

Before starting the mastering mindfulness program with Gina, I had participated in countless weight loss programs. I worked with personal trainers, nutritionists, and dietitians. I tried weight watchers, my fitness pal, gym memberships, and even had consultations with bariatric surgery clinics and hospital guided medical weight loss programs. Despite all of the nutrition information I was taught and all of the program options available to me, I couldn't figure out how to successfully integrate that knowledge into my everyday living. I wasn't willing to have bariatric surgery or to live on weight loss shakes and/or pre-packaged chemical laden food through a hospital program. Eventually I got sick of talking about food, exercise, and health in general. I essentially gave up.

At some point, my hopelessness about my body and my health became overwhelming. I reached out to Gina and was given the opportunity to join her mastering mindfulness group. This group was different than anything I had participated in before. There were tools and processes that we went through together as a group, but somehow, at the same time the experience was very individualized allowing each of us to address differing needs and/or issues. Working with the group every week I was able to first recognize my basic needs as a human being. I was able to purge a lot of negativity that had been plaguing my thoughts and self-worth for so long.

With this program I haven't agonized over a meal plan, food options, or portions. I did, however, become keenly aware of my choices and the impact they may have on how I feel physically. I've grown to look at everything as data that guides current and future decisions regarding my health journey. I've given up the self-hate and punitive responses to moments of over-eating. I've learned to keep moving because even the littlest steps will help to create big change. I still have a long journey ahead of me, but in just over one year in the program I've shed 39 pounds, developed coping mechanisms for dealing with anxiety and stress that reduced reliance on medication, and realized there are basic things I can implement that have a positive effect on my energy, ability, and judgment.

In closing, the best description I have of the mastering mindfulness program is that it has been a life lesson in holistic healing, self-love, and connectedness.

-Mandy S.