



Passing the Baton through the Storm

A week later, Suzanne traveled to Houston. She went earlier than planned so she could spend some time with her father before leaving for California. The medication Dr. Conner prescribed provided some minor relief, but her symptoms were still present. To ensure an ailment-free trip, Suzanne decided to visit the company doctor to get a cortisone injection a day before leaving for Houston. She remembered that an injection two years ago helped her get through a bout of itching during the winter months. *Dr. Blake knows my history. She wouldn't give me something harmful. I just need to make sure I have a wonderful trip. No itching. No scratching. No hives. No pain. I don't have time to consult with Dr. Conner. It's not like I'm taking the kind of steroids athletes use to get bigger muscles. The corticosteroid will help to contain my swelling, redness, itching, pain,* Suzanne thought, trying to rationalize the cortisone injection.



Suzanne began to read her running and fitness magazine as she waited for take off. With all that had been going on, she was four



months behind with her reading. *I sure hope I don't get a talker next to me.* Suzanne was a friendly, outgoing individual, and often a magnet for those needing a listening ear.

Moments later, a woman asked, "Is this seat taken?" Suzanne graciously made the lady welcome to sit next to her.

As they sat, preparing for the plane to depart, Suzanne could feel the lady glaring down at her reading material. Noticing the lady's attempts to view the contents of her magazine, she felt compelled to initiate a conversation with her.

"Hi, where are you traveling to?" Suzanne asked.

"I'm going to Arizona for a church convention," the lady said. "What are you reading? The cover looks interesting. Is it a health magazine?"

"I guess you could consider it a health magazine for runners. I'm a runner, and this particular magazine provides me with a variety of training tips, the latest research reports from health professionals, and motivational stories that help keep me committed to living a healthier lifestyle."

"Wow, a runner! I wish I could run or just even get motivated to do some sort of exercise," the lady responded. "I ran track back in high school. Needless to say — that was minus twenty years ago and 75 pounds ago. Over the last year, I've been participating in a weight loss program, but I can't seem to incorporate the exercise piece. I've lost quite a bit of weight, but I still have a long way to go."

"With the right program and motivation, you could be a runner, also. A commitment to exercise and healthy eating habits are the minimum requirements," Suzanne explained.

"That's exactly what I need. The right program," the lady responded.

"What sort of food do you eat?" Suzanne asked.

"For the past few months, I've routinely eaten a grapefruit and two eggs for breakfast, soup and crackers for lunch, and a piece of meat like a steak or chicken with a salad for dinner. Sometimes I'll have one of the meal replacement bars or drinks for breakfast or lunch."

“You may not be consuming enough calories,” Suzanne said. “However, it does sound like you’re taking in a lot of cholesterol between the eggs and steak, and probably a lot of sodium between the soup and crackers.”

“I don’t want to eat a lot of calories. That’s my method for losing the weight,” the lady replied. “I hadn’t thought about cholesterol and sodium.”

“My fitness consultant, Trevor, says when you don’t get enough calories, your body will go into a starvation mode. In order to lose weight, it is necessary to reduce the amount of calories you consume. But not eating enough calories can have damaging effects. Your body needs a certain amount of calories to live, plus a little more to support your daily activity level. Trevor says the moment you start restricting caloric intake, your body recruits lean muscle mass for fuel... to keep you living.”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“The last thing you want is to lose muscle mass. Have you ever seen someone who’s lost a lot of weight? Their skin sags. Although the scale shows that magical number they were aiming for — they look thin, but they’re actually fatter. They have more fat than muscle. Because fat weighs less than muscle you don’t need as many calories. And that’s okay if they can eat less calories for the rest of their existence on earth. Unfortunately, it never works out that way. Sacrificing... resisting those temptations... eating less... eventually comes to an end. And when it does, they go back to their familiar style of eating.”

Suzanne continued to explain to the lady how the weight returns in the form of fat. “It becomes more difficult to lose the weight because they probably have a lot more to get rid of. Always remember muscle burns fat. If there’s no muscle or limited muscle, you can’t burn fat. Burning fat is what creates a lean... tone body.”

“I guess that’s why most health articles encourage exercise,” the lady responded.

“Absolutely. One of the reasons for that is so you can lose unwanted pounds and build muscle mass,” Suzanne confirmed.



"I'm just eating the grapefruit, egg, soups and salads until I lose all the weight I'm aiming for."

"Like I said, eating less activates your body's starvation mode. Your body expects a certain level of food every day... and when that doesn't happen, it conserves energy by slowing down your metabolism. In return, your body is taught to be more efficient at storing fat for those times it doesn't receive what it expects. When you resume that familiar style of eating, the food you eat will more than likely get stored as fat... and the weight will return. If you're not careful, a cycle of food restriction and food over consumption can cause a series of health problems."

"I saw an ad for a weight loss program last week," the lady said. "Basically, you purchase all of your meals from the company... breakfasts, lunches and dinners... and desserts. All for approximately \$10 a day. Since I don't like to cook... and I'm getting tired of the same meals everyday... I thought it would be ideal. Plus, you don't have to worry about counting CARBS, points or calories. I only wish I could afford the program. There's no way I could shell out \$300 a month."

"Three hundred bucks is a lot," Suzanne replied. "In order to become healthier, some adjustments are necessary. Cooking is one of those adjustments. You can develop your own repertoire of healthy, easy-to-make dishes that can be eaten in one or two settings. Healthy, nutritious and tasty foods like a turkey loaf, new potatoes with rosemary, and steamed asparagus are easy to prepare. Most of the pre-packaged, ready-to-eat meals are full of chemicals... preservatives... and sodium. We're all oblivious to the unhealthy levels of chemicals we're consuming everyday. Our quick and convenient lifestyle has us inhaling unhealthy levels. Start looking at the ingredients on the packaging... start researching those ingredients to see what they are. Sorry... guess I got on my soapbox for a moment."

"I know you're right," the lady said. "I do need to make an effort to cook more. I've never thought about chemicals in foods. I just know what I like to eat. I buy the fully-cooked chicken breast to eat with my salads. I guess I could cook my own chicken."

“The chicken you cook would not have the levels of chemicals and sodium that are in the pre-packaged... pre-seasoned... fully-cooked... or frozen, ready-to-eat versions. Just remember that even the packaged fresh chicken purchased out of the grocery store’s meat department’s refrigerated cases have chemicals... unless the company states that their chicken is 100% all natural, meaning they were raised without use of hormones and steroids, and do not contain any artificial flavoring, coloring, chemical preservative, or synthetic ingredient, and has been minimally processed. And let me tell you, there aren’t too many of those companies out there,” Suzanne said.

“I need to start thinking about these things,” the lady said.

“You have to eat in order to lose weight. So try and eat four to six small meals a day, and that will be a good way to keep your metabolism going... burning fat. And you have to exercise. Only exercise can build muscle mass.”

“How did you get started with the running?”

“Actually, I’ve been a runner for over ten years. I remember years ago watching episodes of *Baywatch* every Saturday night, wishing for a lean, soft, sculptured body like the girls running on the beach. One day, I decided to join one of the local fitness clubs. My first encounter with the fitness consultant and the machines was disastrous. First, I was placed on a stairclimber. I couldn’t last five minutes. Then I was placed on a stationary bike. Once again, I couldn’t last ten minutes. I remember thinking that I’d never get the hang of exercising long enough to make a difference. I contemplated over and over just giving up. But, I went everyday, and over a period of time my stamina improved. I remember walking on the treadmill and observing the younger ladies next to me running effortless with ease and confidence. With a craving to do the same, I began to execute a combination of walking and running. Over a period of time, I was able to do more running than walking. In 1999, I ran my first marathon. My fitness consultant, Trevor, who at that time was my running coach in a program I joined, helped me train for about six months.”

“That’s awesome! Were you fat at the time you started exercising? I’m sorry, were you larger back then?” the lady asked.



"I wasn't a large size, but I was a little chunky. As a result, I wasn't happy, and I think it showed externally through my lack of self-confidence and relationships with others. I was basically a recluse. I didn't go out. Like I said, my weekends were pretty much spent watching sitcoms and drama shows. And believe me I had a lot of spare time. I even felt uncomfortable getting on airplanes. The tight seating areas reminded me of how oversized I was. The times that I did decide to venture out, I did everything by myself. I often went to the movies alone," Suzanne said.

"There's nothing wrong with going to the movies alone," the lady interjected.

"I know. But, I did it because I was unhappy with myself and didn't feel deserving of the company of others," Suzanne shared. "At the time, I had a job that required me to do a lot of traveling. I had an opportunity to visit some exciting cities, but I never felt comfortable venturing out to explore the activities, attractions and events... or the shopping districts, restaurants or nightlife. All because I didn't feel worthy. So I would stay in the hotel room after transacting my daily business, order room service and watch the pay-per-view movies."

"You look great! How did you get out of your rut?" the lady asked.

"I didn't like the way I looked, so I decided to do something about it. Plus, I didn't want to end up like the multitude of my family members — who died untimely deaths from diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. I decided to raise my bar and live a better, healthier life. The gym was my first step toward doing just that."

"Before I started eating the grapefruits, soups and salads, I was solely a fast food eater," the lady said. "How did you get into marathon running?"

"I had a supervisor who ran daily and was inspired by his enthusiasm. I listened to him talk about running outdoors, breathing God's fresh air and enjoying the sunshine, rain, sleet, and snow — along with the scenery, the people and the varying terrain. He was my first introduction to running. More amazing for me, he had run a marathon race — 26.2 miles. It was then that I moved

from the inside, running on a treadmill, to the outside, running the track. I traded the confinement of running inside for the freedom of running outside.”

“How were you able to travel and eat healthy?”

“Traveling made eating healthier a little challenging. I mainly focused on eating establishments that offered healthy choices — steamed vegetables and fresh fruits, wheat bread, etc., eliminating the butter and condiments high in all the wrong stuff. I always asked the hotel concierge about the nearest cafeteria or deli.”

“What were your initial steps for becoming a runner? Did you walk and run everyday, every other day — did you go fast or slow? I’m just asking because it’s something I’ve been thinking about, but I don’t know how to go about getting started. Even more than that, I guess I’m just scared.”

“Through the years, I’ve gone through a lot of trial and error. If I had to give any one particular piece of advice, it would be to first get a good pair of shoes. Proper footwear protects the body from injury. For years, I ran in the wrong type of footwear that caused a series of unpleasant injuries,” Suzanne said.

“What kind of running shoes should I get?”

“The type of running shoes varies for everyone. Once you get to the running stage, it’s important to understand that you need a shoe specific to running. When inappropriate shoes are utilized for running, the result can be a plague of leg and foot problems. The best way to ensure you get a running shoe that fits properly is to go to a specialty running store. The staff is generally experts at recommending running shoes. They will conduct an assessment of your feet, such as measurement of length and width of each foot... and observe your walking and running style. After the assessment, they will recommend two to three pairs of running shoes for you to try. Based on the fit and comfort, you make the selection. It’s a good idea to take the shoes you’ve utilized in the past so they can review your wear pattern. Additionally, the right pair of socks is critical to prevent running ailments, such as blisters. Cotton socks are not recommended at all.”



“Are running shoes very expensive?”

“Prices will vary. I see so many people walking and running in the wrong shoes... old tennis shoes, fashionable shoes, and recreational sports footwear. Women especially like to exercise in cute shoes that match their workout outfits. In the long run, they pay for it and have to take an extended break from exercising. If you’re serious about getting started the right way, check out the running stores in your area that can guide you on selecting the correct walking and/or running shoe for your foot type — flat, high arched, or normal. The right shoe will offer the right motion control, cushion, flexibility and stability for your foot type.”

“What do you mean by motion control?”

“Because I have flat feet, my feet tend to roll inward when I run. To control the inward motion, I need a motion control running shoe. The motion control shoe prevents my feet from rolling inward. It’s kind of like having a corrective shoe. The early years of running in the wrong footwear caused me to experience a series of common injuries like plantar fasciitis, shin splints, and knee pain.”

“I didn’t realize the importance of correct running shoes.”

“For right now, you should concentrate on developing a structured walking program to help you lose some more weight. With running, each time your foot strikes the ground you are applying a large percentage of your body weight in force to each leg and your spine. If you start out trying to run, your excessive body weight on the joints, tendons and ligaments can make you more susceptible to injury.”

Suzanne encouraged the lady to focus on establishing a daily walking program for at least one month. “One month of consistent walking, coupled with sound eating habits, will generate a weight loss of eight to ten pounds. Your body will be better conditioned. At that point, it will be safe to initiate a mixture of walking and running, for example four minutes of walking with two minutes of running.”

She recommended starting out on a treadmill since it provided a soft surface. “Exercising on pavement can be extremely taxing on the body. The key is to start slowly.”

Suzanne gave the lady some of the basic tips that helped her in beginning. Her tips included exercising at least three to five days each week. Warming up for five to ten minutes before her main aerobic activity. Maintaining her exercise intensity for thirty to forty-five minutes. Suzanne stressed the importance of gradually decreasing the intensity of her workout and stretching to cool down during the last five to ten minutes.

“In order to generate weight loss, you should progressively increase your minutes to sixty (five days per week),” Suzanne suggested. “First and foremost, visit your physician for a check-up before starting any exercise program.”

“I did have a physical last month, and my doctor encouraged me to exercise. I think I will join a gym in my neighborhood. I received an advertisement on my door last week. The monthly cost of the gym in my neighborhood is \$19 per month. And, no contract! Is that a good rate?”

“That’s good. If you decide on a personal trainer to help you develop a personalized plan, there will be an additional cost. Trevor, the guy I’ve mentioned, owns a fitness facility, Faith-Based Fitness Solutions over on Maple Lane in Dallas. I could give you his contact information. He can also develop a solid walking program for you,” Suzanne suggested. “As far as using the fitness equipment, I would advise you to invest in a few sessions to make sure you’re knowledgeable about the equipment and how to gain the most benefit. And most fitness facilities will surely have aerobic and kickboxing classes.”

“Maybe aerobics, but not kickboxing. I mainly want to start off on the treadmill. Are there any special considerations for the treadmill?”

“Whether you walk outside or on a treadmill, you should walk at a pace that increases your heart rate. You can’t walk at a casual pace and expect to burn calories. You have to walk at a quick pace or a higher incline. Another thing... don’t hold onto the rails. Holding onto the rails prevents you from maximizing your legs to do the work. Also, don’t stand too close to the front of the treadmill. You will shorten your stride. Stand back and aim for a comfortable, normal stride.”



While they were talking, the flight attendant approached with her cart of refreshments.

“Would you like peanuts or pretzels?” the flight attendant asked the lady.

“I’ll take the pretzels,” the lady stated.

“What would you like to drink?” the flight attendant asked the lady.

“A diet soda will be fine,” the lady responded.

“Would you like peanuts or pretzels?” the flight attendant asked Suzanne.

“None for me. I’ll just take a cup of ice, thank you,” Suzanne said.

“So, I guess you don’t eat peanuts or pretzels for some health reason,” the lady asked.

“I’ve just gotten in the habit of traveling with my own healthy snacks and beverages,” Suzanne responded as she retrieved a granola bar, apple and bottle of water. “The peanuts and pretzels are too salty for me. Their beverage choices are soda, fruit juices, or coffee — I don’t drink caffeinated or diet drinks, and the fruit juices are too sugary and high in calories. My mother and I will be in California in a day or so, and I’d rather save my excess caloric intake for my favorites, like Key Lime pie.”

“You are disciplined with your eating,” the lady replied.

“Eating healthier is probably the hardest hurdle to overcome. Everyday we’re bombarded with the food industry’s attack on our weakness for food. They’re always coming up with something. I always love to see what the pizza companies are going to come up with next. My favorite is the company that has the pull-apart crust with thirty cheese-filled bites. Each one of the cheese bites is seasoned with the flavor of garlic butter. Being the researcher that I am, I looked on the company’s website for the nutritional value of the pepperoni version they advertised. One slice is 420 calories, 19 total fat grams, 10 of those grams are saturated fat... 55 milligrams of cholesterol, 1170 grams of sodium, and 42 grams of carbohydrates. Back in the day, I would have eaten at least three

slices... more than likely four slices. Eating three slices was enormous, and that doesn't even consider the other foods I had eaten that day."

"I saw an advertisement last night for a new lasagna pizza... I'm sure it contains a lot of unhealthy levels of this and that," the lady said.

"Now that's pretty innovative," Suzanne replied.

"It's a lot to absorb and figure out. What to eat? What not to eat?"

"You might consider seeking the services of a registered dietitian or nutritionist. They can give you specific guidance on how to incorporate healthier eating habits," Suzanne suggested.

"What do you think about weight training?"

"Weight training can definitely help you lose weight. The higher your ratio of muscle to fat, the faster your metabolism will be and the more calories you'll burn 24 hours a day. Strong muscles developed under the right conditions are important, because you'll develop the power to do more. Daily life activities are easier — moving a large planter, lifting your bike into the car or onto a bike rack, repositioning a large television, moving furniture — plus, you'll be less likely to get injured during exercise. Routine weight training also helps to prevent osteoporosis, the loss of bone mass that inevitably comes with age and makes you more susceptible to broken bones."

"You're like a walking fitness encyclopedia. I'm glad we had an opportunity to sit next to one another. By the way, what is your name?"

"My name is Suzanne, and yours?"

"My name is Molly."

"Maybe we can exchange email addresses so I can periodically contact you for fitness tips, and to let you know how my exercising is progressing," Molly said. "I am going to start doing something. You have motivated me. I don't know why, but there's that fear of exercising. Not getting results quick enough. Worrying about what others think. Making excuses about finding the time."



Finding somewhere to exercise where no one will see me. No one to exercise with. I just need to stop making excuses, get started and stick with it.”

“There’s a host of information I can share with you regarding nutrition, water intake, safety tips, and injury prevention. You might also consider running a half marathon or full marathon one day.”

“Let me get started with walking and we’ll see about the other.”

“I recommend that you contact Trevor. He will be happy to give you some tips. He can get you into a structured walk and run program that will guide you on how to build your endurance through progressively increased intensity. He’ll ensure you reach your fitness goals,” Suzanne said.

“It couldn’t hurt to get his name and telephone number,” Molly admitted.

“I can also give you the names of walk/run programs in the area that meet each week. They have coaches equipped to provide instruction on proper form and technique, injury prevention, resistance and flexibility. Best of all, you will receive valuable information on eating healthy, meal preparation, and sports nutrition.”

“It all sounds wonderful. Please write down the information,” Molly said, handing Suzanne a piece of paper.

“Meanwhile, I don’t mind sending you tips to help you along the way. My motto is... ‘The freedom to be fit without restriction’. I’ll also put the name of a running store on here... Luke’s Locker. It’s over off Mapleville Lane, not too far from Trevor’s fitness facility.”

“Thanks... I like that motto. I’d appreciate any information you send.”

“What sort of convention are you attending?” Suzanne asked.

“It’s a national Baptist convention.”

“What goes on there?”

“All sort of things. I’m overseer of the Sunday School and Baptist Training Union at my church, so I mainly attend for the

christian leadership seminars and workshops. The classes are designed to help church leaders and individuals take their ministry and relationship with God to the next level. The schedule of events will include teaching and preaching all day, drill team competitions, and a musical concert on one of the nights. It's pretty awesome!"

"It sounds awesome."

"Are you and your husband members of a church?"

"Yes... we attend Bethany Baptist Church."

"Are you active in ministry?"

"No. We're Sunday Service saints. We've thought about getting involved, but..."

"You should really consider doing so. There's a lot of work to be done in the church. Involvement in ministry is a great way to become fully connected to the church. You'll never get a sense of belonging if you're not involved with other believers... your church family. Also, it's a great way to use your gifts and talents to give back to the community. You never know, there might be a need for you to share your fitness tips."

"I'll see. Right now is not a good time."

"There's no time like the present."

"My life is so shaky right now. I've been dealing with sporadic medical concerns for the past few months."

"Sounds like you need to reach in and grab a hold of your spiritual life preserver," Molly said.

"Have you ever felt like the demons of your past were buried alive? And were just waiting to resurface," Suzanne asked.

"We all have the demons of our past lying in wait. It's up to us to keep them buried," Molly said, confused about the direction of conversation.

"I have a friend. She was involved with someone a few years ago. She ended the relationship because of her struggles with the type of lifestyle she was involved in. The person went away, but now they're back. She wants to be friends with the person, but she