



To see Aubrey's video:
www.nwh.org/aubrey

Weight Loss

SUCCESS

One Patient's Story

At 22 years old and 351 lbs, Aubrey Podell was nearly incapable of regular, daily activities. She was classified as “super morbidly obese,” and on track to develop type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease all before she reached the age of 30.

“At one point a doctor told me that I would be lucky to see my 40th birthday,” says Aubrey. “I felt trapped in my body and feared I would never be able to do all the things that ‘normal’ people could do – exercise, fit in airplane seats or even have children. I was certain that everything I imagined for myself was out of reach and that I would forever watch my life go by from the sidelines. I was fighting the disease of obesity, and it was winning.”

Aubrey had started a new job at one of Newton-Wellesley Hospital’s medical practices and saw an ad for the Center for Weight Loss Surgery.

“I had never really considered weight loss surgery,” says Aubrey. “I had tried so many diets and fads to lose the weight but I just couldn’t dig myself out of the hole I was in. I decided to attend the Center for Weight Loss Surgery’s New Patient Informational Meeting and by the end of the meeting I had already left a message for the office to schedule an initial appointment.”

The meeting opened Aubrey’s eyes to the option of surgery and the support provided by the team at the Center.

“While I was sitting in the meeting I realized there is no shame in asking for help. They talked about obesity being a disease and I hadn’t thought about it that way. I realized this was the right path for me.”

After weeks of counseling, dieting and exercise, Aubrey underwent Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery with Sheila Partridge, MD, Interim Chair of Surgery and Medical Director of the Center for Weight Loss Surgery.

“I really connected with all of the staff at the Center – from the Registration staff to my surgeon, Dr. Partridge. They have all been so compassionate and I never worried what people thought. They all wanted me to succeed and I felt that from the first time I walked through the office door.”

After her surgery, Aubrey worked hard to learn the skills that would help her lead a healthier life. “Weight loss surgery was just part of the process. It was a tool that allowed me the time to learn a new lifestyle. You have to work hard after

surgery to retrain yourself and engrain the principles of healthy eating and exercise. In the first three months I lost 70 pounds. After that point, I had to work harder to ensure that I was making good decisions to continue my weight loss.”

Over the course of 18 months, she continued to lose weight and make many changes to her everyday life. “Aubrey is a great representative of how improved health and an active lifestyle can be incredibly fulfilling and motivating,” says Dr. Partridge. “With her successful weight loss and lifestyle changes Aubrey is living the patient experience.”

Aubrey lost 190 pounds and decided to take on a new challenge – running the 2014 Boston Marathon.

“There was a point in my life that a flight of stairs or a walk through a parking lot seemed almost as insurmountable as running a marathon,” she explains. “Three months after my surgery, I started exercising and realized that it would be

a major component to my mental and physical journey.”

Aubrey decided she would try to run one mile without stopping. “I was embarrassed and unsure of whether I’d be successful so I set out to test the waters in the privacy of my own home. No music, no light, no spectators. Just me and the treadmill. 12 minutes later, feeling very accomplished, I celebrated by crying tears of joy on the floor of my apartment.”

The next day, she ran two miles, and a week later, Aubrey signed up for the Harwich Half Marathon. She had officially caught the running bug.

On a cold, rainy morning, Aubrey completed her goal and sprinted across the Harwich Half finish line!

“I finished, and I was elated. Before my tears of joy had even dried or the muscle cramps subsided, I was already combing the internet for marathon training schedules. I knew it was just a matter of time before I’d want to undertake another challenge!”

As an employee of Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Aubrey decided to enter her name in the raffle for a Boston Marathon number. The Hospital is an official medical provider of the Marathon and has a team each year that runs to raise money for the Vernon Cancer Center at the Hospital.

“A couple of months after Harwich, I submitted my name to the Newton-Wellesley Boston Marathon lottery. I had my mind set on the Dublin Marathon in October, but why pass

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– Aubrey Podell, Patient

up a chance to run the world's most prestigious road race? Not really thinking my name would be picked, I enjoyed the holidays and took some time off from the gym. Little did I know, the opportunity of a lifetime was waiting for me in my inbox. The rest, as they say, is history."

As soon as she got the news, Aubrey was back on the treadmill. She found making the time to train challenging but rewarding. "Speed work, hill circuits, distance days... these phrases somehow found their way into my daily lexicon more often than they should. The outpouring of support and generosity I received was truly humbling. During my training I received a multitude of calls, Facebook messages and emails, and exceeded my fundraising goal twice. I feel incredibly lucky to have such wonderful people in my life. I couldn't have done it without them."

The team at the Center for Weight Loss Surgery helped Aubrey learn how to fuel her body for marathon training. She met with the Center's nutritionist to learn how to eat and make healthy choices.

"It was a great privilege to represent Newton-Wellesley Hospital in the 2014 Boston Marathon. I am incredibly proud of the Hospital's mission to treat every patient like a beloved family member, and its commitment to raise money for the Cancer Center. I feel an immense sense of love and gratitude for this place both as an employee and as a patient."

Aubrey crossed the finish line with her entire support team watching. Her parents and boyfriend were there to see her reach her goal. "Crossing the Marathon finish line was so emotional. I couldn't stop the tears. At times I still struggle with feeling like I weigh more than 350 pounds. Finishing the Marathon proved to me that I have made it. I am the new person I have worked so hard to become."

Now, more than two years after her surgery, Aubrey attends the young adult support group and mentors others thinking about having surgery. "Aubrey is active in our young persons' community support group and has made it a priority to give back to others considering weight loss surgery," says Dr. Partridge. "She makes this process look easy because she has fully embraced the hard work it takes to be successful."

Aubrey says the support group has been crucial to her success and continues to participate more than two years after her surgery.

"Everyone has a different journey. Being around others who understand what you are going through is so important," she explains. "I'm no longer labeled as obese, and have since assumed new labels – health nut, gym rat, runner and now, Boston Marathon finisher. I used to wake up every day with aches and pains, constant reminders of my deteriorating health. Now, I feel a sense of accomplishment reminding me not of the things that I'm incapable of, but rather everything that I've accomplished."



Sheila Partridge, MD

Interim Chair of Surgery and Medical Director, Center for Weight Loss Surgery, Newton-Wellesley Hospital

Dr. Partridge graduated from Cornell University Medical College. She completed her residency in general surgery at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and was a Harvard Medical School clinical fellow in surgery. She is board certified in general surgery. She has expertise in bariatric and gastrointestinal with a focus on minimally invasive surgery.

For more information about the Center for Weight Loss Surgery at Newton-Wellesley Hospital, please call 617-243-3724 or visit www.nwh.org/weightloss

