year, Rotsztein has managed to shed more than 70 pounds. And he did it the old-fashioned way: watching what he ate and working out in his basement.

In her email, Share wrote: "Brian's doctor actually made it seem hopeless, that any changes he made now might be too late to impact his quality of life going forward. ... Quietly he began paying attention to labels on packaged food, buying lots of raw vegetables and filling up on salad at restaurants instead of bread. He also started to walk on a treadmill, which soon progressed to an hour. And then he started boxing and bike riding."

Rotsztein, who holds two MAs in psychology and runs his own Web design and Internet marketing company, embarked on his lifestyle change in January 2012.

"I am not on a diet," the affable 40-year-old told me. "I didn't really understand the term 'lifestyle change' until I changed my own life."

Staying in shape has always been a roller-coaster ride for Rotsztein. His weight would often fluctuate. Through his 20s, he managed to keep the pounds at bay by staying active and dancing. He loves to dance, but running two companies where he spent the majority of his time sitting took its toll.

At the end of 2011, a trip to his doctor changed it all.

The doctor told him he would die a lot younger than he had to.



Brian Rotsztein once weighed 315 pounds, leading his doctor to say he would probably die a lot younger than he had to. Rotsztein knew he had to change, and in just over a year he shed more than 70 pounds.



BRIAN ROTSZTEIN

"He looked at me and pointed at my gut and said, 'Look at you; look at that.' And he seemed almost like it was hopeless. He didn't believe I could lose the weight."

But Rotsztein was adamant that he would.

"I knew the time had been coming. I wasn't able to do some of the things I should have been able to do, clothes were becoming tighter; my feet would hurt — all signs that change was needed," he said.

So he started replacing foods,

switching to fresh fruit instead of ice cream, snacking on raw veggies. "I'm addicted to red peppers," he said with a laugh.

And he would read labels, looking at daily percentages and fat and sodium content.

Share, who had made some lifestyle changes of her own and would run on a treadmill in her basement when the weather wasn't so great, began to share the machine with her husband.

The first day, he walked on it for

half an hour at "a very slow pace." He gradually increased the time, speed and distance.

"I'd plug in my iPad and watch Netflix," he said.

Rotsztein, who loves comic books, says he started to feel like a superhero as the weight came off.

"If I felt like I had had enough, I would tell myself, 'Spider-Man would keep going — he wouldn't quit,' so I'd keep at it."

Within five months, he had lost almost 50 pounds.

Friends and family started to comment, which further encouraged him to go on.

He went from size 42 pants to a 34, which has helped make clothes shopping a whole new experience.

"For the first time in a very long time, I can wear fitted shirts and trendy jeans," he said proudly. "It's a lot more interesting to dress from regular-sized stores for a change."

On the rare occasion he does overeat, which isn't often, Rotsztein says he doesn't feel good.

"It was like I was being pulled to the dark side, and it was enough to make me not want to go there."

Rotsztein works out five days a week, and incorporates weights and boxing into his regime.

"I do whatever I feel like doing," he told me.

Last summer, he was able to go for a run on Mount Royal with his wife.

"That felt great, even though I find running boring as hell," he said with a chuckle.

Last summer he also experienced what he calls a true superhero moment.

Fishing is a passion for Rotsztein. On a trip in August, he was at a remote lake when the motor on his boat died and the wind picked up.

The friend he was with started to panic when the boat began heading in the wrong direction. They had a broken oar and were, as Rotsztein said, "in the middle of nowhere."

No cellphone service, nothing. Rotsztein did not panic.

"I turned to my friend and said, 'Dude, I got this!'"

Using the oars, he began paddling as hard and as fast as he could, eventually getting them to safety. He says he didn't even break a sweat that day.

"No way I could have ever done that at 215 pounds."

So I guess behind every great man and woman is a good superhero lying in wait, too.

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