



Introduction

I'll never forget the day I was sitting on the sofa in my family room when my youngest daughter, who was five at the time, came bounding into the room with so much love and affection to give. Wrapping her arms around me, she made a discovery, which she felt obligated to share. "Mommy, your body is jiggly like mud pies." Can you imagine? Why couldn't my little precious lie to me? If she felt like telling the truth that day I would have much preferred that she confess one of her five-year-old sins, but her honesty regarding my icky jiggles I could easily do without. Hopefully, you've not been referred to as a "mud pie" but if you're a mother (an aunt, or even a woman) there's a good chance that you've received an unsolicited observation or two from a well-meaning child (or even an ignorant man). Sometimes, it's these innocent statements out of the mouths of babes that cause us to make some very positive changes in our lives. Then again, if you're past the age of 40, it's quite possible that you've discovered for yourself that your body is changing, and you didn't even need anyone's help to figure it out.

Without a doubt I've had my fair share of middle age realities launched my way. You see, last year I was fortunate enough to have all three of my children celebrate graduations. My firstborn graduated from college, my second child graduated from high school and my youngest

graduated from kindergarten. Along with these memorable and proud moments came the snapped photos, which included me, the smiling mother. Smiling, that is, until I saw the developed pictures. Somehow my grandma's arms appeared in these pictures – but they were on my body. How did this happen? Surely, someone was playing a nasty little joke on me. Well, probably not because, you see, the reality of the extra flab on my body was soon undeniable as a result of a what should have been a fabulous ride out in the country on the back of my husband's motorcycle. It started out so beautiful, enjoying the warm sunshine upon my face and anticipating a lovely afternoon and then he did it. My husband had the nerve to stop at a red light and let the vibration of the bike start shaking my fat around like a tub-full of jelly during an earthquake. At that point it was time to admit it – I had “back-fat” – yes, that's right, I said two of the most dreaded words known to women: “BACK-FAT.”

The harsh reality is that as we women age, our hormones cause changes to come about within our bodies and, as a result we begin to notice that we've gained some weight, added a few wrinkles to our face, developed a gray hair or two, etc. You mean we've finally gotten to the point of being mature and self-confident, and now we're going to become old and tired and gray and fat, too? Not necessarily. Once these changes started taking place in my own body, I became determined to do whatever I needed to become much more fit than I was. Not necessarily perfect, but definitely better.

Now keep in mind, I'm just the typical mom next door, which means I don't have a multitude of resources to make getting fit any easier for me than it is for you. Sure, if I had a nanny I could exercise three or four hours a day; but then I've got this little obstacle in my way, which I refer to as a "job." For me, going to work is a necessity, so paying a visit to the plastic surgeon for liposuction to erase all the extra fat I've accumulated in recent years is not an option. All of this meant that if I wanted to be in my forties and fit I needed to do so naturally, and that's exactly what I've done. I was (and remain) determined to slow down that part of the aging process that causes weight gain.

When I started on my journey to become fit, I definitely went about it the wrong way. Silly naive me thought I could be one of those lucky women who wouldn't need exercise, those whom likely don't even exist. I had the crazy notion that perhaps I could stick to a low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet to regain a youthful figure, because if I could just keep my weight down, that would be enough to get me where I wanted to be, right? Wrong. This simply didn't work for me and before long it was obvious that the extra fat on my body was going nowhere.

It was then that I realized it was probably time to start exercising. This epiphany took me to a national chain of gyms for women, whereby circuit training is used. This consisted of standing in place for thirty seconds doing cardio, then moving to the next station and performing exercises that include weight resistance. I really didn't notice too much of

a change, so I decided to attend this gym twice a day, doubling my exercise time to an hour each day, approximately five days per week. Management at the gym then told me that this is not allowed. What? I was paying nearly thirty dollars each month, and they're going to tell me that I can't use the gym as often as I'd like? I'm mature and self-confident (and old and tired and fat and...). They're not telling me what to do!

Needless to say, I started looking into other options, when I found a co-ed gym in my neighborhood with all the standard equipment; treadmills, stationery bikes, elliptical machines, weight resistance machines and free weights. That was all I needed to begin a regular and effective exercise routine. Once I started working out I noticed that the weight (or at least inches) was coming off and I couldn't believe my eyes. I wasn't even monitoring what I ate and was still getting thin, fit and toned. I really didn't think it was a reality for an everyday mom to be able to achieve what I was seeing in the mirror, especially because I was investing so little time and effort. There was still, however, one challenge: I continued to notice a significant amount of fat around my abdomen. As a result, I did much research and discovered how my body works and why there have been so many changes (albeit gradual) over the past few years. What I learned is that the fat I'd gained around my abdomen is a perfectly normal symptom in women approaching menopause.

Not to worry, though; as with all of the challenges I've encountered as I began my journey through menopause, I discovered how

by just making a few simple changes I could also tackle the stubborn fat that didn't seem to want to remove itself from my mid-section. Just making those few simple changes has enabled me, an ordinary everyday woman, to feel and look great past the age of forty. Please remember the key words in the previous sentence – “a few simple changes”, because that's really all it took and if I can do it, so can you, which is why I absolutely needed to share so much important information with you. My enthusiasm has gotten the best of me and I really do believe it's necessary to get the word out and let women know that there are preventative measures that can be taken and you can benefit so very much by making those few almost-effortless alternations.

I am determined to make you believe in yourself and understand that you really can feel beautiful and confident during these years about which we've heard nothing but horror stories. I also want you to experience the physical and emotional well being I've gained through making some lifestyle changes that have been so much easier than I could have ever anticipated. I know you've heard it all before, but I'm here to tell you that it's absolutely amazing how much I didn't know about the changes occurring in my body. It also surprises me that more professionals in the fitness industry aren't taking the time to educate women in their thirties, forties and beyond so that we understand that there are measures we can take to regain a youthful and toned figure without spending all of our time at a gym – attaining goals we thought

were impossible at our age. Once you see the changes brought on by a regular exercise regimen you'll notice positive changes in other areas, as well. You will have more energy, your skin will look healthier and more youthful and obviously, your overall attitude will be much improved.

Go ahead and get started, because you will no doubt experience a very positive and unexpected transformation, which will occur as a result of just a little determination on your part. My own transformation has taken place and now instead of being mature and self-confident (and old and tired and gray and fat), I'm mature and self-confident and healthy and fit and feeling oh-so-beautiful. If you just keep at it you can too! Read on, my friend, and enjoy the next phase of your very fit and fun life.



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