

# MY 20-YEAR FITNESS RIDE:

BY TERRI WEST

## Three Basics I Wish I'd Known

**After years of being teased and taunted for my weight during my childhood years, it didn't become clear to me until my second year of junior college that I was a fatty. I didn't feel good about myself, and yet I didn't know what to do in order to feel better. At age 17, my knee joints were already beginning to fail me.**

I resorted to quick fixes, like diet pills and one minimal meal per day, which consisted of something like a piece of toast, coffee and cottage cheese. I really believed that by starving myself (and punishing myself) that I would transform my body into something tolerable by others and myself. But what happened instead was low energy, limited brain function due to lethargy, and while I did lose a few pounds, I was flabby. I thought, well, maybe if I start jogging around the school track, that might help. And it did a little. Still, even after months of doing that, I had no noticeable muscle definition. Back to the old drawing board.

Like a scientist with no useful data, I resorted to muscle-building magazines. It was like having a canvas with no paint brush. I'd read the rags between classes, thinking that somehow I'd acquire an awesome physique by imagining rather than doing. And sure, I learned a little from research, but not enough to make me strong, lean and fierce.

Time passed and I pursued my bachelor's degree in journalism. I later became a talk radio producer at ABC Radio Networks and also worked on the assignment desk at ABC News in Hollywood. If you've ever worked in the news business, then you know there is no time to eat balanced meals at work. A typical day for me at this stage in the diet game was whatever stale donuts were in the newsroom, coffee, and if I was lucky, a salad at lunchtime from the commissary. I was in the industry for a decade, and during those 10 years, I gained 20 pounds minimum. Then came layoffs. What to do with my time now? Exercise, yes. But it would be nothing like before. This time, I would educate myself on becoming healthy and help others to do the same. I became a nationally accredited certified fitness trainer and started my own health and wellness business.

First, I had to change my eating habits. In order for my body to run like a machine and use food for fuel, I had to know which foods would propel my body into motion. I began eating metabolism-boosting foods like chicken breasts, broccoli, apples, whole grains, grapefruit, berries, rolled oats and egg whites. Man, my body burned those up like a furnace.

Appropriate meal times to accommodate my workouts: I consumed five meals per day, each one balanced with fruits, vegetables, protein, carbs and at least eight ounces of water. Before I became a fitness guru, I worked out on an empty stomach. Now, I eat a full meal one hour prior to my workout for energy, and another meal within an hour after my workout. Weight training and cardio are not efficient if not accompanied by food.

Frequency of exercise: At this point, my body is calibrated to burn fat even while sedentary due to the amount of muscle I've added to my physique. Gone are the days of doing cardio two or

three times a day. If I'd known in my 20s what I know now, I would've used my time more wisely. Today, I just coast through the week with an occasional hike or intense spin class. Weight training is a different story, as it requires focus on specific muscle groups, making sure to balance the planes of motion for adequate growth and symmetry. And, of course, rest is necessary so that your muscles have recovered for your next workout. I don't care if you're doing a fat-burning workout, agility or bodybuilding, you must rest your body for optimal results.

My lesson in all this was to understand the basics, learn from my mistakes and perceive my fitness goals as a journey.

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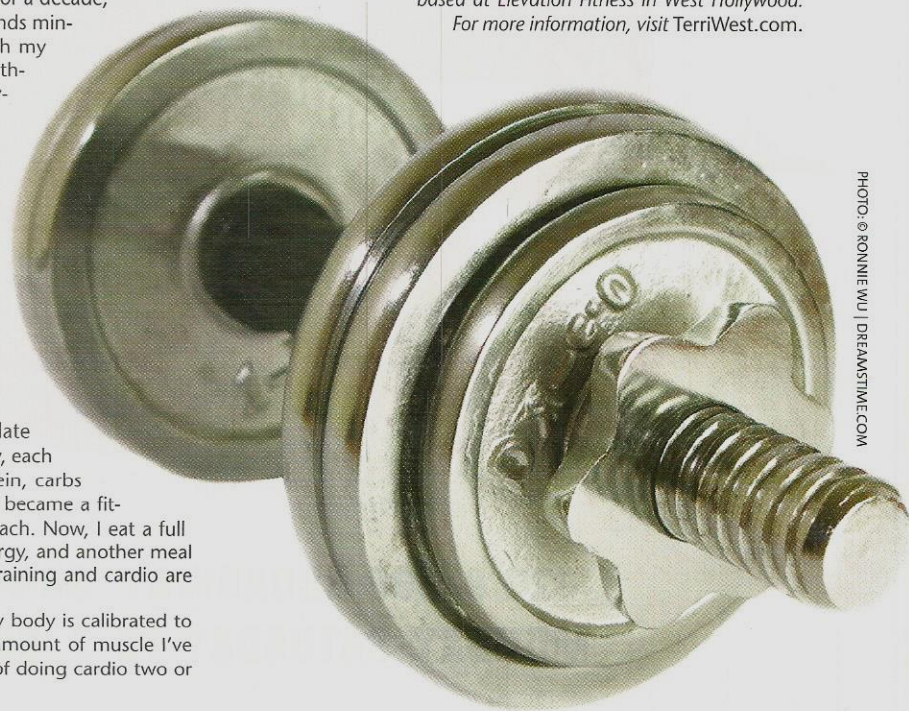


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