

Twenty Questions with PAM!



Each Tuesday we feature a different success story from the Trading Cardio for Cosmos community in a new segment called **?Twenty Questions With??** Young, young at heart, marathon runners and those who can't exercise at all, vegetarians, pescatarians, working mommas, work-from-home professionals and retirees. We're going to showcase them all, because when you read about someone like you succeeding, I think it gives you the confidence that you too can succeed!

This week I want to introduce you to Pam! Pam has lost more than 50 lbs since she turned 45 years old, and she's kept it off for more than 3 years! Pam's a big fan of eggs, meal prep and red wine (so you know she's my kindred spirit in Chicago), and you're going to totally love the variety in her menus! It's awesome!

The Questions:

1. Give us the basics about you ? your first name, age, region you live in, etc.

I'm Pam! I'm 48 yrs old and live in Des Plaines, IL with my cat.

2. When did you start your weight-loss journey? What was the "tipping point" that made you start?



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I started my weight loss journey in January of 2013. I had turned 45 the previous October and had an 'OMG-what-the-heck-happened-to-my-metabolism?' daily event beginning at my birthday. I chalked it up to getting 'old and fat?' but was seriously unhappy with what was happening to my body. We took pictures at New Years and I was super unhappy with how I looked. YUCK! I decided I couldn't do anything about the older thing (It beats the alternative!), but thought I should at least try doing something about the weight. I had friends of friends who had success on Weight Watchers, so I looked into it, asked lots of questions and began to track my intake, portion sizes and points with a free app. I saw success pretty quickly and then saw the official WeightWatchers app in person and signed up immediately. I loved the barcode scanner and database of foods and restaurants!

3. What is one piece of advice you wish you had known when you started out?

I wish I hadn't waited so long! Tracking portions and really paying attention to what you consume is actually easier than I thought it would be. I wish I had taken control of the situation much earlier!

4. How much weight have you lost? If you are done losing, and are on to maintaining? How long have you been maintaining your loss?

I lost 40 lbs during 2013 (Jan through Oct). I took my mom on a once in a lifetime 2 week trip to Japan at the end of October 2013 and managed to eat rice and noodles but maintain my weight. We did a ton of walking everyday and I hit the gym as often as I could.. I realized at that point that I knew how to balance portion control, the right foods to eat and exercise. As soon as I returned from my trip I relocated from southern California to Chicago for a promotion. In 2014 and 2015 I lost another 5-8 pounds on my own. I think in ?points? and am very careful with meal planning and portion control. I still pretty much followed the PointsPlus system but stopped tracking officially in Nov 2013. I've managed to survive many holidays and a trip to Italy without more than a few pound swing. I know how to offset additional food/treats with exercise and have learned that balance.I re-joined WW in December 2015 to check out the SmartPoints program. I refer people to WW all the time and wanted to see what the new program was all about and how it compared. I've lost another 4 pounds and have a goal of 2 more.



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5. How do you keep your motivation up?

I'm just ?a little? OCD about my fitbit, exercise and food. (My friends are laughing at that comment right now.) Once I get into a good routine, I make it permanent. I love feeling healthy and energetic. I also find that I stay healthier overall by getting enough sleep and eating right. In order to wake up and work out each morning, I go to sleep early most nights ? I prioritize sleep, exercise and food!

6. How do you handle cravings?

If I have a craving I figure my body is telling me something. Sometimes I have a small portion of whatever I'm craving (a slice of cake vs the whole cake), sometimes I can trick my body into something similar. The one thing I really love about WW is that you can make your own decisions about what to eat and negotiate with yourself and the rest of your day/week.

7. What are your top three tips for success?

- 1. Meal prep:** To me, the most important thing is to plan ahead. I do my food prep on the weekends and take my lunch and snacks to work with me so that I control my input. My meals typically revolve around mass quantities of veggies, so I decide what form/type of veggies will be my staples for the week, do my shopping and work on many meals at the same time on Sunday afternoon/night. I also love to make HUGE pots of soup (I have a 12 quart soup pot). I like to share soup with neighbors and I always freeze some so that just in case I'm busy on a weekend, I can take soup out of the freezer and still have lunch to take.
- 2. Calculate BEFORE consuming:** If I'm shopping, eating out or traveling, I calculate all possible food points BEFORE I decide what to buy or eat, so that I am making good choices. (By the way, I lost my weight while traveling for work 90% of the time and living out of hotel rooms. So don't let that be an excuse!)
- 3. I exercise FIRST before anything else.** For me, I know once I am up and showered I won't get to it, so I plan all my days around my workout and do that first. If I have somewhere to be on the weekends, I calculate backwards to figure out when I need to wake up and do my run. If I'm running 6 miles or longer, I wake up and eat something and set the timer for an hour so I can digest. I do some housecleaning chores for that hour and then hit the trail or treadmill. (I know some people can workout later in the day ? that doesn't work for me. My advice is to figure out what works for you ? then do it!)

8. Do you exercise? If so, how often, for how long and what type of exercises do you do?

My workout of choice is running! (My first piece of furniture in Chicago was a treadmill!) I also have my own spin bike in case I need to break up the routine. Finally, I joined the gym in my office building and I break up my day by going downstairs for 30 minutes of strength training 2-3 times a week. Once we defrosted in Chicago in spring of 2014, I discovered wonderful wooded trails right by my house. I trained for my first half-marathon in the summer of 2014, completed it in October 2014 and completed another 3 half marathons, 2 15k races, a 10k race and a Warrior Dash in 2015. I also walk 2 blocks to the train and take the train downtown to my office Also, I never purchased a car out here. So when the weather is nice I walk or bike everywhere. (I call it a ?European? lifestyle.) Since I am obsessed with my fitbit and have to hit my 10,000 steps a day, I now run 6 mornings a week - 3-3.5 miles 4 mornings a week on the treadmill, outside on the weekends 6 or 9 miles (or longer if I'm in training) ? As long as it's over 30 degrees outside and not treacherous. Or 6 miles each day on the treadmill on cold/snowy weekend days. For my one ?break' day I walk on the treadmill for 2 miles to get in my steps!

9. What is your favorite breakfast?

EGGS! I LOVE eggs. Poached egg on toast is my absolute fave breakfast. Sometimes I switch out the poached egg with egg whites on toast with a schmear of hummus. On the weekends I'll have an egg with veggies ? poached or scrambled ? I like to mix one regular egg and egg whites for added protein and food!

10. What is your go-to lunch?

Roasted veggies ? sometimes with tuna or chicken, or veggie soup? or a little of both! If I'm at my office I always bring my lunch.

11. What does a typical week night dinner look like? What about a weekend dinner?

Week night dinners ? whatever I have prepped for the week - Roasted veggies, shredded cauliflower/broccoli (for fritters, fried rice or pizza crust) spaghetti squash, butternut squash (sqoodles ? new fave), or veggie soup or veggie chili. I usually prep at least 2 of those for lunches and dinners. Often I roast 2 trays of veggies, make soup and shred my cauliflower/broccoli on Sundays. I eat some combination of soup and veggies Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday lunch and Weds night I'll whip up something with my other prepped food - cauliflower fritters or pizza crust, etc. Sometimes I sqoodle or zoodle after dinner one night and cook them up the following night. On Thursday and Friday I will eat the old and new

leftovers. To switch things up I may use a flat round bread for a mini pizza in the toaster oven, make a quesadilla with light laughing cow cheese spread/spinach/tomatoes, cut up tomatoes with sea salt/pepper/balsamic (fresh basil is also great in the summer!), or have cut veggies with some hummus. (I'm madly in love with my veggie spiralizer!)



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Weekend dinners ? I will sometimes eat out on Friday or Saturday - sushi, Thai or Italian are my favorites. I make good choices, but I also give myself some leeway because I know I will get in many extra miles on Saturday and Sunday. I'm also pretty good at ?use what you got? meals ? take whatever I have left for the week and figure out a meal with it so I'm not wasting food. Sundays are usually meal prep days for the week. I take inventory of what is left before I go to the grocery store and figure out my next set of meals.

12. What kind of snacks do you like?

I pack a cut apple everyday (I know I tend to not eat the apple if it's not in slices), grapes or an orange, and mixed berries (sometimes with kiwi or pineapple) to mix in with a nonfat greek yogurt and a scoop of nonfat cottage cheese. Lately I've also discovered protein bars and they seem to keep me full for a long time between breakfast and lunch.

I also make these little no bake energy balls (dates, flaxseed, oats, fiberone bran cereal, mini chocolate chips, vanilla and half a banana ? mix in food processor). I love the little bit of sweet for a treat in the afternoon or evening!

13. What kind of desserts do you eat?

I just bought a Yonanas! OMG - I LOVE IT!!! That is my new dessert of choice! I try to have a frozen banana in the freezer at all times. I'll mix a banana and some berries and make a delish yonanas treat ? maybe throw some mini chocolate chips on top or light whipped cream. I also usually have some dark chocolate on hand ? ya know, just in case. :P

14. What kind of adult beverages do you enjoy?

I love red wine! I implemented a ?no wine on school nights? rule. (Granted, it's not a super strict rule and is easily broken for ?special? occasions!) In general I just try to save it for the weekends. 2-3 glasses on Friday and Saturday nights. Over the holidays I was off for almost 2 weeks and I had wine probably everyday ? but I also did longer runs everyday and made up for it.

15. What is your favorite meal to eat in a restaurant?

SUSHI ?I love sushi rolls! I will go with some miso soup, a salad with dressing on the side and one delicious sushi roll. Eating out is better with more people so I can have a few different kinds of rolls.

16. Do you have a favorite fast food/casual dining meal?

I don't really eat fast food. If I am out and starved and need something I will go for a grilled chicken sandwich without sauce/mayo, or a salad with grilled chicken. I ALWAYS have my water bottle with me and I try to always have a healthy snack with me wherever I go. If I leave the house for any length of time without snacks I find myself immediately starving. :P

17. Do you have a favorite weight loss blog/website/FB group that you visit for inspiration?

[Trading Cardio for Cosmos](#) blog is AWESOME!!! I also love [WeightWatchers](#) and Hungrygirl!]

18. Do you have a favorite website for healthy recipes?

[Hungrygirl](#) has great healthy food/recipe swaps. Also [Skinnytaste](#). I am creative in the kitchen and love to cook, so for me recipes are more of an inspiration than something to follow. I sometimes follow a recipe the first time and then make it my own.]

19. Do you have a favorite quote, meme or thought that keeps you motivated?

Don't reinvent the wheel! You don't need to come up with your own program ? there are programs that work already ? adopt one that suits how you are wired and keep at it!

20. What's one final thought you can share with someone who's interested in losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight?

If you aren't the best you right now, take a deep breath and decide to make a change. No one is going to do it for you ? it's up to you.

Pam, thank you so much for sharing your journey with us! Have questions for Pam? Share them in the comments below!