

Ozempic and the “New Me”

Okay...I have had a weight problem all my life.

Weight was always a source of humiliation. I remember how my father had to drag me to the clothing store because I hated having to go to the husky section to buy pants. Being overweight made me slow. So, I was always “it” when playing hide-and-seek with the neighborhood kids. In little league baseball, I was usually chosen last for the team. At the beginning of the year in gym class, they made everyone climb a rope. I could never do it and would give one tug and then give up. I could hear the other students snickering along the sidelines. The only activities I was good at were coordination sports like ping-pong and pool. However, those activities had a low priority amongst my male peers. I was bullied by a boy down the block. All this made me the “low man on the totem pole” with the neighborhood kids.

I had little support from my family. My father worked long hours as a salesman in a lighting store. When he was not working, he was busy playing golf, pinochle, or bowling. My mother was always depressed and appeared to resent having children. My siblings and I could never confide in our parents. As an overweight, depressed kid, I would take out my feelings through eating and tormenting my younger brother. Even this was ignored by my parents.

Oh... to be Jewish and a fat, little kid! My maternal grandmother Fannie was a woman with an eternal scowl on her face. When I picture her, she is always in the kitchen cooking fantastic Jewish food...and scowling. When we would visit my grandparents every Sunday, I would walk in and she would take one look at me and say, “you’re too fat!” She would then proceed to feed me chicken, pot roast, kugel, and matzoh brie cooked in chicken fat (or “smaltz” in Yiddish). It was all delicious and completely fattening. Every Sunday it was the same. She would stuff me with food and then tell me I was too fat.

In college, I lost 42 pounds, grew my hair, added a moustache, torn jeans, and an old army jacket. This was my “new look”. It was 1968 and I was finally in style. I was “cool” for the first time in my life. I remember flying home to New York for Thanksgiving. At that time (pre-9/11), people could meet you at the gate. My father came to pick me up and looked right past me as I walked up to him. Finally, I was standing right in front of him. He looked at me and said, “David?” My father - a bit dismayed by my hippie - outfit was overjoyed that I had lost so much weight. He was so happy that he gave me \$200 (a lot of money at that time) to buy new clothes.

By this time, my grandfather Harry had passed away and Fannie was living in a condominium in Miami Beach (or “condominium Miami bitch” as she would say). I flew down to visit her and was looking forward to my grandmother finally saying something nice about how I looked.

You may have already guessed what happened. I walked into Fannie’s condominium, she looked at me with the same scowl on her face and said, “You’re too skinny”.

Oh Fannie! You had to love her.

I kept the weight off until I married in 1984 and opened my psychology practice. At that time, I played racquetball regularly. But that was not enough to make up for my sedentary job and the late-night dinners after I saw my patients. I kept gaining weight which made me depressed once again. My emerging depression contributed to my weight gain as I would eat to soothe myself.

For the past 30 years, I have felt terrible about my weight. I was slow again and had very little energy or stamina. I became increasingly sedentary and felt old.

Then came Ozempic.

This past year everything changed.

I have been on Ozempic and playing pickleball for six months now. In that time, I've lost 53 pounds. Just so you know, I am 5'9" tall and had weighed 224. Now I weigh 170.

My brother Eric introduced me to pickleball. I found that I really enjoyed the exercise and the friendly, positive people who shared their enthusiasm for the game. I joined a local club and found outdoor courts nearby for the warmer days. I became part of a wonderful community. Now, I have arranged my client schedule to free up mornings to play pickleball.

I quickly realized that I had a big disadvantage in improving my game... my weight. While pickleball is not as strenuous as running all over a tennis or racquetball court, there is still a lot of movement involved, and I was slow. I also would get tired quickly lugging all that weight around. In addition, I realized I needed to get in shape not only to improve my game but for an upcoming trip to the Amazon and the Galapagos Islands I was planning to take with my sister in a few months.

How many of us have said to ourselves, "If only medical science could come up with a product that would really help me lose weight." Well, they have! Whether it be Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro or the brand-new one called Zepbound, they all work the same way. They take away your food cravings. As my cravings went down, I found myself eating a third- to a half-portion of the same foods I have always eaten and would still feel full. Between Ozempic and playing pickleball 3-4 times a week, I began to lose significant weight.

To say my outlook on life has changed would be an understatement. I now come out of the shower and don't grimace looking at my body...it resembles the body I had 40 years ago. One of my friends said, "you look like you lost 10 pounds off your face!" It's true. I have lost that pudgy, round face I had developed over the years and no longer have a double chin. I look at my wedding pictures and see how my clothes fit the same and my face looks much more like I did then. I am wearing clothes that I gave up on years ago because they were too small. My waist is down seven inches, and I have had to buy new pants and shirts.

How do I feel? I feel great! I feel so much more energetic and am "light on my feet" on the pickleball court...slowly getting better at the game. Friends come up to me and tell me how great I look. I can now go into my closet and not worry about what still fits or how I look in my clothes. I know I will look good in them. No longer am I haunted by the husky department of the

clothing store. When I play pickleball, I am noticing how the other team is trying to hit the ball to my partner rather than to me...

I am no longer the kid who can't climb the rope.

My self-esteem is improving knowing that I have achieved something that I never thought could happen again. I am thin. THIN!! The dream I have had since I was a child! I feel more confident and am no longer ashamed of my body. I can relax about how I look. I even have noticed women giving me the eye.

To say that Ozempic and pickleball have changed my life would be an understatement. This weight loss journey has made me feel normal for the first time in 40 years. I can look back on my childhood traumas and say, "not anymore...no way!" I have the body I wish I had had as a child. It is my intention to never to feel like that fat Jewish kid ever again. The thrill of being able to say that is so exhilarating that it is hard to put into words. No more of Fannie's scowls, being bullied, being picked last and snickered at. Not me and not ever again! I am the David I always wanted to be.

One more anecdote about my weight loss experience.

When I went to the Galapagos islands with my sister, one of our excursions was to hike up a volcano. There was a boardwalk that was about a half mile long and our guide warned us that there were 348 steps to get to the top. Some of my fellow travelers felt they could not handle that much exercise and decided not to go. Well, I went, and I made it to the top of the volcano!

I hope you enjoyed my sojourn into the world of weight loss.

That's all for now...

I'm off to play pickleball.

Dave Marcus