

## **Business and Good Health Can Co-exist**

**Living Healthy:** It is so easy to get caught up in the chaos of life and lose control of our own health. Without your health the chaos is overwhelming, exhausting and draining. In August of 2005 I had finally hit my personal bottom, or in this case the top weight I was willing to see on the scale. It was at that point that I decided to get control of my weight and health. In the years of having children and building Essential Wholesale I had lost sight of my own personal well being. I have come to realize that my dilemma is incredibly common. Between 1992 and 2001 I had three children and lost and gained, and lost and gained multiple pounds. In the midst of this Essential Wholesale was born, and even more weight added each year as the needs of my family and business superseded my needs. The more I buried my own need for balance and health the less effective I became in business and life. The struggle I faced is the mirror image of so many women in business.

**Step One:** The very hardest step is the first step. How many times have you thought about getting your life under control? I had excuses a mile high that kept me from changing my habits. I was too busy, too tired and too overwhelmed. The last thing I wanted to do was add another commitment to my life. I also did not want to commit to something that I would fail at. I was uninterested in losing weight, only to have it come back and bring more friends along. I realized that I could not just go on a “diet”; I had to change my habits forever. The thought was so overwhelming and frightening that it paralyzed me for years. I had to look in the mirror . . . really look, and not allow my clouded vision of myself to veil the seriousness of my condition. I was “overweight” in the mirror, yet when I saw pictures of myself I was gross. Then I looked up my BMI (Body Mass Index) and discovered that I was obese. How could that be? Shockingly, I did not resemble the skinny girl that I used to be before I had children and my own business.

**Wake Up Call:** What is your wake up call? Are you ignoring it while it rings off the hook? My wake up call was going shopping for summer clothes before a family vacation. I decided to enjoy every moment of my vacation, because the moment I returned everything was changing. I had done my research for years into weight loss. We all know what to do. It is just a matter of taking action. I stopped consuming all sugar, except for two pieces of dark chocolate each night. This was my fail safe mechanism to insure that I never felt deprived. I also did not want to substitute sugar for chemicals and decided to stay free of fake sweeteners as well. I ate only organic whole foods and dropped all processed foods. The final step was to not eat empty calorie foods like potatoes or white flour. Each food needed to offer something of value. So I switched to whole wheat instead of white flour. I ordered a side salad instead of French fries. The pounds started to melt off of me. Due to the time crunch my husband and I live under, we often eat out. This did not change, I simply made smarter choices.

**Keeping and Renewing Focus:** In December of 2005 my mother had to have open heart surgery due to radiation damage. I spent a week sitting with my mom and dad in the cardiac intensive care unit before, during and after my mother’s surgery. It was extremely stressful and one of those events in life that normally would have made me fall away from the healthy habits that I was integrating into my daily life. However, as I looked around the cardiac intensive care unit I watched families devastated by life threatening health issues and death. A closer look around the unit revealed to me that there were absolutely no skinny people lying in those hospital beds. Apart from my mother, all the patients were overweight or obese. The pain that I witnessed that week was my wake up call to never back slide. I could not bear the thought of putting my family through the fear and loss that prevailed in the cardiac intensive care unit.

**Making the Time for Exercise:** It took months of weight loss for me to make the time for exercise. I knew it was the missing link to my lifestyle change, but I could not find a single moment in my day that was wasted. Each day was consumed from morning to night. Each night I fell into bed exhausted. As a business owner, wife and mother I found that making time for me was the absolutely hardest task I had ever faced, but in forgetting myself I was doing a disservice to my family and business. Each night as I passed out completely exhausted I beat myself up for not exercising. I wondered how I could possibly have the energy to exercise, even if I had the time.

Finally I hit a plateau in my weight loss that I could not conquer. I had goals to meet and my body was not moving one inch forward towards those goals. My husband, much to my surprise, offered to take the kids to school in order for me to steal an extra half hour out of my day just for myself. I am not quite sure why I never asked for help, but I was so busy carrying the world on my shoulders it never dawned on me. I started out small; fifteen minutes of swimming three days per week. Each day I added five minutes, and then I felt so amazing I got greedy. I now swim for one hour three days per week. Amazingly I get even more done, even though I show up to the office just a little bit later than before. I am so energized, enthusiastic and refreshed the days that I swim that I accomplish more than ever. In taking an hour for myself just three days per week, I have more to give my business, husband and children.

Now I find time in spots of the day that I never even saw were there for stretching, Pilates and walking. While I help my kids with homework, I stretch or squeeze in some Pilates exercises. I even park far away and walk farther rather than parking up front. I heard that advice a million times, but I was in a hurry and thought a few extra steps wouldn't do me any good anyway. Now I steal every single opportunity to get my heart pumping, stretch my muscles or move my body. Years of chronic and excruciating back pain was high on my excuse list, yet strengthening my body is bit by bit taking even that excuse away.

**Balancing Act:** A key factor for my success has been that I set realistic goals for myself. This lifestyle change was for a lifetime, not for awhile, so the goals were set in realistic chunks. I knew ultimately I wanted to loss fifty pounds, but my first goal was twenty pounds, and then twenty more pounds and then reaching that fifty pound mark. From there I knew the healthy habits that I created would take off the next twenty. I have passed my fifty pound goal now and am working on the next twenty. When I get there my goal is to maintain this lifestyle long term. It is May when I am writing this and I expect by August I will have finally reached my ultimate goal, one year after I started. There has been no overnight success, no miracle cure, and no shortcuts. Yet it has been a rewarding year.

Life is about balance. As a business owner your life becomes about your business. But you are your business, without you, without your health, without your sanity, your business is nothing. For the success of your business, you must carve out that fifteen minutes that you know does not exist in your life and reclaim it, never giving it back. I was firmly planted on a thousand reasons not to get healthy. My business, my kids, and my husband all needed my every waking moment; I was certain that there was not a spare moment left for me. Yet, today I get up at the same time as I always did, go to bed at the same time and somehow I fit taking care of myself into my day. I never knew it was possible. Join me on this journey of health and wellness. You have the time.

