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Relatively Insignificant - The Power of Words

Friday, January 22, 2016

I'm blaming this blog on the blizzard. I have time to ponder and think deep thoughts.

Yesterday I was included on a group sparkmail regarding a request to interview women with a unique story and aha moment who fit certain other criteria. I'm too old to qualify by about 25 years so it certainly didn't affect me.

However, one phrase stood out and I found myself still thinking about it today so I'm writing about it.

The woman should have lost a "relatively significant" amount of weight, at least 35 pounds.

I've always felt somewhat self-conscious about being active on Spark since my weight loss was "only" 25 pounds. I think that's why I spent 3 years as a Spark Hermit until I found the team "At Goal and Maintaining + Transition to Maintenance" and that wonderful maintenance ticker. I love seeing that ticker when I login to my page each morning - 321 maintenance weeks. Yeah, that's motivation to keep going.

My 25 pounds is "relatively insignificant?" Only it's NOT.

I was extremely fit and very active - a runner who maintained an active gym membership since 1975. I drank only water and still I was dragging around 25 extra pounds.

The easy recommendations to lose weight? Move more and drink water?
I was already doing those.

My 'aha' moment had nothing to do with health or a desire for a slimmer body. At age 61 my running times were getting slower. I even blogged about that moment once, since I have a picture of it.

25 pounds was 16% of my body weight and it took almost one year to reach that point. I know that's not "biggest loser" material or anything that lands in a magazine, and I have no desire to be there anyway, but it's not insignificant. I am inspired by and admire those sparkers who have lost much more than I and have also faced difficult life challenges. They deserve to be celebrated.

As I said, this is just about the power of words. What is a "significant" amount of weight? It depends on where you're starting and what kind of frame you have.

As for that 'aha' moment - December 2008. The grimace on my face, in spite of winning my age group (and the turkey DD is carrying) says more than words.

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The genuine smile after finding SP and reaching goal - definitely significant!



Edit: After reading the comments so far I want to clarify that SP admin only passed on the request from an outside source who included the "relatively significant" requirement in their criteria.

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HWNHMMBRD

With reality shows on weight and weight loss all over the air waves, we are inundated with large numbers and people who need to loose 100+ pounds. I live in Hawaii and with such a diverse ethnic back ground, I can see what might be a significant loss for one person might just be the start of the road for another. Any loss is significant when it is what you are working for!
1963 days ago



HOLLYM48

I saw that email as well but didn't pay much attention to it and didn't even finish reading it. It is all relative when it comes to weight as you pointed out and the size of your frame. I think that 25 lbs is a great achievement and maintaining it after changing your lifestyle is also the biggest accomplishment.
Losing weight comes with that great feeling of seeing the scale number go down is very motivating, but what keeps us motivated once we lose the weight. That takes a significant source of willpower and determination. All weight loss and maintenance is awesome, no matter the amount that you lost!
You look fantastic and kudos to you for being to run in all of the races that you do!
1964 days ago



**SUBMOM2**

Thanks for posting this! I saw that email as well and it really irked me. I know they're trying to sell magazines, but why put a number on "significant"?

Kudos to you on all these years of maintenance. I'm someone still struggling mightily to lose 20 pounds, so I value your insight and experience.
1964 days ago

**SEAJESS**

response to the article shout out I can imagine!



Twenty-five pounds is an AWESOME achievement. Especially for a runner. I feel okay and even good but when I run, it's like carrying a bowling ball on my belly. I'm looking at losing about 20 pounds at this point and to me, that is significant and challenging.

There's a saying about not comparing your insides to someone else's outsides. It's about your own journey.

The comments on your blog are all wonderful. I appreciate what MJZHERE said about everyone needing encouragement. Thank you, everyone!



Let's celebrate each other and ourselves.

1964 days ago

**WILSONWR**

Your weight loss was very significant, and you lost it the "right" way!! (slow and steady)
1965 days ago

**PGBACK**

I love your before and after photos. You are a big inspiration to me. You encourage me because you are ten years older, and you are out there enjoying running. I did not have a lot of weight to lose, but it was a lot for me. Yesterday, I went to the Cardiologist, and I have lost 20 pounds since last January. I am so excited.

Have a great weekend.
1965 days ago

**TERI-RIFIC**

Let's take it to an extreme-who is going to buy the magazine with the headline, "I lost 5 pounds in a year." Unfortunately, most of what you read is written to sell magazines and not really to help people lose weight. I admit, when (originally) looking at SP teams, I glossed over the ones based on a small amount of weight needed to be lost and likewise did not feel a common bond with those people who had gone from 120 to 115 - woo Hoo. I was WRONG, of course. In a way you were right to feel that people with a lot of weight to lose might look askance at your weight loss -because I'm sure they do! Because they wouldn't be extremely overweight (like I was) if they understood the whole lifestyle thing. But, eventually people "get it" -or they leave. I don't want to restate the obvious truths of your blog. However, apropos of it, I have noticed lately that there are women -one in particular- who I have known since our kids were little, who have always been in great shape, who when I see them now, I realize that I am in better shape than they are. A couple of days ago, I saw a FB picture and thought, oh my gosh - she has a little pot belly! I think that is how you would be if you hadn't gotten serious when you did.
1965 days ago

**ONEKIDSMOM**


I don't remember how tall you are, but let's do the math: 25 pounds off a frame that starts out at 125, is 20% of your body weight. Even "the biggest loser" shows measure based on percentage of body weight, not raw pounds!

Even without the math, significance in terms of LIFE impact is very individual. Your 10 pounds may be just as big a hurdle to you as my 100 was to me. I discovered this basic truth "in the rooms" of a 12 step program. Interestingly, Susan Pierce Thompson (Bright Line Eating) addressed this in one of her video blogs... when someone asked if they shouldn't separate out those who had a LOT of weight to lose from those who were "only" trying to lose 20 pounds or less.

SPT in her vlog addressed that the number of pounds one needs to lose is not necessarily the best measure of the suffering one is going through!

So, m'dear... while you have only 1/4 of the "pounds lost" that I can claim, I consider you a Spark-friend and kindred spirit and a great role model. Because if you can catch it at 25 and correct it, you prevent a whole boatload of suffering! And when it comes to "competition" of "how much did you lose"... I pale in comparison to some... and I know that MY body would not have survived

weighing more than I did at my top. It's not that kind of completion! How much did you lose? I lost enough to get to a healthy body weight. And THAT is the significance!


Spark on!
1965 days ago



KRISZTA11

A 25 pound loss is a great meaningful achievement, especially if maintained successfully long term.



Maybe they want to target a group of younger people with more extra weigh. If someone has to loose 100+ pounds, they may be inspired more with a huge weight loss.

I laughed when I read that SparkMaill addressed to At Goal and Maintaining + Transitioning to Maintenance...

We have many successful maintainers, but just like you and me too, many of us are 45+. I believe age and wisdom is a major success factor in weight loss.

So left it without response. Maybe we too will be featured one day :)
1965 days ago

v



MEADS BAY

Well, whoever put that significant label on 35 lbs or more is just plain ignorant...not to mention insensitive.

One thing I like about sparkpeople is that MOST sparkpeeps are sensitive about and appreciative of other folks' journeys, no matter the numbers involved.

Apparently, SP admin needs to take their cues from the members!

I thought it was funny that you were not insulted at all at the age requirement.

I guess I would look at it like being a subject of a study...they get to choose who may participate based on their criteria.

You are an amazing woman and I applaud your success.



1965 days ago

v



PRNCSCUP1-2FULL

Those words caught my attention in that message too! Fabulous & significant blog! Thank you for it! And, congratulations!!!

1965 days ago

v



PHOENIX1949



1965 days ago

v



LIVEDAILY

Everyone is different. Your weight loss and successful maintenance are remarkable achievements, and are in no way insignificant!! You done did good!!



1965 days ago

v



MILLEDGE2

I will not be shy about saying you and your blog are a constant inspiration for me! You are an active woman in my general age group and I'm here to testify that maintaining a 25 pound weight loss is no small feat! Your blogs preach healthy living and common sense and I look forward to



your posts, believe me.
1965 days ago

v



MARINGAL

Just curious, where would I find the maintenance ticker? I did not know this site had one. I have lost 50lbs and have been on maintenance since July 2015.

1965 days ago

v



WATERMELLEN

Loved this blog and so agree with you: there is NOTHING at all insignificant about losing the weight YOU needed to lose and MAINTAINING it.

You glow with health and vitality.

You have presence!!

(And: thanks for your comment today on the Presence 4 blog -- I wasn't able to link to the troublesome thread on AGAM: TM . . .)

v

Actually I was -- very interesting topic, the "hopelessless" of maintenance . . . and nope, I don't think it's that bad!!!!

1965 days ago

Comment edited on: 1/22/2016 6:22:34 PM



MJZHERE



Yes it is significant! 10 lbs, 100 lbs, it is still a struggle and that is why I look for those (quite a few lately) with no friends to become friends with. Every one needs support and encouragement - and I appreciate all those here who have supported me. All are included and we can learn from each other no matter what the number.

1965 days ago



WUMPASTAR



Thank you for this. I feel like the weight loss industry is always focusing on the extremes, because of course it's more sensational. Not saying those people aren't impressive - they sure are. But to me, someone who managed to lose 100 pounds is as courageous and impressive as someone who lost 15, and whoever manages to maintain their healthy weight longer is more impressive (321 weeks?! WOW!). It sure ain't easy to lose weight, but it's also very difficult to keep it off.

1965 days ago



SYLPHINPROGRESS



You bet "significant." Your 25 lbs is as significant as Betty Boop's 78 lbs. and Elmer Fudd's 137.

1965 days ago



SLENDERELLA61



Of course it is significant Well done You were just doing lots of things right a lot sooner than many of us. Now I think 5 pounds is significant.

1965 days ago



MAYIE53



I could totally relate to your blog. When I started this journey I weighed 146 and today after, I don't know, perhaps 2-3 years, I weigh 125lbs. That total loss of 21 pounds was significant enough for me. After all, I did not start out at 200 or more pounds (thankfully) nor did I desire to lose much more than I have lost thus far. Some days my Spark Page says I've lost 70 lbs (because it calculates pounds into Kg or whatever and I don't know how to fix it). That's when I get friend requests wanting to know how I lost that considerable amount of weight. Ha ha. I've likely been in maintenance for months but have yet to reach my initial goal weight (which I think was unrealistic in the first place). I'm the first to admit I am not computer literate and usually rely on my daughter to fix these things which she is sometimes reluctant to do. What am I trying to say? I know I'm rambling. So here goes . . . I think you look fantastic in the above photo. I admire you for losing those 25 lbs and managing to keep them off for 321 weeks and counting. To me, that is SIGNIFICANT. "It all depends on where you start and what kind of frame you have." Keep up the GREAT work!

1965 days ago



COOP9002



Awesome job on your weight loss. 25 pounds is an amazing goal.

1965 days ago

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