

How I lost 5 pounds

4 WOMEN. 4 SUCCESSFUL WEIGHT LOSS STORIES. STEAL THEIR SUPER STRATEGIES.

FUNNY, YOU NEVER HEAR A GROUP OF WOMEN COMPLAINING ABOUT HOW HARD IT IS TO GAIN 5 POUNDS. HAVING A couple of extra desserts a week, making happy hour a regular habit, even moving the TV into the kitchen can all cause the creep-up. But taking off the weight—that's another story. To help you conquer those stubborn pounds for good, SELF gathered four winning 5-pound losers to share their simple keep-it-off tips.



Bridget Shea, 25, occupational therapist, Boston
MOTIVATING FACTOR

Gaining a few extra pounds made me feel less healthy.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE

My boyfriend and I used to eat out several nights a week. I didn't pay attention to how much I was putting in my mouth.

SLIMMING STRATEGY

I came up with healthy replacements for high-calorie foods so I wouldn't feel like I was missing out. For example, I packed lean salads and sandwiches for lunch instead of buying fattier ones at the deli.

COMPROMISES

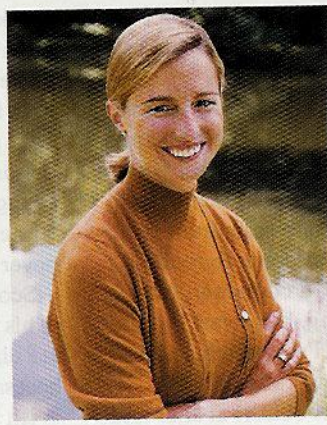
I cut out cocktails during the week.

VICE

Chocolate. Instead of buying ice cream, I froze nonfat chocolate pudding.

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Two months



Hadley Gates, 31, PR company president, Boston
MOTIVATING FACTOR

I was getting married and wanted to lose a little weight before my walk down the aisle.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Stress—from work, planning the wedding and starting my own business

SLIMMING STRATEGY

I didn't give up my favorite foods; I scheduled them in. Example: I'd eat cheese only occasionally—and then I'd pick one with a strong flavor, like feta. A little goes a long way.

SECRET WEAPON

Power yoga a few times a week. The more I exercised, the less I craved fatty foods.

VICE

Chocolate. My A.M. mochaccino carried me through the day.

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Two months



Sunita Diez, 29, marketing consultant, Atlanta
MOTIVATING FACTOR

I didn't feel good after I'd gained a few pounds.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE

I moved from New York City; instead of walking 20 blocks to work, I now drive.

MAKING CALORIES COUNT

I bought a juicer and drank two glasses a day for lots of nutrients and vitamins.

SECRET WEAPON

Snacks. Fruit mid-morning and a yogurt in the afternoon tided me over between meals.

MAINTENANCE PLAN

For one week every other month, my husband and I eat only fruits and veggies. Breakfast is fruit; lunch, a salad and some broccoli; and dinner, a huge plate of kale, turnips and beets.

HOW LONG IT TOOK

One month



Dawn Farrell, 34, business manager, Boston
MOTIVATING FACTOR

A Bahamas trip. But I really did it as an overall life change.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE

I had a new job in a new city, and I was focusing on that and not my eating habits, so I gained weight.

SLIMMING STRATEGY

I replaced my morning bagel with Shredded Wheat or whole grains and started eating lower-fat varieties of everything.

COMPROMISES

I substituted fruit smoothies for ice cream and skim milk for whole. I also cut back on sodium.

TOP TOOL

My tape measure. A scale can't tell you you've lost an inch off each thigh.

SECRET WEAPON

I snacked on PowerBars.

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Seven weeks

Wanna drop 5 pounds? Skip just one of these treats every day for two months.

- ◆ 1 bagel (3½ inches) with 1 oz cream cheese (295 calories), or
- ◆ 1 regular-sized Snickers bar (280), or
- ◆ 1 McDonald's hamburger (280), or
- ◆ 2 servings (2 oz) of Frito-Lay Sun Chips (280), or
- ◆ 2 bottles of beer (292), or
- ◆ 2 slices of Domino's thin-crust cheese pizza (273), or
- ◆ 5 Oreo cookies (265), or
- ◆ 2 Starbucks Tall cappuccinos with whole milk (280)

FROM LEFT: PETER MELLEKAS; STYLING, HOLLY DONALDSON FOR TEAM; HAIR AND MAKEUP, COCO GRACE FOR TEAM; ANN STATES; STYLING, SUSAN PRITCHETT FOR CREWS; HAIR AND MAKEUP, JAMES BISHOP FOR CREWS. SEE GO SHOPPING GUIDE.