

Lifestyle

Photo & Page Design
by Laney Fouse

Eating Well magazine features English Instructor Emily Orlando

How to lose weight the "write" way

Laney Fouse
Editor-in-Chief

Emily Orlando found an answer to a lifelong weight problem by designing her own curriculum for fitness, which allowed her to lose 50 pounds and keep it off for the past five years.

The petite English instructor is featured in the January/February edition of *Eating Well* magazine.

"Two years ago, in 1994, they had a little blurb at the bottom of one of the pages. They wanted to hear from anyone who had lost 50 pounds and kept it off for two years. They wanted to know how I did it," said Orlando.

She admits it felt good to write the one page letter even though she got a "thanks but no thanks" letter. In September 1996, Orlando received a message on her answering machine from the magazine.

"I thought, well, my subscription must be up. The rest of the message said they were going to do another story on weight loss and lifestyle changes, focusing on fitness. They wanted to know how people fit the exercise into their life," Orlando said.

The editorial staff at the magazine decided to review some of material they had received from their previous request. Orlando's letter had apparently impressed them.

"I don't even remember what I wrote. I didn't keep a copy of that letter. I don't know but it must have been brilliant, I guess. Of course I was interested," said Orlando.

Over the course of the next couple of weeks, she had several phone calls -- including one interview with the magazine's nutrition editor. The forty-minute phone call covered such areas as whether she had kept the weight off, what sort of routine she followed and whether she was still doing the same things.

"She called my husband the following week to see if he was still sane. They told him they would be in touch and they wanted some pictures. They wanted some outdoor shots, maybe some action shots. Even at that point we were just laughing and saying, 'This is pretty exciting' but who knows what will come of it," said Orlando.

One month later the photographer called. He traveled to Estacada and spent two hours taking rolls

and rolls of film.

Orlando still did not think it would come to much. Another phone call was from the copy editor who was checking facts.

"It was just a lark when I first wrote that one-page article, to kind of validate and prove I had actually did this. Writing the one-page narrative and sending it out was more proof, besides what the scale said and how I was feeling. It was just kind of another step," Orlando said.

She kept a very sketchy journal during this time because there were too many other things keeping her busy.

"I couldn't write a sustained narrative but what I did and what I still do five and a half years later I write down everything I eat everyday. I don't know if this is good or obsessive," said Orlando.

A family history of heart disease and diabetes were a major concern for Orlando but being self-conscious about her body image played an even greater role.

"I was just overweight my entire life. I had a wonderful

"I was a second-generation Italian and love was food."

~Emily Orlando
English Instructor

family childhood but other kids were cruel. They would call me fatty and four eyes and stuff like that. Even through college I was overweight. I was always thinking about food and weight and my body but all in a negative way," Orlando said.

In 1992, at forty-three-years old, she made up her mind to change.

"I said, 'This is it.' It's a matter of health now plus I had curvature of the spine. My back was killing me. The doctor had said decades ago the older I get and the heavier, that the weight on my frame was going to cause pain. And sure enough that's what was happening. I had to lose weight. I couldn't wish it off anymore," said Orlando.

Prior to making her life-changing decision, Orlando

had resigned herself to thinking she was always going to be overweight. She kept checking with her doctor who said her health was still good. Her lab reports contained all the right numbers. Orlando felt happy with herself.

"I was so happy with myself that I gained about six pounds in two weeks," she said.

Like a lot of other women, Orlando's emotional eating patterns stemmed from her family.

"I was second-generation Italian and love was food," said Orlando, "[In my family] it was 'if you don't eat this, you don't love me'."

When she was about eighteen, Orlando spent her days going to college and working; she took all the overtime she could get. Some days she would be away from home from six in the morning until eleven at night. Before she even realized it, she had dropped down to 113 pounds without even trying.

"I didn't have money for food. Lunch was toast and tomato or something similar. Sure enough, my family said, 'Oh you're going to die. You look so terrible. Eat some more.' Once I had enough money for college, I didn't have to work that hard anymore and the weight came right back," said Orlando.

In January 1992, she felt it was time to do something.

"Actually, I thought I had eaten pretty well because I hadn't used butter or even margarine for decades. I don't use salad dressing. I had been drinking skim milk since 1975," said Orlando "My lunch that I brought to school would be nonfat yogurt, Grape Nuts and raisins. I'd have a half bagel in the morning with nothing on it. I thought I was eating pretty good. And maybe three times a week, I would have a king-size Snickers bar. But, heh; how bad can that be?"

Once she made the decision to lose weight, she started writing down everything she ate.

"I was amazed that my healthy little lunch was almost a thousand calories. I realized it was a matter of cutting fat and cutting calories. A thousand calories of Grape Nuts may be healthy, but it's still a thousand calories. I was

eating two-thousand calories and not exercising that much," Orlando said.

According to Orlando, it was astonishing to her how



Photo by Laney Fouse
Emily Orlando lost 50 pounds with her own weight loss plan.

much she would eat with just a bite here or there.

"I would eat five tortillas and cheese while preparing dinner. I didn't even realize I was doing it. I would turn around and half the package of tortillas would be gone and a half pound of cheddar cheese was gone," Orlando said.

The biggest change she made in her food choices was to give up cheese. She now eats nonfat mozzarella on pizza, but only occasionally. Orlando was able to identify as one of her problem areas the simple act of coming home and reading the paper.

"I would open up the newspaper and eat. I would eat until dinner. I isolated that as a trouble spot. I would have to come home, change into my exercise clothes and do something immediately. If I looked through the mail or looked at the paper, then here would come the tortillas and cheese and I'd be sunk," she said.

Orlando made a conscious effort to change by writing down what she ate, when she exercised and what her trouble areas were.

"I would attack each one a little at a time. What I did was plan to lose three pounds a month. I thought that would have been a miracle. I asked myself, 'What can I do in January that's different than what I did in December to lose three pounds?'" she said.

She began by using fewer

Grape Nuts and, instead of raisins, she used grapes. Instead of taking the whole two-pound block of cheddar out, she would cut off just a little, figuring it would be better than eating half as she did before. Each month afterwards, she would always ask herself what could she do different than the previous month to lose the three pounds.

"I was still having the cheese, but I would cut it back. I took out the Grape Nuts and added more grapes along with an orange or an apple. I was eating in bulk. I realized that by trading off the bagel, I could have an apple, a banana, an orange and some milk. I could never even eat all that much at once," she admits.

Making a lifestyle change affects not just the person making the change but also family members.

"Charlie and I have been married for years, and he understood that I was battling the weight. He really made an effort to understand. He's been really supportive," said Orlando, although she said there have been times of adjustment "When I would come home from school, I would have to do aerobics even when I didn't feel like doing it. It was a matter of a psychological, habit-forming thing."

Even when she was not working out as hard as she should, she was exercising her mind, establishing the habit. There were times when she would go home and, although she knew there were things to be done, she would go upstairs and do aerobics.

"There were times when he would be thinking that I could get all this exercise from helping him out. I explained to him that I had to establish this pattern. I had to do this sustained exercise every day or at least four times a week. I didn't mind doing the other stuff, but it would have to be after my established time. Once he understood that, it was great. He ended up helping quite a lot," said Orlando.

She acknowledges it was the small, seemingly insignificant changes in her choices of food that were the primary reason for her weight loss.

"What I realized was I had lost the taste for fat. My body could not accept it anymore. It's not so much willpower as it is making a conscious decision. I have a choice," said Orlando.