

Christian Seymour  
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When I was asked to write this blog, I was very apprehensive as I'm not that confident of a person and to be honest, I guess I was a bit embarrassed about how I used to be. I used to weigh 127.5 Kilograms. The reason I have decided to tell my story is if can inspire another person dealing with weight issues, or an eating disorder than I'm happy to put myself out there.

From a very young age I loved sports and was really competitive. I remember playing rugby league and doing nippers as a 5 year old in Western Australia at the start of the 80's. I loved the beach lifestyle and the mateship that came with playing team sports. In the mid 80's we moved back to QLD to be closer to family and after year or two, I started putting on weight. It was really tough being the new kid and I started to get a complex and funny enough I would eat to compensate and make myself feel better. By the time I hit High school I was the fat kid. There was a brief period around mid-high school were I dropped weight and started playing footy again but this didn't last long, as I left school and started my apprenticeship, smoking, drinking and eating burgers, chips and soft drink. By the time I was 20 I weighed 108 KGs.

In the 90's, I was playing in punk bands around Brisbane and had started my own business, I felt good for the first time in a long time. However this didn't lead to a very consistent or healthy life style, (a lot of drinking and late nights), together with a diet that consisted of a couple of pies for breakfast, burger, chips, calamari, and chocolate for lunch, and takeaway for dinner, I was big on Butter chicken. I thought it was time that I did something about my weight and started yo yo dieting for next 8- 10 years, down 20kgs up 30kgs and so on.

Fast forward 10 years, I was juggling running my own business with 30 guys, still playing in bands, had baby on the way and was renovating houses, It would be safe to say that I was stressed out of my brain. On my way to work one morning I felt completely puffed and started getting shooting pains up my arms and down legs, I started freaking out about it and drove to the hospital. After a thousand tests they informed me that I had, had an anxiety attack brought on by stress, and that I should really look at losing some weight as I was now tipping the scales at 127.5 KG. I decided to look at lap band surgery as I had tried everything else and never seemed to keep it off. I went and had the surgery and lost the first 20 kgs quite easily, but then I plateaued out so I started filling the band with fluid until it was so tight that I couldn't eat at all without throwing up. So that's what I did, eat and be sick, eat and be sick, it was safe to say that I wasn't feeling real good and my doctor was telling me that I shouldn't take any more fluid but I would trick them when doing swallow tests so they would put more fluid in. Eventually I collapsed one my way home from the doctors one day as my stomach had constricted so much that I could barely get air in, I was found on the side of the road and ended up in hospital, lucky that I didn't die. (I had to have corrective surgery within the next couple of days). Around the same time, 1 year after our son was born my wife had started feeling out of breath, like she had asthma; she decided to go the doctors on the way home from work. They told her to go up to the RBH, as they didn't know what was causing the symptoms. Brooke thought it was asthma and the wait would be too long so she went to the Prince Charles instead, within hours she was in ICU and diagnosed with Cardiomyopathy. Within a couple of weeks she was told that to survive longer than the next 12 months she needed a heart transplant, I completely broke down and was diagnosed with anxiety and depression. Brooke's doctors were worried about my condition and the impact on Brooke; they suggested that I go see a psychologist to learn how to cope with what was going on. I don't know whether it was the psychologist or watching this brave woman cope day in day out, spending up to 3 month stints in hospital without ever complaining, but something inside of me changed and I knew from that moment that something had to give. I immediately sold my business took a non-stressful job and started living a life instead of constantly worrying about things. Brooke was just so inspirational, I felt like I had been the biggest whinger.

Over the next year the three of us spent so much time together, but never went further than 80kms from home in case the our buzzer went off and we had to get to the hospital quickly. These were some of the

most beautiful times of my life, along with the saddest. I don't what happened but we went up to the hospital one day after one of Brookes quarterly tests and they seemed really positive. They told us that 1 – 100,000 women with this form of heart disease caused by child birth recover enough to come off the transplant list and that Brooke was one of them. I don't think I have ever cried so much in my life. As you can guess we went on a holiday straight away, I just felt like we had been given a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance and there was no way I was going to waste it.

Over some beers that summer a couple of my friends joked that I should come down and play over 33 AFL with them. I loved the game but hadn't exercised for 20 odd years, but I just felt like Jim Carrey from that movie the "Yes Man ". Around the same time I was reading about Ocky and Geoff Huegill, the next day I got up and went for a run. I got about 200mtrs before I keeled over and had a chuck but for some reason I just kept getting up every day and tried to go further. After a few months I could run a couple of K's, so I decided to go to a personal trainer. I spent the next 4 weeks vomiting in his front garden but eventually got myself fit enough to plays old boys footy (you don't need to that fit to play old boys footy). I couldn't believe that I had achieved this, as strange as it seemed to my friends that had never been overweight and who had done some form of exercise throughout the last 20 years. It felt like I was ticking something new off my wished I could do list each weekend. I got out the back surfing, ran Mt Coo-tha and ran the Bridge to Brisbane.

I had always thought that Triathlon was a sport where you had to battle the mind along with your aerobic fitness and had always seemed so completely out of reach to me. A friend of mine told me that a mate of his was selling an old bike and that I should grab it because it was cheap. I bought it and sat in the garage for a couple of months before I got it serviced and went for a ride around South Bank. Around the same time I decided to go for a swim, bloody funny, I was flat out swimming 25 mtrs and this went on for weeks until some told me that if I got a pool buoy it would keep my fat bum from sinking. After a couple of months I could do 1500mtrs with the pool buoy and was chuffed with myself, so I jumped on the USM website to look for a tri I could do. It was there I discovered BTS and sent them a couple of emails enquiring about their beginner's course. Mark said that I should just come down and have a crack. Once again the "Yes Man" came out and after a couple weeks I built up the courage to go along to a beginner's cycle with Suz, I joined that afternoon, missed the run session and then went to the Brads swimming session and I thought I was going to die, stopping at each end panting. He asked to me "have you done most of your swimming with a pool buoy"? I laughed, that was the end of the pool buoy. The next session was transition at Suttons. I remember staring at the beach completely petrified, but the best thing about group training was the fact that there was no way I wasn't going to jump in. I prepared to do the course twice and was shattered when they said I had to do it a third time I was pretty much a carrot for the fast guys to run down. Over the next couple of months the sessions got a little easier to complete and I met a bunch of really supportive athletes of similar ability, it was really encouraging and supportive and fun.

I completed my firs triathlon, Robina Race 2 a couple of weeks ago. I remember going down the day before and staring at the swim course completely petrified, I started to laugh and though of Suttons a couple of months earlier. I got through the race and remember Mark saying to me just before my wave, it doesn't matter how bad you feel just make sure you pump your chest out over the finish line, I remember this very distinctly every time I passed my family and 200 metres out from the finish line, I hadn't felt a wave of emotion like it since my son was born, my whole body went into pins and needles and I felt amazing. After the race Mark came up to me and said "I heard you used to be a bit of a heavy weight, you should write a blog about how far you have come". I was pretty embarrassed and said that I thought I had a story but hadn't done anything yet to warrant telling it to anybody. It wasn't till I was going through some old photos the other day and saw photos from 3 or 4 years ago, I didn't even recognise myself, I put it beside a more recent photo ala biggest loser to see how far I'd come. Once I could physically see it, I thought maybe I did have a story worth telling.

Brooke is now living quite a healthy normal life, she takes about as much medication as your 90 year old grandmother, but it better than the alternative, she is working with a trainer that is helping her to build core strengths, which helps with strengthening the heart muscle, she also raises awareness of the Price Charles Hospital and Organ Donation Australia. I am her biggest fan.

