



Local bloggers Stephen Vinson and Jen West have found a welcoming online community to encourage and challenge them on their weight-loss journeys.

Blogging Off the Weight

Area residents find support and accountability for their weight-loss journeys on the World Wide Web.

IT'S THE DAY that I sometimes dread: Friday. Most people are happy to see Friday come because the weekend is a mere eight-hour work-day away. But Friday mornings mean one thing to me: weigh-in day.

It's a day filled with anticipation – and that's especially true if you're going to share this weight with others, as I do on my blog, [stellarfashionandfitness.com](#).

I started writing about my weight-loss journey in the summer of 2010, and I've since stumbled on a community of bloggers and readers who are more supportive, encouraging and

honest than I could've imagined. They offer advice, low-calorie recipe ideas and even call me out when I'm slacking. Writing has become my therapy and my readers have become my cheerleaders. I hear their voices in my head when I'm about to reach for a cupcake, and even when I do indulge, I know they'll forgive me and push me to try harder.

Writing about my exercise regimen holds me accountable to the workout schedule I've set for myself for a given week. And I'm not alone. Meet three local weight-loss bloggers who have also shared their experiences.



JEN WEST
[thejenwestquest.com](#)
Pounds lost: 47
Starting weight: 192

How she did it: West documented her weight loss with photos of herself in a bikini as she implemented "The Carb Lovers Diet," which encouraged her to eat healthy grains and count

calories. "It's all math," West says. At 5'10", she kept her calorie range to 1,400 to 1,800 a day, even when working out and training for races. "I feel like if I was less strict with food, it left me thinking about food, and that made me uneasy," she says.

What motivated her: She remembers one night sitting on the couch with a huge plate of spaghetti and garlic bread. "I just scarfed it down and thought 'This is so unhealthy.'" Although she has always been an avid runner, West's diet had become a detriment to her weight and health.

Why she blogs about her weight loss: At first, she wanted to put herself out there because she'd been hiding her body to herself and everyone else. "If I don't do this, this thing that scares me, I won't do anything else," West says. Now, she says her followers provide her with encouragement. "I felt so much support. I can't imagine where you'd find that kind of accountability anywhere else because you're putting it all out there."

How she feels about being an inspiration: West says, if anything, her readers inspire her. "It's so powerful [the blog], it's almost like you can feel the energy from it."



STORY BY JENNIFER DOME PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER JONES

About the Author: Jennifer Dome is an assistant editor at Bassmaster magazine and blogs about her personal weight-loss journey and love for fashion at [stellarfashionandfitness.com](#).

Pushing Through a Fitness Plateau

Getting stuck in your weight-loss journey is discouraging, but there are ways to keep yourself motivated. Here are a few to try:

Take your measurements. As my trainer frequently reminds me, sometimes you will lose inches and not weight. Keep track of your measurements from the get-go and you'll be encouraged, even if the scale isn't moving down!

Plan to run or walk a race. The impending date will make you train regularly, and choosing a race that benefits a cause that's meaningful to you will fulfill your soul too.

Find an accountability buddy. Even if you don't want to blog, lean on a friend or loved one who will support you and also challenge you – and maybe work out and cook with you, too!

Start strength training. Cardio is great, but strength training is an amazing way to burn calories, build muscle and create a leaner body. My trainer encourages weight lifting two to three times a week. "Muscle burns more calories than fat, and it's smaller than fat and looks different than fat," says Lauren Adair, a Body Pump instructor at Gold's Gym.

Switch it up! Change the playlist on your iPod, buy a new workout outfit, attend a new cardio class and learn to cook new dishes. Trying new things will keep the journey interesting.



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STEPHEN VINSON
whoatemyblog.com
Pounds lost: 300
Starting weight: 632

How he did it: Vinson started exercising by walking and swimming at the gym. He also sees a nutritionist about his diet.

What motivated him: After developing sleep apnea, high blood pressure and hyper-thyroidism from his weight, Vinson says he knew he had to make some changes. "My health started going downhill quite rapidly," he says.

Why he blogs about his weight loss: "It does motivate me to continue to lose weight," Vinson says. He has met a lot of people from the blog who are now his friends in "real" life.

How he feels about being an inspiration: "It still feels weird because I'm just plugging away every day," he says.

WILL NEVIN
ducttapeweddingring.com
Pounds lost: 175
Starting weight: 350

How he did it: "I started out doing three miles a day on the treadmill every day," Nevin says. Now he walks for as much as two hours each day.

What motivated him: On his way to California to see Alabama play in the 2009 national championship game, Nevin says he experienced chest pains that made him wonder if he was having a heart attack. Luckily, he turned out to be fine, but says the health scare, and then getting laid off, lit a fire under him. "I had all this free time on my hands right now, so the two of them just came together," Nevin says.

Why he blogs about his weight loss: Losing weight can be a lonely endeavor, he says, so it's nice to know others have been in the same situation. The community of bloggers and readers he's created is a great support system. "If I ever did have a problem with a craving, I would hope I could be honest about it and it would help someone else dealing with the same problems."

How he feels about being an inspiration: "It's still so weird [to know you're an inspiration]. Being heavy for so long and going through all the associated stress that society puts on you, and then to be where I'm at today and for people to say I'm an inspiration, it's like a dream," Nevin says. "I mean, pinch me." ■

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