

Glimpse into a life transformation

As I deal with a chronic illness that prevents me from taking part in activities that I once loved to do, I take inspiration from people who have managed to change their bodies into something amazing. Whether it is due to chronic illness, a busy and hectic lifestyle, poor choices, or a lack of resources and opportunity, there are so many reasons why people can find themselves in a body that they are less than happy with. I believe that we can all work with what we have and improve the fantastic homes that we live in – after all, it is the only one we will ever get! Whether this means that you will be able to get out of bed for a few hours a day, or whether it means taking part in an ironman, there is a level for everyone that we can aim for, and do everything in our power to reach.

I was lucky enough to interview a woman who has turned her body and life around. She describes her health in the past to have been appalling. She spent years heavily binge drinking two to three times a week, as well as smoking two to seven cigarettes a day, plus an extra pack on a night out. She ate fast and processed foods regularly and took no notice of what was in the food, such as additives and sugars. Her name is Gabrielle, and she decided, while sitting in the smoking area of a pub, intoxicated, that it was time to make a change. She is not only improving her body for her health, but will be competing in the INBA 2013 QLD State Championships for Body Building. What a goal!



This is where Gabe found her body to be when she decided

enough was enough! These are photos that have motivated her to keep going with her change. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us, Gabe. Congratulations on making that decision to put your body first.

Gabe: I'd always lightly talked about doing it beforehand and finally a training friend gave me the push to go through the process with her – and together we are exceeding our own expectations in leaps & bounds to be body and mind ready to compete for our state.

What motivated you to start this quest?

Predominately vanity – I noticed in the mirror that I was looking round, haggard and there was no bright spark left in my skin. Further, the looming issue of turning 30 really kick started me to prove you can still 'have it' after 30.

I've also always seen body sculptors on stage and envied what they have – it's the age old question of "what's underneath all this skin" and now I am able to see my efforts. Your own changes are what motivate you and push you to grow more and see more.

What are your immediate goals in terms of your health, body and wellbeing?



My immediate goals were to kick smoking once and for all. I have been smoke free now for 5 solid months. Secondly, was to have a more mature outlook on my drinking and socialising habits. I still go out for lunches & dinners and small events, but the wild days of 5:00am partying are behind me. I don't drink at all now, as it is not necessary, and I have far more enjoyment when catching up with friends and family.

Another notable goal is to grow & sculpt this body into perfect symmetry to be stage ready in September – under a monitored and carefully planned programme for my body, to minimise damage and excel in gains.

You have food intolerances; what are they?

I am Celiac with lactose & yeast intolerances. I also don't consume seafood at all, and may have discovered that my body cannot handle Kangaroo meat also.

I have come to understand the damage I was doing to my health by ignoring my food intolerances. The health benefits were

immediate with a new food plan and cutting out the foods I should never eat, and cleaning up the chemical storm of foods I was consuming. They will no longer be returning to my body, and that is a goal achieved.

These foods that I have an intolerance to aren't really that good or necessary for the body anyway, and there are numerous alternatives and healthier options out there, and word is spreading. When it comes to cheat meals as a part of my strict training programme, my food is nutritious and delicious without the harrowing effects of bloating, indigestion problems, cramping, headaches etc.

In the first few weeks of measurements on the competition diet plan, there was a rapid drop in my skinfolds & body weight, attributed to 'de-bloating'. Clearly I was holding a lot of water due to my blatant abuse on my body. On talking to my coach, my constant craving of water and fluids was also attributed to a reaction to eating foods my body couldn't cope with, as well as numerous other internal problems that had happened. I am so very grateful to report now to have rectified these issues and am on the path to healing.

You maintain a very strict diet. Do you have any experiences/tips/advice on how to prepare foods or eat out with strict diets?

Food preparation IS the key!!! I do all my shopping on a Saturday morning after training, and spend my Sunday afternoon (after market goodies pick-ups) prepping all the meats & veggies, and then each night I prep a full day's food into their containers. That way, I am always good to go and not panicking that I don't have my correct foods and portions.

Linking up to the social networking system quickly opened my eyes to the options and choices out there. Various pages, similar to Glimpsing Gembles that offer ideas & pathways to recipes and eateries available all over.

In relation to my training, I found it incredibly easy speaking with my coach & reputable sports supplements stores (i.e. ASN or Mass Nutrition) and can find alternatives when required. For example protein is predominately whey or milk solids based, but brands such as Sun Warrior, RAW & Vital have brought out delicious and nutritional equal options in a Pea Protein format.

What changes have you noticed so far since starting your journey?

I recently had a blood test – from it we can see that I am in perfect health, and excelling in certain areas. Cholesterol is way below normal and my body fat and lean mass are very much in the above average for healthy. I haven't been sick in over 6 months now at all, when I always used to get headaches, stomach upset, coughs, colds etc. Bone scans also showed up that I have increased my bone density from 1.6 – 1.9 in 7 weeks with healthy clean foods & regular exercise. In 6 months, my body has dropped 11.7kg and 13% body fat. My skin is clear, and my alertness is very noticeable. I feel my brain is functioning far better, and am more productive at work and in my social life. I have a far happier outlook on life and am never negative; it's hard to stir me up as there is only positives that I see now. Since commencement I feel I have inspired friends to at least try the same, and I have made so many phenomenal new like-minded friends and we enjoy many social outings together.

✘ Furthermore, my past was a horrid physical & emotional mess in relation to men I chose when dating . Meeting men while blindly drunk in bars or drinking events usually only ends in an arm-chewing or memory lacking embarrassing situation! Dating whilst 100% clear minded and being totally myself for once has been an incredible experience, and one I solidly endorse to those on the market. Filling your body & mind with copious amounts of alcohol and thinking that you can string logical sentences together is not advised – only animalistic urges take over and you really miss out on getting to know that someone special and, enjoying your time with them. A new healthy lifestyle seems to have attracted a wonderful man, who had seen me in the past and now has wanted to become an integral part of my life. He supports me and my decisions and genuinely makes me feel on top of the world and radiant to be myself. We both have a passion for healthy eating (he has

intolerances too) & training and he fits in perfectly with the lifestyle I have chosen for myself to live the rest of my life.

I'm making far better and more mature decisions with a clearer head and am not afraid to just be me (finally) & spread this infectious happiness.

Who has been your rock in this journey?

There isn't a specific 'rock' per say – more a team of wonderful people.

From the FITGirls where I got started, to looking up to my former PT Michelle Allan and all the glories she had whilst Body Sculpting on stage, to my patient and knowledgeable coach Dan Hooper, and pose coach Jo Rogers. There is also my blessed new friends I have made through the gym & training boot camps, especially Alicia who brought the idea to me first, and Trish and Shari who motivate and push me, and slug it out with me in the gym. Then the amazing support of my best friends (Charna, Stacey & Charley), my partner Phil and my family.

What is your best tip or piece of advice for people who are also looking to lead a healthy lifestyle?

Start TODAY!!! I always was a 'I'll start Monday' person...but why not today, start incorporating health into your life at a pace comfortable to you – I dove straight in head first but that is only because I know that's the only way it was going to work for me. What I've learned about me, my body & health is incredible. I can finally hear my body and listen to what it's telling me to change as it is needed, rather than ignoring the blatant 'help me' signs.

I don't regret this decision for one second – it SAVED me!!! It has been the best decision and journey I have ever done in my entire life and has set me up for the rest of my life. There have been lows, but I have got through them. I'm human and yes, it can feel like the hardest thing in the world, and you are tired and you are hungry and you do want normality as you knew it back then, but now you are a new person, you need to work through this. You can call or see the necessary people and keep on trucking. The highs really MAKE the lows. What I see in the mirror and how my head feels today is all you need.

You hear people talk about it and you don't believe it...I never did – trainers struggled with me for years being stubborn and mocking their choices, but now that I'm here...I'm thankful every day I took the plunge. Especially after a conversation with my mother on the weekend that moved me: "Gabe, I'm so proud – you said you'd change your life and you did it!!! You're father & I have never seen you look more beautiful & happy and that makes us so very proud"



This change has made me more aware of the choices I make in friends and social activities. You don't NEED to hang around in bars and get drunk every weekend, thrashing around in your bed on a Sunday, hoping the pain will stop. There is SO much more to life, and being active and getting out there and enjoying things you haven't tried but wanted to try. Small things even, like a breakfast on a Sunday at a lovely café with others, rather than eating Macca's and lying on the lounge room floor with last night's makeup running down your face. Work has been far more enjoyable and productive, and I am so blessed that Phil (partner) saw something in me and my changes through the social network and contacted me again (it had been years since I'd last seen him) and now enjoy a new adventure getting to know him and being with him.

What are your long term goals in terms of your health?

Long term goals are to continue this 'health' venture. I have just enrolled in a Health Sciences course to become a Naturopath, learning more on my intolerances, the effects they do have on the body and places and foods that are friendly to me and others like me. I'd also consider competing again, as the challenge is 110% reward for the effort put in. The discipline and training is good for the body & soul.

Forty weeks of hard work, diligence, motivation, training, and a strict diet of no gluten, lactose, red meat, sugar, carbs & alcohol have been a driving force for Gabe. However, this body change is more than working towards a stage event for body building. It truly is about recognising one's own true ability, and realising that everyone can make a change for the better. Gabe's story is obviously one of extreme improvement,

but it is inspiring to us all, at any level. She decided that where she was at was ultimately not how she wanted to be living, and she did everything in her power to change it.

If you have chronic illness issues, keep going to those doctor visits and undergoing what seems like endless tests, because one day, something will help. If you give up, there is no hope of that happening. If you think you are too busy to make a healthy meal, look at what those quick fix foods are doing to your body. We only get one chance with our bodies, and we need to treat them with the respect that they deserve. Sometimes, they can be so frustrating and upsetting when they won't work properly, trust me, I know! But you won't help yourself by giving up, or treating them badly. Choose your goal; a realistic plan with a time frame and manageable steps, and go for it. Don't think that your goal is too small to count. For me, I plan to be able to do light exercise for 5 minutes a day by the end of the year. For someone who used to work out at the gym for at least an hour 5 or 6 times a week, this seems ludicrous! But it is also something I can not do right now, so I have to accept where my body is, and keep working towards my goal. Gabe has proven to us all that we can all make a change, big or small, that will benefit us in some way. We just have to decide what that change needs to be for us, and do everything we can to make it happen.



Thank you so very much Gabrielle for spending your time to share your motivational story with us. We wish you all the best on your quest for a fit and healthy body! You are looking fantastic! Good luck, and I can't wait to see you compete on stage!

