A Feminist analysis of discursive practices in 'success stories' in Australian weight loss centres

Brittany Johnson

308149203

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education and Social Work (Arts and Social Sciences)

The University of Sydney
Statement of originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Name: Brittany Johnson
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Abbreviations

12 Week Body Transformation: 12 WBT
American Medical Association: AMA(a)
Australian Medical Association: AMA(b)
Australian Bureau of Statistics: ABS
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: AIHW
Body Mass Index: BMI
Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: FCDA
General Practitioner: GP
National Health Priority Area: NPHA
The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention: CDC
World Health Organisation: WHO
Abstract

Obesity is often viewed as a lifestyle choice for which the individual is blamed for this excess weight. This individualistic, dichotomous and behavioural perspective only allows for a narrow understanding of weight, which may lead to misperceptions, stereotypes and the marginalisation of obese or overweight individuals. The context in which weight is represented may also have a strong impact on the development of certain ideals and beliefs regarding legitimate bodies and this can also be framed by gender. This thesis, therefore, seeks to explore discourses of weight and gender, and the bodies that are produced within weight loss centre success stories. The key research questions underlying this thesis include:

1. What discourses of weight and gender are produced in the success stories of three Australian weight loss centres and, with what effect, for how participants and populations more widely are to understand their bodies?

The three secondary research questions underlying this thesis are:

(a): How do the success stories of Australian weight loss centres construct discourses of weight for adults?

(b): What types of bodies are produced in the success stories of Australian weight loss centres?

(c): How are these bodies gendered?
The current study employed Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to critically analyse one hundred and eight (n=108) weight loss centre success stories from three Australian weight loss centres made available to the public on their website on Thursday 20\textsuperscript{th} August, 2015. These three weight loss centres were: Weight Watchers, Lite n’ Easy and Michelle Bridges 12 Week Body Transformation (12 WBT). The findings suggest that there was a complex and dynamic relationship between weight, gender and constructions of certain bodies. Within these success stories, these weight-related and gendered discourses came to be enacted and produced on and through the bodies presented. Bodies came to represent the ‘good mother’, ‘good father’ or ‘good person’ interchangeably, whilst notions of the performance of ‘doing gender’ and the ‘abject body’ through specific dieting practices were also highlighted. Other findings suggest the appropriation of biomedical, psychological or gendered discourses were employed to help justify approaches to weight loss. The main implications of this study centres on how the exploration of weight, body and gendered discourses within weight loss centre success stories can help to make visible how texts contribute to or challenge notions of femininity and masculinity within this context.
Chapter one: Introduction

Research in recent years has been dominated by a biomedical and scientific discourse that declares an obesity epidemic (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2000) and a global health catastrophe (Robinson, 2009), with various resulting medical conditions: diabetes mellitus, heart disease, hypertension (Flegal, Carroll, Ogden & Johnson, 2002), osteoarthritis and obesity-related cancers (Dixon, 2010). Nations, including Australia have increased their clinical and scientific intervention and treatment at a local, state, national and global level (WHO, 2000), to treat individuals who have been medically classified as overweight and obese. This has resulted in Australia adding obesity as a Health Priority Area in 2008 due to its contribution to disease and illness within Australia (McNaughton, 2014; Fleming & Parker, 2015).

There is also research into weight that does not stem from a biomedical perspective. Instead, this research provides a more socio-cultural analysis on weight, and strongly critiques the biomedical construction of weight. This current research moves beyond simply accepting obesity as a biomedical process resulting from a surplus of calorie intake over calorie expenditure (You & Henneberg, 2016). Instead, it is interested in exploring how weight is socially and culturally constructed and experienced (Evans, Rich, Davies & Allwood, 2008).

By expanding the boundaries on conventional understandings of weight and health and moving past primarily constructing obesity as a biomedical health issue, the researcher believes there may be a real potential for weight and related issues to become more comprehensively understood. Subjects do not live in isolation within their social settings. Hence, to acquire knowledge of the world, focus should not remain purely on the subject. Instead, sociocultural researchers should conduct investigations on a larger, more meaningful
level: that of the societal level. This will allow for an extensive examination of the discursive practices, the social forces, the existence of power relations and the social institutions that act to construct, define, control, regulate and discipline subjects. In addition, this examination may apply a greater focus on the discursive constructions and ideals that become attached to weight, gendered bodies, health, disease and illness.

This study hopes to contribute to the critical and discursive discussion around weight, power relations and gender, within the specific context of weight loss centres. Weight loss centres have had a relatively light focus within existing weight loss and dieting literature, especially from a feminist perspective. There have however, been a small number of studies that do explore weight loss centres. For example, Stinson (2001) conducted a study on weight loss centres, whereby she entered a weight loss centre as both a feminist researcher and a dieter, exploring female dieting processes within this weight loss centre. Similarly, Burke, Swigart, Turk, Derro and Ewing (2009) conducted interviews with males and females who had recently joined a weight loss centre. Burke et al (2009) explored the processes of monitoring and disciplining these individuals engaged in during their time at the weight loss centre. Similar to these studies mentioned, the researcher is also hoping to shed light on the discursive processes that occur within weight loss centres, by looking at weight and gender related discursive processes from success stories provided to the public by three Australian weight loss centres. These success stories provide detail about individuals who have joined the weight loss centre and offer insight into their successful journey of weight loss and dieting. Their stories shed light on how weight, bodies, gender and power relations shape dieting processes, and how weight loss centres represent the transformative nature of the dieting process. This is significant because it explores how these weight loss centre success stories function as key techniques within operations of dieting and weight loss. As such, the key aim
of this thesis is to explore the various discourses of weight and gender within the success stories of Australian weight loss centres.

By exploring weight and gender in Australian weight loss centres, it is hoped that researchers can begin to learn and more thoroughly understand how discourses of weight can influence how individuals adopt certain subject positions within discourses of health and illness, and how males and females come to understand weight and bodies. As with other social arenas, it may become evident that weight loss centres function as key sites where discourses of weight and dieting are produced. That these centres contain complex and multifaceted discourses relating to health, weight, disease and illness, as well as to gender and identity. Perhaps examination into the success stories that these weight loss centres produce, can allow for an exploration into the ideological and discursive relationships between weight, gender and the production of certain types of bodies. As a site designed to encourage dieting and weight loss, these centres may contribute to a discursive interplay whereby dieting, gendered bodies and power relations interact within wider discourses of health, illness and disease. This study is making a significant contribution to the area of weight and bodies, because the discourses of weight and gender that may emerge from the success stories can perhaps provide real insight into the way that individuals experience and practice weight loss and dieting. In addition, it can also provide insight into how weight loss centres may contribute to or challenge dominant biomedical constructions of weight-related processes. Do these weight loss centres play into the hegemonic discourse that excess weight is primarily a biomedical issue? It is hoped that this study can shed some light onto how the role that these weight loss centres play in the construction of societal views and attitudes about excess weight, weight loss and dieting. There is a proliferation of socially constructed discursive ideals throughout society about weight loss, dieting, health and illness, with common
examples such as reality television, weight loss programs, weight loss products or social media. This study seeks to explore the various discursive meanings that become attached to weight and gendered bodies in weight loss centres, and perhaps examination into these centres (and the stories they produce) can provide insight into the role they play in constructing (and contributing) to understandings of weight, fatness and excess weight on bodies. Therefore, this current study is necessary because it can offer insight into how weight and related concepts are defined, constructed and understood within the weight loss centre success stories.

One particular piece of research that has had a major impact on and informed this current research was a study conducted by Jarvis in 2009. Through the methodology of textual analysis, she explored the weight loss success stories that were published in various United Kingdom 'Slimming World' magazines. Jarvis' (2009) study is instrumental because it shows that the magazine success stories are not merely representations of an individual's reality. They have been strategically developed to transmit calculated and premeditated messages to society and to the intended audience. This takes place through the framing and constructing of weight as not simply a biomedical issue, but as a discourse saturated by and tied up within ideals of “social inequality (class, gender, generational and racial bias) [and] political expediency and organisational and economic interests” (Monaghan, 2005, p. 309). To explore and focus on the social and cultural inequalities and dominant organisational interests within society, the methodology employed for the current study comes from a feminist standpoint: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). FCDA has been used to explore injustice and inequality (Lazar, 2017), by focusing on language and discourse (Baker, 2014). It is appropriate to employ such an approach for this current study, as it offers a chance to explore the social inequalities and organisational interests that may be contained within weight loss centres, and how these weight loss centres perhaps reinforce or challenge certain social inequalities.
(specifically gender) through text and images, and through the language that is used or not used within the success stories. This language use is significant, as it can provide insight into how individuals construct their world, interact with other individuals (Baker, 2014) and create knowledge and understanding of themselves and other bodies. What this language use can also provide insight on is how society has come to construct, talk about and define the fat body as something in need of regulation and control. The slender body has become normalised; hence the fat body has come to signify an individual out of control, and therefore as someone who needs to be regulated and disciplined (Gerdin, 2017). Exploring the language that is used or not used in these success stories can help individuals examine what social meanings or attitudes become attached to fatness and excess weight and therefore how bodies with this excess weight on them are also defined and regulated in society.

The implications from Jarvis’ (2009) study centres around understanding that the discursive meanings derived from the success stories can have material effects. They can influence how individuals come to understand themselves and other social bodies, as well as the meanings that are placed on certain bodies. Exploring these discursive meanings is also about encouraging individuals to critique the messages around weight and health that are circulated throughout society. There is already extensive literature in the field of weight and weight loss, and extensive research on bodies, gender and weight (e.g. Gard & Wright, 2005; Gard, 2011; Evans et al, 2008; Wright & Harwood, 2009; Lupton, 2013). This critical obesity literature situates weight within discourses of power and risk and seeks to deconstruct and critique the medicalisation of obesity (McPhail, 2017). This thesis intends to explore body and weight discourses in the specific field of weight loss centres which have had a seemingly light focus in previous literature. This thesis, therefore, builds on Jarvis’ (2009) study by exploring weight loss success stories produced by Australian weight loss centres. More importantly, this
current research aims to critique the ways in which weight loss centre success stories create very particular views regarding gender and dieting, and how these stories shape ways of understanding what success means in the dieting field. The researcher aims to contribute knowledge and understanding around discourses of weight, bodies and gender in this unique context. In applying the methodology of FCDA to achieve such an aim, this thesis offers a different way to examine and understand bodies, weight, and obesity beyond that of a biomedical health condition. This thesis applies a feminist perspective to acknowledge and understand how weight and the 'obese' label placed on individual bodies can function as social repositories that expose discursive understandings and representations of gender, identity, the body, morality and governance of the self. By exploring these understandings and representations, it is hoped that the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the particular ways that the weight loss centre success stories both construct and produce discourses of weight and gender, and how these stories contribute to understandings of the fat body.

The focus on the body as a vehicle of discourse is powerful because it can contribute to a greater theoretical understanding of the various processes that are involved in the discursive construction of weight and gendered bodies. FCDA encourages individuals to not simply accept the dominant medical understandings of health conditions as the sole ‘truth’ about bodies. Instead, it encourages the exploration of the multifarious interpretations and truths surrounding bodies and weight (Draper & Jones-Devitt, 2007; Gavey; 2011) by examining the gendered language in any one text (Rogers, 2011; Lazar, 2014) that is seen to maintain and uphold a gendered social ordering and arrangement (Lazar, 2005; Lazar, 2014). FCDA opens up an arena whereby language can be critically examined in terms of both the linguistic messages contained within systems of meaning around a particular concept or social issue (Kramer, 2007). In the present study, this concept is weight and bodies, with the study
providing a means to examine how success stories of Australian weight loss centres shape how gendered bodies are negotiated, disputed or contested (Lazar, 2005). The main research question underlying this thesis is concerned with exploring the discourses of weight, bodies, and gender:

1. What discourses of weight and gender are produced in the success stories of three Australian weight loss centres and, with what effect, for how participants and populations more widely are to understand their bodies?

In addition, the three secondary research questions are:

(a) How do the success stories of Australian weight loss centres construct discourses of weight for adults?

(b): What types of bodies are produced in the success stories of Australian weight loss centres?

(c): How are these bodies gendered?

Research question one is interested in exploring what discourses of weight and gender may be constructed within the weight loss centre success stories, which will be achieved through applying the methodology of FCDA. Research question 1(a) explores how the success stories construct discourses of weight in these weight loss centres. This question will explore certain features of the weight loss centres, such as the language used or not used in the success stories, or the use of certain images in the stories, and how these types of features may contribute to the construction of certain weight-related discourses for adults. Question 1(b) explores the types of bodies that are produced by the weight loss centres. It may become evident that these weight loss centres are powerful in constructing certain types of bodies, such as the ‘fat’ body or the gendered body in these stories. Examination into these types of
bodies can provide insight into the ideals that individuals have around certain bodies and how society understands and talks about these bodies. Lastly, question 1(c) looks at how the bodies that are produced in the weight loss centres become gendered.

The thesis is structured in the following way:

**Chapter one** introduces the problem of weight, explores the significance, rationale and the purpose of the study and states the research questions.

**Chapter two** consists of the literature review, which analyses and evaluates existing literature surrounding weight. It begins by introducing the concept of obesity and discussing the existing literature on obesity including its origins. This is followed by an examination of the various contemporary understandings and conceptualisations of weight, from both a biomedical and socio-cultural perspective. Firstly, biomedical discourses of weight will be explored: the use of BMI and waist circumference to measure obesity, and obesity as a disease. Secondly, socio-cultural and political constructs of weight are explored: weight and obesity as a ‘moral panic’, a neoliberal view of weight and weight, and ‘risk society’. Understanding discourses of weight follows and then the literature review chapter concludes with an analysis of existing literature on weight loss centres in Australia to justify the need for this current study.

**Chapter three** provides detail about the theoretical framework that underlines and guides this current study. It begins by exploring of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to then explore FCDA as the underlying framework for this study. Gendered body performances is then looked at. In addition to FCDA, the researcher is also employing the use of Michel Foucault. These two theoretical approaches have been brought together to guide the analysis. Foucault, and the application of his work to this study is then explored in this chapter.
Chapter four outlines the methodology. It begins by exploring the method of purposive sampling and how this method was employed to select the three Australian weight loss centres that the success stories would be collected from. Detail is then provided about the scope of success stories made accessible to the public on the weight loss centre websites on 20th August, 2015, and the processes of data collection and data analysis of the collected success stories. Finally, this chapter explores the multimodal analysis of images, reflexivity, the ethical considerations and the limitations of the current study.

Chapter five provides the findings of the thesis organised into nine discourses. Discourses one to discourse four are the gender focused discourses that emerged from the success stories, and discourse five to discourse nine are the weight related discourses found during the analysis of the success stories.

Chapter six is the conclusion, which is the last chapter of this thesis. It includes a discussion of how the purpose of the study was completed. It also acknowledges the implications that occurred during the study, identifies some limitations of the study and concludes with the identification of potential future research ideas and suggestions.
Chapter two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Since the World Health Organization (WHO) claimed in 2000 that the world is experiencing an obesity epidemic (WHO, 2000), there has been a large amount of research into weight and dieting. Common within this literature are claims of obesity as a global epidemic (otherwise known as ‘globesity’ [e.g., Deitel, 2003]), a global health catastrophe (Rigby, Kumanyika & James, 2004) and a public health crisis (Ingram & DeCelle, 2012) in need of immediate intervention. Much of this literature tends to adopt one of two perspectives (Patterson & Johnston, 2012):

- Obesity constructed as a biomedical condition and a major health concern (with an endless list of potential health effects) (Must, Hollander & Economos, 2006; Soowon & Popkin, 2006)
- Obesity and excess weight framed historically as a social, moral and political threat (Boero, 2012).

The literature surrounding the construction of obesity as a biomedical health condition and health concern focuses on the perceived desperate need to reverse the obesity epidemic, limit the cost and resources it demands from the health-care system (Hurt, Kulisek, Buchanan & McClave, 2010), and to address the common health and medical concerns associated with it (Rabbitt & Coyne, 2012). In contrast, the literature that constructs excess weight as a socio-political threat focuses on how overweight and obesity bear the markers of hysteria, panic and fear (Tischner, 2013). It also reflects how discrimination, victimisation and body-shaming (AIHW, 2012) come to represent a hybrid of discursive ideals and concepts surrounding the
The aim of this study is to explore how discourses of weight and gender are discursively constructed within the success stories of Australian weight loss centres, and how these success stories offer insight into how weight loss and dieting have come to exist as a “socially constructed and morally regulated phenomenon” (Hermiston, 2010, p. 360). The review of the literature will begin by examining the history and origins of weight and obesity as problematic constructions and will then explore some of the contemporary understandings of these concepts, from both a biomedical and a socio-cultural critical perspective. The literature review will then focus on exploring some of the existing literature on weight loss centres.

2.2 The origins of Western obesity

Often regarded as a Westernised, contemporary phenomenon, obesity as a problem of excess weight has a long history. As far back as 30,000 years ago, sculptural representations depicted obese figures. These figures were mostly female, and functioned to encourage and represent fertility, reproduction and health (Wolin & Petrelli, 2009; Ali, 2012). Since food scarcity, malnutrition, disease and poverty have been a major historical issue for much of the human population at some time, historical and cultural constructs of weight saw obesity as a sign of wealth, prosperity and affluence (Rossen & Rossen, 2012). During the Renaissance period, Christians viewed food as a medium for the portrayal of sins, such as lust or gluttony (Gilman, 2008a). By the time of the Industrial Revolution in Europe (around 1760), those in the position of power came to understand that an increase in the bodily size of individuals from underweight to a more ‘normal’ weight could invoke an economic, political and social advantage over other countries because of the likely gains in strength achieved from this increase in body weight (Caballero, 2007). Thus, increasing the number of underweight
citizens to reach a medically healthier weight had a major impact on the productivity and economic development of industrialisation across many developed countries (Friis & Sellers, 2009). History shows that bodies, weight and body shape came to be significant and hold meaning. These meanings come to construct a discourse or an ideology about how bodies are constructed, viewed, talked about and their role in society. Thus, how bodies look (i.e. their outward appearance) comes to signify something. This has changed throughout history and may differ in different communities, but essentially, the body does and always has had meaning. Exploring these meanings can provide insight into the experiences individuals go through and the knowledge individuals have about themselves and others. It can also provide insight into the types of bodies that are idealised or favoured based on societal standards and can provide insight into the range of bodies that exist, and the discursive meanings that can be derived from these bodies and how these hold power.

2.3 Biomedical understandings of weight

The twentieth century produced perhaps the largest changes in the prevalence and occurrence of overweight and obesity and this coincided with the increasing methods of measuring, categorising, recording and scrutinising weight (Elliot, 2009). Historical records from this period show that height and weight ranges of populations in developing countries increased gradually (Caballero, 2007). This was due to factors such as: the rise in food production technology (Prentice, 2006); an increase in food serving sizes (Sterns, 2002); the provision of cheap and refined carbohydrates, fats and oils; the abundance of rich and diverse foods (Kearney, 2010); the development of fast food restaurants (Hamid, 2009); changes to living arrangements, such as urbanisation (Pirgon & Aslan, 2015); a rise in affordable transport (Jones & Bentham, 2010); an increase in sedentary lifestyle behaviours (Prentice, 2006); and a reduction in daily energy requirements (Brody, 2011). The year 2000 represented
an important point in the history of obesity: it was the first time the number of obese adults exceeded the number of underweight adults. Whilst the underweight population has marginally decreased since 1980, the number of overweight adults has increased to over 1.1 billion (Gardner & Halweil, 2000). As of 2002, an estimated 8.5% of the human population was categorised as overweight compared with an estimated 5.8% of the human population categorised as underweight (Zimmerman, 2002). In 2008, 35% of adults (1.4 billion) were classified as overweight, with 500 million (36%) of these individuals classified as obese. In 2014, the number of overweight adults increased to 1.9 billion (39%), which represents a 4% increase in the number of overweight individuals over an 8-year period. Also, 11% (500 million) of individuals were obese in 2008, which increased to 13% (600 million) by 2014 (WHO, 2013; WHO 2016).

2.3.1 Obesity and BMI

Obesity is commonly defined in medical terms as a “Body Mass Index (BMI) greater than 30kg/m²”, and overweight is defined in medical terms as a “BMI between 25 and 30kg/m²” (Lobstein, Baur & Jackson-Leach, 2010, p. 3). The BMI is the most commonly used determinant of excess body fat (Alpert, 2009). Consistent with this, the WHO developed international standards of BMI classifications among adults (Table one).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>BMI (kg/m²)</th>
<th>Comorbidity of associated health risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>≤ 18.5</td>
<td>Low (but risk of other clinical problems increased)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal range</td>
<td>18.5-24.9</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>25.0-29.9</td>
<td>Increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity class I</td>
<td>30.0-34.9</td>
<td>Moderately increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity class II</td>
<td>35.0-39.9</td>
<td>Severely increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity class III</td>
<td>≥ 40</td>
<td>Very severely increased</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one: BMI classification in adults
Despite the convenience, inexpensiveness and relative accuracy of BMI measurements to determine whether an individual is medically considered to be underweight, of normal weight, overweight or obese (Kelishadi, 2012; Summerfield & Ellis, 2015), limitations have been identified in the literature surrounding the use and application of the BMI as an indicator of overweight and obesity. One example of a limitation is that the BMI is unable to distinguish between the bodily (muscle and fat) proportions of different ethnic groups (Kelishadi, 2012). The BMI, therefore, should be used only as an estimate in determining the risk that a population may have in developing obesity-related health conditions. It should be used with caution in assessing or determining ill-health or co-morbidity on an individual level, because it fails to accurately “account for the wide variation in the nature of obesity between different individuals” (WHO, 2000, p. 9).

2.3.2 Obesity and waist circumference

The BMI is considered to be the most common scientific measurement to measure overweight and obesity. However, waist circumference is also often used to measure an individual’s overall health or their risk of disease. Most of the literature around using waist circumference, as an indicator for obesity or related diseases, tends to indicate waist circumference as a more superior and accurate measurement compared to the BMI (e.g. Mehta, Richards, Lober & Rosenthal, 2009; Bray, 2010; Huxley, Mendis, Zheleznyakov, Reddy & Chan, 2010; Abbasi, Blasey & Reaven, 2013). There is also a suggestion that using both waist circumference and BMI can offer a more accurate representation of weight and the risk of disease (e.g. Bray & Ryan, 2006; Nash 2014). As such, the hesitation around using the
BMI as a solid indicator of obesity or risk of health effects perhaps has led to a greater reliance on using waist circumference to measure overweight, obesity and the risk of developing certain diseases. Adapted from the NHLBI (The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute), the WHO uses the following table to indicate the risk of disease based on waist circumference, relative to BMI and the classes of obesity:

**Table two:** BMI and waist circumference cut-off points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>Obesity class</th>
<th>Disease risk (relative to normal weight and waist circumference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>&lt;18.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Men &lt;102cm, Women &lt;88cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>18.5-24.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>25.0-29.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>30.0-34.9</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>High, Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.0-39.9</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>Very high, Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme obesity</td>
<td>&gt;40.0</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>Extremely high, Extremely high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 2.3.3 Obesity as a disease

In 1985, obesity was officially classified as a disease (Earle, 2007), becoming an Australian Health Priority Area in April 2008 (Australian Government Department of Health, 2008). However, there is much disagreement around whether obesity should be classified as a disease. For example, the decision by the American Medical Association (AMA[a]) to classify obesity as a disease in August 2013 caused much debate (e.g., Stettler & Shelly, 2009; Floodmark, 2011; Karasu & Karasu, 2010; Apovian & Mechanick, 2013; Wilkinson, 2013; Wolfgang, 2013). Before this, the AMA(a) described obesity as an urgent chronic condition and a major health concern. Other groups had labelled obesity as a disease before this, such
as the WHO, the National Institute of Health, the American Obesity Association and the American Heart Association. However, it was the classification of obesity as a disease by the AMA(a) that was believed to have been a major step forward for health and medical research (Wilson, 2013).

The controversy surrounding whether obesity should be labelled as a disease is primarily due to the differences in opinion about how one defines or should define ‘disease’ (Evans & Must, 2014). Disease, from an epidemiological and medical standpoint, is defined as a “biological dimension of non-health...a physiological dysfunction” (Porta, Greenland, Hernán, Silva & Last, 2008, p. 77), or an “interruption, cessation or disorder of body function, system or organ” (Steadman, 2012, p. 492). A condition or illness is considered a disease if it meets at least two of the following three characteristics:

1. **Recognised etiologic agents:** these etiologic agents (otherwise known as the recognised causes of obesity or the origins by which obesity may result from) can include genetics, the environment, behaviour and drugs.

2. **Identifiable signs and symptoms:** hormonal changes (e.g., glucose and triglyceride levels) can be identified through blood tests. Physical bodily changes are also evident, such as respiratory issues or effects on the reproduction system.

3. **A consistent anatomical alteration:** the physical body undergoes physiological changes as body mass increases (Kelly, 2006).

In accordance with the AMA(a) guidelines, obesity meets all three of these criteria and so technically, could be classified as a disease. It meets the criteria for producing physiological and metabolic abnormalities and consequences (Conway & Rene, 2004), with recognisable signs and symptoms and an identified etiologic basis (Aronne, Nelinson...
& Lillo, 2009). This pathologisation of obesity can be seen in the invention of the new ‘five A’s of obesity management’: ask, assess, advise, agree and assist (Vallis, Piccinini-Vallis, Sharma & Freedhoff, 2013). Advocates believe that the decision to label obesity as a disease will encourage the health and medical profession to more seriously consider the effects and implications of the condition (Kazaks & Stern, 2009; Pollack, 2013). The medical profession, specifically government bodies such as the WHO (Heshka & Allison, 2001), have come under pressure to provide more concrete answers and solutions to the problem of obesity, rather than simply prescribing an obese individual to eat less and exercise more (Rubin, 2013).

There is also discussion around the idea that obesity should not be considered a disease, but rather a failure to make healthy lifestyle choices (Rubin, 2013). For example, as Warren and Smalley (2013) somewhat harshly contend, obesity is more of a behaviour rather than a disease, since “obesity is really an accumulation of hundreds and hundreds of bad decisions” and so individuals “choose to be fat” (p. 31). This argument is supported by Seibold (2013) who strongly argues, “obesity should not be classified as a disease. When it comes to issues of weight, unless there is a true underlying medical condition, which isn't the case most of the time, your weight is your responsibility” (Seibold, 2013, p. 1). Even though there are specific illnesses or medical conditions that can commonly contribute to weight gain - for example hypothyroidism, polycystic ovary syndrome and Cushing's syndrome (Watson, 2009) - Seibold (2013) further argues that individuals often blame external factors for the failure of their diets, rather than placing the responsibility and ownership on themselves and their decisions. In addition, those who are against the labelling of obesity as a disease believe that doing so may increase the stigmatisation and discrimination surrounding it (Puhl & Heuer, 2010; Van den Belt, 2010; Wilkinson, 2013).
and may allow the weight loss industry to receive an even greater profit through the production and advertisement of weight loss surgeries, diet pills, exercise equipment and obesity drugs through the mass media (Pool, 2000; Crary, 2004; Bennett, 2010).

Within the Australian context, there was hesitancy as to whether to follow in the AMA(a)'s footsteps and label obesity as a disease. Obesity became a National Health Priority Area (NPHA) in 2008. Then, in 2009, an inquiry by the Australian Government pushed for obesity to be labelled as a chronic disease and to encourage General Practitioners (GPs) to prescribe individualised obesity management plans to overweight or obese patients. However, despite these two situations, in 2013, both the Australian Government and the Australian Medical Association (AMA[b]) shied away from the decision to label obesity as a disease. Labelling obesity as a disease could cost the Australian Government up to $700 million in providing overweight or obese individuals with individualised health-care management plans. A news report concluded with the statement: “Associate Professor Dixon's claim that “we are treating a chronic disease” is debatable” (ABC, 2014, para. 80).

This last section of the literature review has explored some of the most common concepts contained within the biomedical model of obesity: the BMI, obesity and waist circumference and obesity as a disease. These concepts reinforce a view of weight that strongly highlights a scientific approach to measuring, defining and treating obesity. Conversely, social discourses of weight have a stronger focus on the socio-cultural and political aspects of weight. These social discourses will now be explored.
2.4 Social discourses of weight

As has already been identified, much of the scientific literature on overweight and obesity tends to construct these concepts as problematic biomedical and scientific health conditions. Conversely, another dominant discourse of weight and obesity frames it within a socio-cultural and political discourse, examining it in the context of morality, politics and governance. This second discursive construct will now be explored in more detail.

2.4.1 Weight and obesity as a moral panic

Much of the literature that opposes obesity as a biomedical health condition focuses on the notion that overweight and obesity (and the claim of the ‘obesity epidemic’) is a moral panic. Termed by Cohen (1972), a moral panic is defined as “a threat to societal values and interests” (Cohen, 1972, p. 1). When applying this definition to weight, it can be identified that there is a real fear or anxiety around not only the measurement of obesity and excess fat, but also of obese and overweight individuals. There is a high degree of discrimination, prejudice and stigmatisation against obese individuals, who are often categorised as social and moral failures (Harjunen, 2017). Such processes resonate strongly with Foucault’s concept of governmentality, and how bodies become docile and disciplined to avoid negative connotations becoming attached to their body (LeBesco, 2010). Foucault’s interpretation will be explored in further detail later on.

2.4.2 Neoliberal view of weight

Whilst there is strong focus on labelling obesity as a disease, there are also alternative constructions that label being overweight and obese as more of a health condition (governed by lifestyle choices), rather than a disease. Here, individuals are posited as having control over their weight, and therefore obesity is a choice rather than a disease. The view that ‘your weight is your responsibility’ strongly reflects a neoliberal stance towards health. Here, the
conceptualisation and representation of obesity rests largely on how the overweight and obese body has come to exist as a social, moral and political failure to the nation state (Meleo-Erwin, 2013; Rich & Evans, 2013) by the individual who should be held at fault for becoming obese in the first place (Boero, 2010; Van den Belt, 2010). This neoliberal process within health can be seen in Crawford’s (1980) healthism concept. Healthism explores how health becomes the responsibility of the individual, whereby the healthy body is regarded as the product of a morally and socially productive citizen (LeBesco, 2010). The healthy (non obese) body displays discipline and governance over remaining a healthy weight and size and epitomises what a ‘good’ body should be. The healthy body functions within wider social discourses of a neoliberal way of governing risky, unhealthy bodies (Harjunen, 2017).

2.4.3 Weight and ‘risk society’

Contemporary civilisation has been classified as a ‘risk society’. Termed by Beck in 1992, ‘risk society’ is defined as a “systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities” (Beck, 1992, p. 21). This concept is concerned with how society is organised and explores how risk is a central element in contemporary society (Mythen, 2014). Our society is characterised by anxiety and fear that “requires us to vigilantly monitor even the banal minutiae of our lives” (Hubbard, 2003, p. 52). The important point about this is that often, the risks are not actual, physical threats, but rather certain occurrences that are classified as ‘dangerous’. These dangers must be managed somehow, and here is where individuals are relied upon to manage their own risk. For obesity, managing the associated moral and social risks shows that individuals ‘avoid’ obesity because they do not want to have the associated negative constructs, such as irresponsibility, laziness and failure that have become attached to the obese body (Li, 2017). The ‘good’ citizen manages their own risk by remaining healthy and not becoming overweight or obese and avoids risky behaviours such as eating
unhealthily or falling outside a ‘healthy’ BMI. Here, the biomedical and socio-moral discourses of obesity and health merge and interact to produce a subject that is ‘non-risky’ (Glasbeek, 2014).

2.5 Understanding discourses of weight

The obesity literature mentioned above tends to fall into two main camps: obesity as a biomedical health issue or obesity as a moral and social panic and something that is, therefore, inherently risky. The researcher is not saying that obesity is or is not, for example an epidemic or a disease, nor that obesity is or is not a moral panic. Rather, the researcher is identifying that obesity can be and is constructed and understood in these ways throughout society for different purposes at different times by different groups. The researcher is highlighting that there is a dominant discourse of ‘obesity science’ throughout society (Warin, 2015), and that there is a strong tendency to describe and understand obesity in this very scientific and biomedical manner. For example, the use of the BMI plays a significant role within discursive understandings of obesity from a biomedical, but also a socio-cultural position. From a biomedical standpoint, the BMI functions as an inexpensive and relatively accurate way to determine whether an individual is medically considered to be underweight, of normal weight, overweight or obese (Kelishadi, 2012; Summerfield & Ellis, 2015). However, from a social and political perspective, the use of the BMI is complicated. The BMI discourse not only normalises certain bodies, it also objectifies and labels other bodies as ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’ and classifies these bodies as the ‘Other’ (Greenhalgh, 2015). The BMI functions to label and inscribe certain meanings on fat bodies, and by doing so, we come to understand ourselves and other bodies based on these meanings (Gerbensky-Kerber, 2011). This process is significant because it influences not only how individuals view themselves and their position in the world, but also how
individuals talk about, think about and interact with other bodies. Fat bodies are classified in such a way that they are stigmatised for being ‘bad’, and the BMI functions to outcast them as diseased. The BMI creates new social realities (Jutel 2006), because it ‘pushes’ these fat bodies into action, to instil into them that they need to change their body and that therefore, their body, in its current (fat) state, is wrong. Therefore, these bodies are encouraged to develop new ways of life and new ways of living that could include dieting, exercising and eating or excluding certain foods. These processes become discursive technologies through which these fat bodies function and experience life, based on their bodily categorisations.

How individuals come to understand weight and obesity as say, an epidemic, disease or a moral panic reflects the varying and sometimes contradictory discourses that exist within society and reflect that there are different and varying discursive meanings of weight. These accounts of weight and obesity are contingent on how it is produced within different discursive settings. These understandings highlight how weight and obesity is constructed and understood by different individuals at different times, in different contexts and for different purposes. Theorists such as Michel Foucault (1926-1984) identified discourse as the “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 54). These practices form systems of language whereby words, actions, rules and beliefs are constructed, communicated and circulated within and throughout society (Vick, 2006). Discourses contribute to the development of ideas and statements of knowledge and meaning, which then operate to restrain, control and associate individuals with particular behaviours or identities (Markula & Pringle, 2006) and therefore produce objects of knowledge (Wooffitt, 2005).
Discourses encompass the various practices for the production, construction, authorisation and use of knowledge. Such practices produce a sense of this knowledge as being true, which results in certain practices being seen as more ‘truthful’ than others (Markula et al, 2006). An understanding of a concept becomes contained within specific rules that govern how, where and under what context a topic or idea can be discussed. Within any one phenomenon, certain discourses are dominant and are seen to hold more truth than others. These dominant discourses are the systems of knowledge that are the 'taken-for-granted truths' surrounding a concept and have the power to produce and uphold world views (Vick, 2006) and social understandings. Both the rules that are established and the dominant discourses that exist are crucial for being able to understand what knowledge is and can be included (and thus excluded) within a specific social context.

Any one object of discourse (e.g., weight or obesity) will have a multitude of discursive understandings attached to it (Braun & Clarke, 2013). For example, a biomedical discourse of obesity can construct it as a pathological disease with various health consequences. Here, the onus falls largely on the individual to control their own health (Aston, Price, Kirk & Penney, 2011). This authorises the medical and scientific profession to be in a position of power to declare and authorise the current ‘war on obesity’ as truth (Rich & Evans, 2005). It also concurrently constructs, inhibits and subjugates the overweight or obese individual as a ‘victim’ in this war on obesity (Tischner, 2013). A moral discourse of obesity can identify obesity as a marker of disgust, repulsion, laziness, greed and weakness (Bordo, 1990; LeBesco, 2010; Puhl et al, 2010), whereas a socio-environmental discourse of obesity would concern itself with the social structures (e.g., the education system and the media) that produce and construct obesity (Braun et al, 2013). An individualistic discourse of obesity would construct the individual (rather than society) as the level required to
understand, examine and address obesity (Edmunds, 2006). Thus, even though multiple, and at times, contradictory discursive understandings are likely to exist within and through a particular discursive field, one or two discourses may dominate within this field (Braun et al, 2013), with obesity as a biomedical health issue and obesity as a socio-political threat perhaps being the two most hegemonic discourses of weight in society at this current time.

Thus, discussion is generated that brings forward a range of social, political and cultural issues which are or have been historically constructed in a particular way (Gabay, 2007). When this is applied to the lived experiences of those who are or have previously been overweight or obese, there is value and importance in exploring how these aspects function to produce particular types of subjects and bodies within certain power interactions. Simply being labelled as medically obese or overweight is just one part of the story. How this produces a way of operating and ‘being’ in society is another aspect worthy of investigation. New ways of thinking about the body have produced different and innovative approaches to the exploration of obesity and the discourses surrounding the obese body. One such method that has been useful in this area is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The theoretical framework underpinning this thesis will be further explored in Chapter three of this study.

2.6 Existing literature on weight loss centres

Despite the extensive literature exploring online forum interactions between obese individuals (e.g., Harvey-Berino, Pintauro, Buzzell & Gold, 2004; Weinstein, 2006; Saperstein, Atkinson & Gold, 2007; Hwang, Farheen, Johnson, Thomas, Barnes & Bernstam, 2007; Jarvis, 2009; Hwang, Ottenbacher, Green, Cannon-Diehl, Richardson, Bernstam & Thomas, 2010; Neve, Morgan, Jones, Collins, 2010; Johnson & Wardle, 2011; Manikonda, Pon-Barry, Kambhampati, Hekler & McDonald, 2014), only two studies
(Jarvis 2009 and Manikonda et al, 2014) have employed a discursive analytical approach. The remainder of these studies examined the role or impact that social support and social interaction (in the form of online internet forums) can play in the accomplishment of long-term weight loss. Jarvis (2009) employed two strands of textual analysis (narrative methodology and CDA) to analyse weight loss success stories from ‘Slimming World’ magazines. Similarly, Manikonda et al (2014) explored the difference in language use between individuals who, through their involvement in an online weight loss program, were either successful in keeping the weight off or ended up regaining the weight they had lost. How the language differed between the two groups of individuals was grounded in discourse analysis.

Jarvis (2009) asserts that her analysis of the discourses within these Slimming World magazines involves expanding and locating such discursive ideals within wider sociological contexts and frameworks. Thus, the application of a discursive approach enables individuals to explore the social, cultural and political meanings, beliefs, biases and prejudices that may become attached to obesity at any one time. Exploring and rupturing these discursive fields that surround any one social issue (in this case, weight) becomes useful because it allows individuals to deconstruct hegemonic understandings surrounding weight, and to consider alternative or suppressed discursive ideas around weight, dieting and weight loss. This can allow for the deconstruction of these dominant discourses and regimes of knowledge or understanding that have come to be accepted as ‘the’ truth (Tischner, 2013).

Several studies have analysed weight loss, health or fitness magazines to explore the discourses that exist in relation to health, weight, body image or gender (e.g., Eskes, Duncan & Miller, 1998; Jarvis, 2009; Tiainen, 2009; Bedor & Tajima, 2012; Fuller, Briggs
& Dillon-Sumner, 2014). The current thesis builds on this already flourishing arena of discursive analyses of weight loss magazines by applying FCDA to a different landscape: ‘success stories’ of Australian weight loss centres. Of the few studies that have explored weight loss success stories or weight loss centres, five of these are worthy of mentioning. Sarlio-Lähteenkorva (2000) conducted open-ended interviews with nine females who had successfully maintained weight loss (10-27 kilograms) for at least 7 years. The interview data was then analysed using both grounded theory and narrative analysis.

Sarlio-Lähteenkorva (2000) discovered discourses of the pre-(obese)body and the post-(not obese) body. The pre-(obese) body of the females was discussed in terms of the fear and anxiety of being and acting obese (e.g., “being fat was a scary experience” [interview no. 53, Sarlio-Lähteenkorva, 2000, p. 82]). She also notes how the females emphasised the importance of engaging in a range of disciplinary behaviours to ensure the weight was kept off in the long term, such as regular exercise, a constant monitoring of weight and calorie controlling their food intake. Exploring these and other related discursive ideas that emerged from Sarlio-Lähteenkorva's (2000) study is useful because it allows individuals to uncover some of the discourses of health and bodily experiences of obesity that these females have whilst dieting or previously had when they were obese. These discourses represent the different understandings or conceptualisations that these females have of weight and of the obese body. They provide a means to move beyond conceptualising obesity as just a biomedical health issue. Many of the individual behaviours of the females that Sarlio-Lähteenkorva (2000) found evident in her study appear to be related to or draw on a biomedical model of understanding their weight (classified as obese), such as weighing themselves or calculating their BMI. However, the meanings or intent behind these behaviours runs deeper and relates to sociological and cultural discursive meanings that
become attached to weight or to the obese body, such as power, discipline, control and the social pressures to obtain (and maintain) an acceptable (female) body. Sarlio-Lähteenkorva's (2000) study was valuable in contributing to the knowledge and understanding that researchers have around how obese individuals’ experience, practice and approach weight loss and dieting. Despite these strengths, her study was conducted a long time ago (16 years ago) and in the meantime, weight research and knowledge have advanced quite profoundly. Hence, society may now have a greater capacity to understand and explore weight loss and dieting practices. It is hoped that this current study can contribute to contemporary and up to date knowledge and understanding around weight and how individuals experience or practice dieting and weight loss.

Stinson (2001) entered a commercial weight loss centre as both a feminist researcher interested in investigating female bodies and bodily process of weight loss and also as a dieter wanting to lose weight (following 25 years of failed dieting). Through in-depth interviews conducted with other female attendees of the weight loss program, she discovered five main discourses within this context: self-help, work, religion, addiction and feminism (Stinson, 2001). Self-help looked at the process of the individuals helping themselves and relying on themselves to make appropriate changes during the process of losing weight. Such practices reflect a neoliberal stance towards weight and health, whereby the individual conceptualises health as being their own responsibility and as something that is under their own individual control. Stinson (2001) found that self-help processes could be achieved by engaging in positive interpersonal relationships with other clients of the weight loss centre. The work discourse explored how the body functions as a means of production, whereby it can be shaped and produced into more appropriate and acceptable
forms through weight loss or dieting. The body is a vehicle of change and losing weight allows the body to become a more disciplined, docile and productive form within society.

Stinson (2001) acknowledges that the metaphor of religion was a key discourse highlighted by the females participating in the weight loss program. Constructs of morality, right and wrong, temptation, deprivation and confession in relation to food and exercise emerged from the collected data. If a ‘sin’ was committed (e.g., a workout was missed or a ‘bad’ food was consumed), the females would confess to this sin, admit their guilt and begin on the path of redemption or salvation. This path would see them tightening control over the foods they believed were ‘bad’ and increasing physical activity to redeem oneself from their sinful and ‘bad’ behaviour. As a side note to the religion discourse, the idea of the confession is a strong discourse amongst other weight loss focused studies. For example, Bombak (2015) acknowledges that the obese body confesses to corporeal failure and pathology as a result of the excess weight. Similarly, Levy-Navarro (2012) explores how ‘before’ and ‘after’ weight loss photographs function to not only produce a confession of being overweight, but also to produce a confessional discourse involving a declaration that they are now no longer obese; that is, a new (not-obese) self now exists.

The fourth key discourse to emerge from the Stinson (2001) study was the discourse of addiction. The author explored how this discourse of addiction reflects a lack of control, which often leads to excessive eating and weight gain. The body is at risk of losing control and through self-help practices, individual bodies are encouraged to control their addiction to food through processes of dieting and weight loss. Weight loss seemingly appears to be the result of an individual being successful at controlling their addiction to food. The last key discourse identified by Stinson (2001) was feminism. She explores the contradictory terrain and interplay between feminism and dieting, raising the question of ‘can I be both
a feminist and a dieter?’ In her experience as a participant in the weight loss centre, Stinson (2001) identifies that feminism is used to encourage females to lose weight for themselves, to take care of their bodies, to look and feel good, and to eventually come to a place of self-love and self-acceptance. Yet, the means through which a woman is expected to love and accept themselves and their bodies stems from the discourse that constructs the female body as inadequate and as someone who must be willing to subject their body to pain and modification (e.g., dieting and exercise) to look and be an ‘acceptable’ female (Montemurro, 2002).

Stinson’s (2001) study successfully explored how females discursively experience dieting and weight loss, but a limitation of this study is that she only interviewed female dieters. Perhaps the study could have been improved by also interviewing male obese individuals to gain more of an understanding into how male bodies experience and practice dieting. This current study overcomes this limitation by including both male and female success stories from the three weight loss centres, and by looking at how bodies become gendered through interactions with other gendered bodies. This study also discusses the discourses between gendered males and females in society, and how males and females discursively experience and practice obesity, dieting and weight loss.

Another study that has also explored weight loss success stories is a more recent study conducted by Jarvis (2009). She employed two strands of textual analysis (narrative methodology and CDA) to analyse forty-two success stories from eight Slimming World’ magazines published from the beginning of 2007 to the end of 2008. Jarvis (2009) found that these success stories were not simply reflections of the individuals’ experience but were recreated and reformed through certain journalistic strategies that frame weight and the body in specific ways. Jarvis (2009) noted that the success stories followed a similar
line of development and plot, each beginning with the individual referencing ‘the bad place’ they are in and then the subsequent ‘trigger’ that took place for them to make a conscious decision to improve their health by losing weight. This plot, as Jarvis identifies, involves seven elements: ‘the bad place’, ‘the trigger’, ‘the meeting’, ‘early success’, ‘what I ate’, ‘the problem’ and ‘the transformation’. How these stories are mediated and consequently framed and presented can have a large impact on the discourses and meanings that can be derived from bodies and their success stories. Jarvis’ (2009) study is just one way that weight loss success stories can be interpreted and analysed from a critical and analytical discourse approach. This current study builds heavily on and draws inspiration from Jarvis’ (2009) study but diverges her study by collecting success stories from Australian weight loss centres, rather than success stories from fitness magazines. Therefore, this current study fills a gap in the literature by focusing on weight loss centres and how the centres and the individuals within these centres construct, produce and experience discourses of weight loss and dieting.

Burke, Swigart, Turk, Derro and Ewing (2009) conducted a study in the context of weight loss centres. The authors conducted interviews on fifteen individuals (twelve females, three males) who had completed a weight loss program one to five months before the interviews took place. The semi-structured interviews collected information around the self-monitoring of ones’ weight loss and their level of compliance to the weight loss program. What was found from this study was that high levels of self-monitoring and self-control were demonstrated by those individuals who were successful at losing weight and keeping this weight off over the long term. The processes of discipline function prominently within this weight loss arena with the slender body displaying successful control and distinguishing it from fat bodies. This discipline and control is important
because it produces a discourse that to be successful at weight loss, you must discipline yourself in certain ways. As such, those that fail to lose weight come to be constructed as social and moral failures (Harjunen, 2017) because they lacked the discipline and control required to lose weight.

The last significant study that was conducted around weight loss centres was in 2008 by Monaghan. Monaghan (2008) undertook fieldwork observations of overweight and obese males who had joined one particular ‘mixed-sex’ American slimming club. The study only focused on the males in this slimming club and he observed how the males discussed, practiced and engaged in weight loss measures set out by the slimming club. Monaghan (2008) conducted a nine-month ethnographic study of the slimming club, whereby he also collected additional information in the form of informal conversations between participants, television advertisements that were played during the observation and magazines and books that were provided by the slimming club for the participants to read. Monaghan (2008) also conducted thirty-seven in-depth interviews with some of the males in this slimming club who had been categorised as overweight or obese. Monaghan’s (2008) study is significant because it is one of the few weight-based studies that directly explore the experiences and processes of weight loss of obese and overweight males. His study effectively confronts the stereotype that fatness, dieting and weight loss is only a female issue. He brings the experience of dieting males to the forefront and highlights how males experience and practice weight loss and dieting in a society that encourages males to neglect and not care about their health.

By focusing exclusively on males in his study, what can be learnt from Monaghan’s (2008) study is the different ways that males and females ‘do’ weight loss and dieting. Not only do such processes differ between males and females, but food choices and eating also
appear to be gendered as well (Ballantine, Roberts & Korgen, 2016). What this can imply is that the meanings individuals place on their own and other bodies can be gendered. The meanings individuals both gain from and attribute to food, as well as the role that food plays in individual’s lives, can also be influenced by gender. As such, how individuals approach and ‘do’ eating, dieting and weight loss is gendered. Males and females appear to diet for different reasons, perhaps based on stereotypical views of what is acceptable behaviour for males and females. For example, because dieting has historically been considered a feminine activity (Guptill, Copelton & Lucal, 2017), the meanings we attribute to males and females who are dieting are subsequently gendered. This may influence not only how females diet, but also how males may feel within a stereotypically dominant feminine arena (Tischner, 2013). By considering the reasons why males and females choose to diet or lose weight, perhaps individuals can come to a greater understanding of the role that gender plays in food choices and behaviours, and how understanding can be gained from weight loss providers about creating environments that both support and challenge existing gendered binaries about these practices.

What can be witnessed from these studies, is that although weight and dieting have a strong focus within the literature, the exploration of these concepts within the specific context of weight loss centres have had only a light focus. Therefore, this study contributes to the small number of studies conducted within the context of weight loss centres. What this study hopes to achieve is to explore how discourses of weight (and gender) are produced and constructed within the weight loss centre success stories. In addition to this, hopefully the researcher can gain insight into how these constructions influence how males and females discuss, practice and experience weight loss and dieting during their time at
the weight loss centre. This may help contribute to understanding how the body is discursively constructed within the field of weight loss.
Chapter three: Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework that underpins this current study is Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). In addition, the researcher has also drawn on the use of philosopher Michel Foucault to guide some of the analysis. FCDA combines features of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with feminism. Thus, this chapter will begin by exploring the origins of CDA, to then focus on FCDA. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) will also be introduced as the framework of the study, with the hope of offering new and innovative ways of understanding the discourses present (and the bodies that are subsequently produced) when examining the success stories of obese individuals who may have lost weight whilst following the weight loss centre program. In doing so, it is hoped that the researcher can highlight the ways that dieting and weight loss are gendered, as well as identify how hegemonic power relations operate within discourses of weight loss. Perhaps FCDA can expose how these weight loss centres contribute to and/or challenge constructions of femininity and masculinity and hegemonic power relations through the language they produce to promote transformative ways of dieting and weight loss. Gendered body practices will then be focused on to set the scene for gender as a main focus for this current study. This chapter then concludes with exploring the application of Foucault to the study of weight and gender.

3.2 The origins of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA surfaced during the early 1990s in Amsterdam, when Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak formed a new methodological framework known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). At that time, Europe and the United States of America were undergoing numerous cultural-political and socio-economic changes such as a rise in immigrants from
Europe and the Reagan-Thatcher revolution of conservatism (Richland, 2012). This “radical post-war transformation” (Slembrouck, 2001, p. 34) saw a rise in post-structuralism, semiotics and linguistics (Richland, 2012) whereby the social science and cultural studies academic circles considered CDA as a useful strategy and method to inquire into language (Slembrouck, 2001). The group, led by van Dijk, expressed an “urgency about moving away from a predominantly descriptive orientation within (socio) linguistics” (Slembrouck, 2001, p. 35). Instead, it supported an approach with a “focus on the analysis and explanation of the constitutive role of language use within institutional practices and within the larger social ordering of institutional domains” (Slembrouck, 2001, p. 36). In other words, the team advocated for an approach to language that explored both the dominant and subordinate subject positions that may emerge within the text.

A central tenet of CDA is to allow a multiplicity of voices to emerge, recognising that there is just not one single voice, message or truth that exists within a text or discourse (Morgan, 2010). Instead, the reading of any text can involve exploring the range of discourses within it, representing different meanings embedded within it, and exploring the economic, political and social influences that can influence how the text is read and deconstructed (Paltridge & Wang, 2015). CDA is a commonly used theoretical and methodological approach that has become increasingly applied to a wide range of social phenomena such as disability (e.g., Stamou & Padeliadu, 2009; Grue, 2011; Nunkoosing & Haydon-Laurelut, 2011), education (e.g., Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley & Hui, 2005; Bladergroen, Chigona, Bytheway, Cox, Dumas & van Zyl, 2012; Leonel, 2014; Rogers & Schaenen, 2014), race and immigration (e.g., Tierney, 2003; Hart, 2010; Khalema, 2011; Conradie, 2013) and gender (e.g., Martinez-Roldan, 2005; Annandale & Hammarström, 2011; Ezeifeka & Osakwe, 2013; Payne, 2014). Additionally, CDA has
been applied to different types of texts, most commonly to magazines (e.g., Conradie, 2013; Bachechi & Hall, 2015), and newspapers (e.g., Rice & Bond, 2013; Mahmood, Obaid & Shakir, 2014; Maeseele, 2015), but also to television shows (e.g., Joye, 2009; Kalyango, 2011), press conferences (e.g., Bhatia, 2006), radio (e.g., Boyd, 2014), interviews (e.g., Pietikäinen & Dufva, 2006) and books (e.g., Stamou & Paraskevopoulos, 2004).

A more recent development in CDA is the application of a feminist lens to the process. Known as Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), this lens applies the same tenets of CDA, but with a particular focus on feminist scholarship by exploring the operation and interaction of power, dominance and ideology within gender and within the hierarchical constructions of femininity and masculinity (Lazar, 2005). FCDA will now be explored in more detail and how it will be applied as the methodological framework for this current study.

3.3 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)

Feminist and women's studies emerged from the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s (Strobel, 2002, Van der Tuin, 2015), bringing issues of gender, sex and inequality to the forefront of feminist academia (McNeil & Roberts, 2011). There was (and perhaps still is) a misconception that feminist or women's studies are concerned exclusively with females and the condemnation of males and masculinity to advance females beyond that of the male population (DuMont, 2013). However, the main focus of feminist and women's studies is actually “a shared goal of rebalancing power structures and moving from power-over relationships to power-within” (DuMont, 2013, p. 127, italics in original). Feminist scholarship encourages the exploration into “the ingrained ideas, assumptions and values promoted and maintained through the mainstream culture, those that praise domination and control of one group over another” (DuMont, 2013, p. 127).
FCDA emerged as an analytical framework by combining features of CDA and feminist studies. Moving beyond understandings of gender as a masculine/feminine binary based on biological difference (Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002; Coates, 2012), FCDA explores how gender and sexuality are continuously being “socially constructed and reconstructed, enacted and re-enacted within specific social contexts and relationships” (Jackson, 2005, p. 29). Ultimately, FCDA is concerned with exploring the “frequently taken-for-granted and gendered assumptions and power asymmetries [that] get discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and contested in specific communities and discourses” (Lazar, 2007, p. 142). In other words, FCDA seeks to explore and elucidate the discursive social practices and bodies that are produced through processes and unequal social orderings of patriarchal and hegemonic masculinity and matriarchal oppression and subjugation (Lazar, 2014). FCDA seeks to explore the “unequal social arrangements sustained through language use” (Lazar, 2005, p. 1). In doing so, FCDA invites and encourages the critical and discursive exploration of the ideas, traditions, norms and social structures that maintain, promote and privilege the patriarchal gendered ordering (DuMont, 2013). This critical approach rightfully acknowledges the existence of discourse and the implications these discourses can have on subjects within an environment and how the existence and functioning of power relations come to locate and represent individuals within certain subject positions (Marks, Murray, Evans, Estacio, 2011).

How language is employed, and what techniques may be used is particularly important and relevant for this current study. This is because a main component of FCDA (or more specifically CDA) is to explore the language that is used or not used in particular social settings. This approach also involves exploring how this language use contributes to the formation of certain discursive understandings around a social experience or social
phenomena. How weight and dieting are talked about and discussed in society will influence how we come to understand these processes and the meanings we may attribute to or place on bodies. This language that is used or not used can provide key insights into how these concepts comes to be discursively constituted within society. It can also offer important insight into which meanings and understandings that surround a topic or concept are discursively favoured. Similarly, it also becomes possible to explore who is speaking within any one discourse, with this offering an understanding into who or what is privileged (Foucault, 1980). This implies language use is a political process, whereby it is possible to explore how the language used within a situation, setting or institution and the speaker of this language interacts with our wider understandings of discursive objects such as weight to highlight the challenges around the interpretation of these topics (Sharp & Richardson, 2001). As such, employing an FCDA framework permits the close examination and exploration into the complex relationship between discursive understandings of weight and to explore both the conflicting and supportive discursive understandings around weight and how both certain bodies come to construct and repeatedly renegotiate reality, meaning, knowledge, understanding (Gergen, 2015).

Identities are socially constructed through an individual’s relationships with others and are formed by how individuals view, operate and engage with others in the world. Hence, in exploring the language that is used or not used within a particular social context or environment (in this case, the success stories of weight loss centres), the researcher is able to expose and explore specific weight and gendered discursive spaces and processes. Exploring these spaces and processes can reveal how language provides insights into the social workings and positionings of males and females (Mills & Mullany, 2011) and how
the language used (or not used) reflects how individuals understand, comprehend and make meaning of the world and their placement in it (Thomas, 2002; Hart, 2014).

As was the case with CDA, FCDA has been applied to a similar range of issues: disability (e.g., Hiranandani, 2006), education (e.g., Hernandez, 2011), racism (e.g., Blencowe, 2011), sexuality (e.g., Shildrick, 2009), religion (e.g., Fiorenza, 2013) and gender (e.g., Benwell, 2002; Lazar, 2005; Gavey, 2011). Applying FCDA to these types of social phenomena has allowed for a much deeper and more critical understanding of these issues. For example, applying FCDA to disability has led to a greater understanding of disability beyond the predominant biomedical discourse that constructs the disabled individual as a problem and a deficit (Hiranandani, 2006; Grue, 2011). Likewise, in exploring weight and the obese body, FCDA allows for a theorisation of how a particular group of bodies (i.e., obese bodies) are categorised, represented, understood and situated within a social dynamic or social context. The language used when discussing weight, bodies and gender provides key insights into how such concepts comes to be discursively constituted, understood and discussed within society, and allows for the identification of dominant discourses. Therefore, exploring the language and grammar within weight loss centre success stories also allows for an analysis into how meaning is created through both visual images, wording and sentence structure (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

In exploring and deconstructing the ways weight and bodies are constituted with a particular emphasis on gender, the need for a methodological framework that intersects both feminism and a critical analysis of discourse becomes clear. In examining the discourses present within both male and female success stories of Australian weight loss centres, processes of how individuals come to place understanding and meaning on weight and bodies may become apparent. Yet, not only does this study focus on weight and bodies,
this study is also interested in exploring how gendered representations of weight and bodies may emerge through these success stories. By combining both feminism and CDA, FCDA can allow for a more nuanced view and deeper examination of gender and weight and how these discourses interact with each other throughout the success stories of the weight loss centres.

As a feminist, the researcher has a keen interest in highlighting and exploring the oppressive nature of society, which often leaves females in a subordinate power relation with males (Worrell & Remer, 2003). The researcher hopes that by employing a feminist epistemology to this current study, she would be able to contribute to helping females become liberated from the hegemonic constraints within dieting and weight loss. However, the researcher is also advocating for males to free themselves from these constraints as well. The oppressive nature of dieting and weight loss sees both males and females fighting against a dominant ideology of biomedical and scientific knowledge that labels bodies as obese and sick (Gard et al, 2005). As such, the researcher wants to uncover and unearth this dominant discourse and explore the problematic nature of labelling certain bodies in certain ways. The researcher wants to highlight that the labelling of these bodies in these ways can influence not only how individuals understand themselves, their place in this world and how they construct knowledge of the world, but also how they interact with, engage with and talk about other bodies. By unearthing the complex interplay between gender and power (Allen, Lloyd & Few, 2009), the researcher hopes to contribute to feminist scholarship and to the literature on power, gender, hegemony, masculinity and femininity within discourses of dieting, weight loss and health. Related, the notion of agency is important within this feminist framework. The physical body should have agency (Rice, 2016) and it is important to explore this idea, as it can provide insight into how and
why individuals act the way they do relative to the social pressures or social constraints that surround them. It can expose hegemonic discourses that instruct individuals on how to exist in the world and instruct individuals on how their bodies should look, and what happens to bodies that resist these constraints and attempt to exercise their agency (Dixon, 2018). For feminists, agency is significant in the production of change around individual’s bodies and their voice (Clegg, 2006). The researcher wants to encourage all individuals that they have the right to look the way they want and to not have to give into the hegemonic dieting discourse that dictates fatness and fat bodies as ‘bad’ and ‘disgusting’. The researcher wants to deconstruct and break down the messages in society that encourages weight loss and demonises individuals for eating, and to promote a sense of self that feels strong enough to defend their right to own their own body and not have to subject themselves to enter the dieting and weight loss discourse.

3.4 Gendered body performances

Bodies are gendered from the first instance of their interaction with the world; that is, bodies become gendered. In this process of becoming, Butler (1990) recognises that “gender proves to be a performance... [where] gender is always a doing” (p. 25). Bodies have knowledge and awareness that gender is a performance and individuals are conscious of how they need to act or exist to be accepted as a male or a female (Behnke & Meuser, 2011). This performance and doing of gender and sexuality produces what is known as a masculine body or a feminine body (Salih, 2002). Exploring the intersection between gender, identity and gendered performance can allow for greater understanding and insight into the stigma and discrimination of bodies that do not fit the ‘stereotyped’ gendered body (e.g., a masculine female or a feminine male) (Monaghan, 2005). For this current project, the focus is on exploring how a particular type of ‘discriminated’ body (i.e., the obese
body) not only becomes classified as abnormal and unhealthy (Glenn, 2012), but also how it becomes gendered. The body becomes gendered as an obese male or obese female and this process becomes normalised, enacted and situated (Galloway & Moffat, 2013). This normalisation paves way for social and cultural understandings, representations and discourses of (male and female obese) bodies to emerge and circulate within society. How individuals understand fatness and weight is largely influenced by how bodies are represented in social and cultural discourse. Therefore, drawing out and critically analysing the discourses that may reside within the success stories of Australia weight loss centres can expose spaces to explore how meaning and understanding of weight, health, fatness and illness “are rhetorically negotiated on the obese body” (Shugart, 2014, p. 56).

Male and female bodies tend to be socially constructed differently. Not only can this influence the meanings placed on these bodies, but it can also influence the meanings that can be derived from these gendered bodies. Within the domain of weight, this differential construction between males and females appears to be exaggerated. Hence, males and females may be viewed differently within the context of weight and health, as well as it also meaning that males and females may experience, practice and ‘do’ dieting and weight loss differently. Employing FCDA offers a suitable medium to explore and elucidate these discursive social practices and processes that place meaning on weight and bodies within gendered processes and constructions of patriarchy, masculinity and femininity (Lazar, 2014).

Defined by Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity is the “…configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Hegemonic masculinity is concerned
with the implied or assumed gender order, which situates masculinity as dominant over subordinate femininity and ‘other’ forms of masculinity, such as homosexuality (Lusher & Robins, 2009). More specifically, Donaldson (1993) states that hegemony “is about the winning and holding of power and the formation of social groups in the process” and is concerned with how “the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination” (p. 645). In other words, hegemony is understood as the process that dominant social groups (in this particular context, this being males and masculinity) maintain and reinforces power and supremacy over other, ‘less privileged’ social groups, such as females and ‘alternative’ masculinities such as homosexuals or trans-gender males. How males understand, approach, discuss or practice processes such as weight, dieting, food, obesity or health becomes framed within discourses of hegemonic masculinity (Mallyon, Holmes, Coveney & Zadoroznyj, 2010). For males to exist and reside within a (feminine) dieting discourse, males may draw on hegemonic discourses to assert their right to be there, as well as asserting they are nonetheless still male, still hegemonic and therefore still masculine enough to sustain the gendered social order of hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity (Mallyon et al, 2010). In a sense, these males in the weight loss centre success stories may appear to possess an apprehension of becoming ‘too feminine’ and therefore ‘not masculine enough’ to reside within the hegemony of masculinity (Tischner, 2013).

3.5 Applying Foucault to the study of weight

Foucault has been introduced briefly above in relation to his development and exploration of the term ‘discourse’. In addition to his extensive work around discourse, Foucault also focuses heavily on power and the body. He was interested in exploring how power relates to the body and how the body has become a site whereby it is possible to identify it as an “object and target of power” (Foucault, 1975, p. 136). Foucault focuses on
how power comes to produce docile, disciplined bodies and how power can be enacted on and through bodies (McNay, 2013).

Although the methodology underlying and guiding this current project is FCDA, the researcher is also going to be drawing on some of Foucault’s work to help guide the critical analysis and discussion. Using both FCDA and Foucault encourages the critical and analytical examination of the discursive ideas around gender, weight and health that may emerge from within these weight loss centre success stories. As a poststructuralist, Foucault believed that everything is contingent. All meaning is impermanent, contested and negotiated between subjects existing within a discourse at a specific point in time (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002). Thus, this thesis integrates elements of a Foucauldian approach within the overall methodology of FCDA to explore discourses of weight, bodies and gender that may emerge from the weight loss centre success stories. The meanings derived from the success stories are contingent upon the time, situation and paradigm these discourses are discovered in.

Using Foucault enables the researcher to acknowledge how meaning, knowledge and understanding is socially constructed and disputed (Birrell, 2003). Foucault also encourages researchers to move beyond recognising social problems as scientific and medically defined facts or illnesses. Instead, he invites health and epidemiological researchers to explore the often-contradictory social meanings and understandings that exist around these social problems. Foucault allows researchers to understand the concept of how subjects are constituted through and within discourse to produce various subject positions (Wright et al, 2009). These various subject positions reflect the way society produces, constructs and manages weight and gendered bodies. Therefore, Foucault both necessitates and allows for discourse (and the body) to be at the forefront of examination
(Rail & Harvey, 1995). Here, employing Foucault encourages individuals to analyse the way that discourses can socially produce understanding, knowledge and meaning of a topic or idea. He also encourages individuals to explore how and why certain discursive statements come to be more accepted as ‘truthful’. For example, weight research has constructed certain individuals such as GPs, personal trainers, obesity surgeons or dieticians as experts. Thus, the researcher wants to make use of Foucault’s work to examine the process of how certain discursive statements spoken by these experts are more readily accepted to be true, than would be the case if the same discursive statement was communicated from a ‘non-expert’ (Bracken & Thomas, 2010).

Foucault’s work has been applied previously to the examination of obesity, health and weight. For example, both Duncan (1994) and Eskes, Duncan and Miller (1998) use the discursive arena of fitness magazines to examine Foucauldian concepts and ideals. Duncan (1994) examined the fitness magazine ‘Shape’ as a metaphorical Panopticon (a Foucauldian idea of a prison structure that encourages self-surveillance and self-discipline). Here, she found the Panopticon as a useful and effective metaphor for examining the mechanisms and processes that subjects undertake to achieve the unrealistic ‘perfect’ and healthy body. Likewise, Eskes, Duncan and Miller (1998) conclude that fitness magazines function to provide subjects with a means to construct knowledge of the self and encourage processes of self-discipline, and to drive in to subjects the necessity of self-care and unachievable bodily ideals. Both Heyes (2006) and Rail and Lafrance (2009) also apply a Foucauldian lens to examine discourses around health, weight and the body. With much relevance to this study, Heyes (2006) argues that the discursive arena of Weight Watchers encourages subjects to undertake processes of knowledge attainment, self-care practices and self-discipline relative to societal norms. Weight Watchers becomes a place
whereby nuances of power are enacted to discipline, control and cultivate the formation of knowledge of the self among subjects (Heyes, 2006). Heyes (2006) study is valuable in allowing the exploration of the discursive subject positions that individuals come to reside in and how this can influence how individuals experience and practice social processes. For example, in her study, Heyes (2006) was both a researcher and a dieter when she joined Weight Watchers. She was interested in exploring the simultaneous process of residing in the subject position of an individual losing weight whilst also residing in the subject position of a feminist researcher. Her study highlighted that Weight Watchers functions as a site for individuals to work on themselves and employ processes of self-care, self-management and processes of normalising and disciplining one’s body to fit the social standards of an acceptable ‘healthy’ body. Heyes (2006) study is especially useful to consider in the context for this current thesis. She acknowledges a pertinent point when she states that applying a feminist framework to explore the disciplinary processes and practices that occur within Weight Watchers can offer a means to explore how such processes become enacted on and by individual bodies. Moreover, these processes and practices can be explored in how they contribute to how individuals identify and interact with themselves and with other bodies. Hence, Heyes (2006) study is specifically valuable to consider in how she recognises the usefulness of applying a feminist lens to explore Weight Watchers as a disciplinary institution. Weight Watchers is rich with regulatory and normalising processes centering around the body to (re)produce previously obese bodies that can now be socially and culturally accepted as normal and appropriate.

Rail and Lafrance (2009) also employ a Foucauldian lens to explore discourses of weight, but within a different context: that of the popular American television show called Nip/Tuck. The authors explore how an episode of Nip/Tuck constructs discourses of weight
that function to discipline and manage the behaviour of individuals. This involves the subtle ‘forcing’ of obese individuals to confess to the sin of being obese, which is then followed by a process of developing a new, healthier lifestyle along with a new, ‘better’ body.

Applying a Foucauldian lens to the analysis of weight loss centre success stories lies in the need to move beyond conceptualising weight and obesity as merely biomedical health issues. Instead, Foucault encourages the exploration of how weight and weight loss comes to be discursively and socially constituted, governed, problematized, conceptualised, experienced and practiced (McGuire, 2010; Kuyvenhoven, 2012). The body speaks. Thus, focusing on what discursive meanings reside within and on the gendered body can help identity and understand how power, meaning and truth are concurrently enacted on the body to transform subjects into objects of medical knowledge (Foucault, 1978), and how this process functions within wider society to control and manage bodies, regulate behaviour and create knowledge of the self, others and society. In undertaking this project through an FCDA methodology and a consideration around Foucault’s work, the researcher shares Foucault’s purpose: to recognise “the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves” (Foucault, 1988, pp. 17-18). Since this knowledge may be context specific, the frameworks of FCDA and Foucault can be useful in considering how subjects consume and produce discourse by being an active, social subject within their own world (Davies, 2003; Gard et al, 2005).

Although Foucault and his work around discourse is useful and helps guide the research in the current study, there are limitations around his work, especially around gender, which need to be acknowledged. For example, one limitation of using Foucault alongside a feminist-based methodology is Foucault’s lack of reference to femininity and females and the overall notion of gender throughout his work (Orr, 1993). In this regard
McLaren (2002) argues that feminists often call Foucault ‘gender blind’ due to his disregard for femininity, gender and females. Despite Foucault’s strong focus on sexuality, he in fact did not address sexual and gendered difference between males and females (McLaren, 2002). One way this lack of focus could be problematic is that in Foucault’s work around power, he conceptualises power in a way that indicates all individuals, regardless of their sex and gender, are subjugated equally (Sawicki, 1991), when this is clearly not the case for males and females. However, there is also acknowledgement of the usefulness of drawing on Foucault’s work to explore gendered experiences. For example, Foucault’s work around discipline or surveillance can be used to explore female (and male) oppression (McLaren, 2002), which is what this current study is interested in. This is why, in part, the researcher made the decision to apply Foucault’s work alongside a feminist-based methodology; because the researcher believed certain Foucauldian concepts could be useful to explore in the context of hegemonic discourses that may emerge from the weight loss centres. To apply these concepts to allow a deeper analysis of the underlying messages within these weight loss centres and their stories, such as the disciplining of the docile, dieting subject or the development of bodies into objects of scientific knowledge.

For this current study, the researcher is bringing both Foucault and FCDA together, to complement each other. Here, FCDA is the methodology underlying this study, and the researcher is drawing on some of Foucault’s work to help guide the analysis. An important point to consider in relation to this is the disjunction that may arise between these two approaches. For example, whilst Foucault understood discourse in terms of language and its strong link to knowledge (McHoul & Grace, 1993), for FCDA, discourse is understood in similar ways but there is a specific focus on the discourses that contribute to or maintain a patriarchal ordering of society (Baker & Ellece, 2011). Since Foucault largely ignored
gender, as has been identified above, it becomes clear that there may be complications when combining FCDA and Foucault in a discourse-based project. This concept was a consideration throughout the project for the researcher, and the researcher remained vigilant of the amalgamation of the two constructs. However, the researcher is not employing both FCDA and Foucault as two methodologies. FCDA is the methodology underlying this study, with Foucault being used to help guide and produce some of the analysis. In saying that, the researcher remained true to FCDA as the methodology, and as such, drew heavily on FCDA in terms of its understandings and uses of terms such as discourse, power and its focus on gender. Foucault was employed to assist with some of the discussion but was not employed as the methodology underlying the study.
Chapter four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter justifies the methodologies used to collect and analyse the data from three selected Australian weight loss centres. This chapter follows on from the theoretical framework chapter and explores more specifically the methodological design of the study. This chapter begins by exploring the process of purposive sampling that was undertaken for this current study, followed by data analysis, exploring the multimodal analysis of images and researcher reflexivity. The chapter concludes with a section on the ethical considerations and potential limitations of the current study.

4.2 Purposive sampling

Sometimes known as judgemental sampling, purposive sampling is a non-probability approach to data collection. For this current study, the researcher employed purposive sampling to select the weight loss centres and the success stories (Stommel & Wills, 2004). This process was done by considering factors such as the intended purpose of the study, the research aims (Rubin & Babbie, 2010) and the research questions underlying the study (Ross, 2012). Purposive sampling has been found to be a valuable methodological approach in studies that aim to gather detailed data and information from a small number of individuals who share characteristics or have experienced or undergone an inimitable experience, rather than broader experiences and making generalisations (Jupp, 2006; Engel & Schutt, 2014). Therefore, this resulted in the researcher selecting three weight loss centres to provide unique insights or perspectives into the experiences of weight as well as
generate new and innovative ways of thinking about weight, gender and related concepts (McNaughton, 2014; Drisko & Maschi, 2016).

Beginning with a simple Google search, the researcher accessed the websites of a range of Australian weight loss centres. The researcher collected information on ten Australian weight loss centres:

1. Jenny Craig
2. Chi of Life
3. Ontrack Weight Loss Retreat
4. Weight Watchers (Australia and New Zealand)
5. Tony Ferguson Weight Loss Centre
6. Lite n’ Easy
7. Total Health & Wellbeing
8. Life Weight Loss Centre
9. Healthy Inspirations
10. Michelle Bridges 12 Week Body Transformation (12 WBT)

Through the process of purposive sampling, three weight loss centres were selected for data collection: Weight Watchers, Lite n’ Easy and 12 WBT. To arrive at these three weight loss centres, the researcher eliminated the Tony Ferguson Weight Loss Centre (number #5) and Life Weight Loss Centre (number #8) due to the centres not making publicly available success stories or testimonials of results from their program. Healthy Inspirations (number #9) was eliminated from the potential sampling pool since Healthy Inspirations is a woman’s only weight loss centre. As the underlying methodological framework of this thesis is FCDA, the researcher felt it imperative that both male and female success stories of the weight loss centre be analysed. Jenny Craig (number #1), Chi
of Life (number #2) and Ontrack Weight Loss Retreat (number #3) were eliminated since they only provided success stories in video form. To maintain consistency in analysis (and in continuing to draw inspiration from Jarvis' [2009] study) the researcher had made the decision for all the weight loss centre success stories to be in print form (to be able to analyse the images accompanying the success stories). Similarly, Total Health and Wellbeing (#7) only provided one paragraph success stories, without images. Since the researcher believes an important consideration of FCDA (and more specifically CDA) is the analysis of images within a text, this eliminated Total Health and Wellbeing. Hence, Weight Watchers, Lite n’ Easy and 12 WBT were the remaining three weight loss centres. All three of the selected weight loss centres offer some of the success stories in video form, however this study will only explore the discourses that may emerge from the success stories in print form found on the three weight loss centre websites.

The three weight loss centres chosen for this study are all Australian weight loss centres. Each centre has a primary focus on weight loss, and there are various programs that each centre provides to participants. For all three weight loss centres, the client base of the majority of the success stories are middle-aged individuals, with varying responsibilities, such as parents or full-time workers who struggle to find time to eat healthily or exercise. This next section will provide an overview of the three weight loss centres, as well as explore the main features of each centre and its programs.

Perhaps one of the most common weight loss centres around the world, Weight Watchers (Australia) emphasises flexibility and being able to lose weight without making drastic changes to your lifestyle. One of the key features of this program is the act of counting calories, in the form of ‘points’. Members are encouraged to stick to a certain number of ‘points’ per day to ensure weight loss. The ‘points’ are organised around the
calorie content of food, where higher calorie foods have a higher ‘point’ index. Members also receive access to recipes, meal plans, suggested workouts or exercise programs, mindset and psychological worksheets and tools, online chat and community support. There are also different prices for the different weight loss programs members can choose from. For example, the ‘online coaching’ program is the most basic program and starts from AU $33.50 a month. This provides the member access to features such as the Weight Watchers smart phone app, online tracking tools to log calories consumed and calories burnt, access to a Weight Watchers chat room and downloadable recipes and fitness plans. The second most expensive program is called ‘group coaching’ and this starts from AU $71.50 a month. This program has access to the same features as the ‘online coaching’ program, but with the addition of weekly group support meetings with Weight Watchers coaches and other members. Lastly, the most expensive program starts from AU $96.50 a month and is called ‘personal coaching’. Here, access is the same as both programs mentioned above, but with an addition of personalised coaching and personalised eating and exercise plans.

A strong feature of the Weight Watchers program is the community aspect during the process of losing weight. The program emphasises the importance of support during weight loss and encourages members to attend meetings, run by a Weight Watchers coach. Here, members can provide feedback about the program or talk about any difficulties they may be experiencing with weight loss or food. Weight Watchers has a focus on a holistic approach to weight loss, with a section on their website related to helping individuals to ‘shift your mindset’, whereby the program helps participants live and eat mindfully and identify popular thinking approaches towards weight loss, dieting and exercise. Weight Watchers also has a ‘slimmer of the year’ award, whereby each year, a participant is given
this title based on how much weight they lost within the year, or if they were particularly motivating and inspiring to other members.

Whilst Weight Watchers focuses on the ‘points’ system of food and attending meetings for support, Lite n’ Easy focuses more on the actual food and the characteristics of the food offered. Compared to Weight Watchers and 12 WBT (which will be explored in the next paragraph), Lite n’ Easy is much more about food, whereas the other two programs have a broader approach to weight loss, considering factors such as group meetings, psychological support and exercise. The Lite n’ Easy program emphasises certain aspects about the food available, such as that the food has been prepared by qualified chefs, the meals have been planned by dieticians to ensure the meals are nutritionally balanced and portioned and that there are more than one hundred meals to choose from. Another aspect emphasised by the program is that the meals are delivered directly to the member’s work or home. As opposed to Weight Watchers (and 12 WBT), there are no meetings or group support programs as part of the Lite n’ Easy program. This reinforces the idea that the main focus of Lite n’ Easy is about the food and making healthier food choices. As for the pricing, there are a variety of options depending on what the individual is looking for and is also based on what calorie amount the individual is looking for in a particular meal. For example, a full seven day plan, which includes breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks is $148 for 1200 calories a day. For 1500 calories a day, this price increases to $162, and increases again to $184 for 1800 calories. The choice in daily calorie allotments could perhaps be about the individual having the choice to decide how many calories they want to consume in a day based on how much weight they want to lose. There are also a range of other prices for different plans, such as purchasing just
dinners for five nights, which costs $64. There are also optional extras that individuals can pay for, such as desserts (e.g. apricot pudding in a four-pack for $9).

The last program, 12WBT, emphasises physical activity, nutrition and the psychology behind weight loss, however there is a heavier focus on physical activity and exercise. The creator of the 12WBT program, Michelle Bridges, has her background and qualifications in personal training; therefore, there is more of a focus on losing weight through exercise. The different 12WBT programs available to participants all start from a cost of $19.99 per week. The ‘beginner weight loss’ program is directed towards beginners starting out in their weight loss journey. The ‘running’ program focuses more on training individuals for running events, such as marathons, whereas the ‘lean and strong’ programs helps individuals to tone and shape their body. 12WBT also has a strong focus on the psychology behind weight loss and providing participants with ‘mindset videos’ to help them understand potentially negative thinking patterns or habits that might be contributing to their poor health. For the nutrition and food aspect of 12WBT, the website emphasises that the program involves “real food, not diet food”. The website highlights this aspect by providing a range of examples of the types of foods available to participants and states that the food is “designed by experts”. The food that can be eaten whilst following the program depends on the participant’s goal of the program. For example, if the participant is choosing to focus on strength or toning, there are a range of meal plans available for the participant that focuses on consuming adequate levels of protein. Alternatively, another type of meal plan that can be followed is the ‘weight loss’ meal plan which emphasises following a nutrient rich and balanced diet. These meal plans differ depending on the goal the participant is wanting to work towards whilst on the 12 WBT program.
Each website regularly updates their success stories, so all the weight loss centre success stories made available to the public from the three weight loss centre websites on the day of Thursday 20\textsuperscript{th} August, 2015 were collected for this current study. In addition, it should be noted that Weight Watchers Australia also covers Weight Watchers New Zealand. Even though the company covers both countries, each country has their own website and their own set of weight loss centre success stories. Although these New Zealand success stories were found on the Australian Weight Watchers website, the researcher felt it was important to keep the focus of this study within the Australian context. Therefore, the four New Zealand Weight Watchers success stories have been removed from the pool of success stories that were collected from the Australian Weight Watchers website on 20\textsuperscript{th} August, 2015. This left a total of forty-four success stories to be included. Of these forty-four success stories, 87\% were female success stories and 11\% were male success stories. The remaining 2\% consisted of one Australian workplace (see Table three).

\textbf{Table three:} The total number of Weight Watchers weight centre success stories made available to the public on 20\textsuperscript{th} August, 2015, the percentage of these success stories that were female and male and the average age of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight Watchers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of Australian Weight Watchers success stories made available to the public on 20\textsuperscript{th} August, 2015</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of female success stories</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of male success stories</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Other (one workplace)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of these success stories that were female</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of these success stories that were male</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of these success stories that were *other (one workplace)</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of participants providing the success stories</td>
<td>33 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the fifty-four success stories collected from Lite n’ Easy on this same date, 62% of the success stories were female, 26% were male and 13% were two individuals (85% of these (six of seven) were heterosexual couples, 15% (one of seven) was a mother and daughter team (see Table four).

**Table four:** The total number of Lite n’ Easy weight loss centre success stories made available to the public on 20th August, 2015, the percentage of these success stories that were female and male and the average age of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lite n’ Easy</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of weight loss centre success stories made available to the public on 20th August, 2015</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of female success stories</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of male success stories</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Other (heterosexual couple)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Other (mother and daughter)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of these success stories that were female</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of these success stories that were male</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of these success stories that were *other (one heterosexual couple, one mother and daughter team)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of participants providing the success stories</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a much smaller scope of success stories (10 success stories) publically available on the 12WBT website on 20th August, 2015, 80% of success stories were female and 20% were male (see Table five). The average age of the Weight Watchers participants was 33 years old. Both Lite n’ Easy and 12WBT only provided information detailing the ages of participants on a limited number of success stories and so an average age of participants could not be determined for these two weight loss centres.
**Table five:** The total number of 12WBT weight loss centre success stories made available to the public on 20th August, 2015, the percentage of these success stories that were female and male and the average age of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12WBT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of weight loss centre success stories made available to the public on 20th August, 2015</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of female success stories</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of male success stories</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of these success stories that were female</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of these success stories that were male</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of participants providing the success stories</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3 Data analysis

Upon the collection of the full range of success stories from the three weight loss centre websites (one hundred and eight [108] success stories), the first stage of data analysis involved an initial read through of all the collected success stories. This initial analysis was conducted because it allowed the researcher to identify and explore the initial discourses in the data set, which were then explored in detail in further analyses (Kyprianou, Graebner & Rindova, 2016). As part of this first stage of analysis, the researcher began making notes about the specific characteristics of each weight loss centre, highlighting certain aspects of each centre and making a note of what aspects were similar or different across the three weight loss centres. This stage also included reflecting on the type of language that was used or not used throughout each of the weight loss centres. One example of this reflection that the researcher explored (and wrote about in her reflexivity journal) was that both Weight Watchers and 12WBT employ quite a holistic approach to talking about weight, food, dieting and weight loss. This approach talks not only about food and exercise, but also the psychology or mindset behind weight and exercise. What this language use shows is the overriding premise and purpose behind these programs and what they hope to
The language used across these weight loss centres is very dramatic and positive. There is a strong discourse of encouragement, motivation, positivity and ‘you can do it’ attitude, which is similar to the findings from Hwang et al’s (2010) study. Rather than focusing on the negative physical, social or psychological effects of excess weight, these centres (and their websites) employ a strong discourse of positivity towards dieting and weight loss. This discourse was noted down in the researcher’s reflexivity journal and was explored in more detail in the findings section of the thesis.

Another consideration at this stage of the analysis was the observation of the role of these texts. The weight loss centres - and the success stories they provide to the public - are texts. They are not simply stories or descriptions about or from the participants and their weight loss. Instead, they are pieces of information that have a purpose. Ultimately, this purpose is to sell the weight loss centre (and their program) to the general public. These success stories function as marketing advertisements to provide ‘proof’ to the public that their program does work and that the individual reading the success story can too be successful at losing weight. It is the positive, uplifting and motivating language that functions to reinforce the idea that weight loss and dieting is easy and ‘fun’ but is only possible if individuals follow their program. This point is important because the weight loss centres want individuals to see physical proof that weight loss is possible (through the success stories and showing ‘before and after’ pictures) but is also only possible by joining the weight loss centre. This sense of ‘membership’ is significant because there is this underlying clause that states you too can only be successful at losing weight if you join ‘our club’; with the associated membership fees.

A second read-through of all the success stories was then conducted, this time marking key words or phrases that appeared common among many of the success stories,
such as ‘goal weight’, ‘calories’, ‘I have lost X kilograms’, ‘exercise’, ‘I have become a better parent’ or ‘my life has changed’. Thirdly, the researcher then began to organise these key words or phrases into larger themes. These themes were common across a large majority of the success stories, with some examples being the physical side effects of excess weight, disciplining themselves to follow the weight loss centre prescribed program, the trigger for change, a changed life or how losing weight benefited the family. These themes were then organised and placed under headings of discourses. This final step in this phase of the analysis involved organising and placing the themes under larger discourses that appeared across the success stories. Once the key words, themes and discourses were identified, they were added to a reflexive journal for future reference. This process of initially reading through the data and recording information was quite methodical and included the researcher keeping a reflexive journal. Both the process and purpose of keeping a reflexive journal will be explored in more detail in the reflexivity section of this thesis, but here, it is useful to point out how a reflexive journal was helpful during the initial stages of data analysis. The researcher methodically worked her way through the success stories, making notes in the journal about the initial themes that emerged and how that might develop into discourses, as well as writing down information such as how many male success stories and how many female success stories were collected from each weight loss centre. This process allowed the researcher to better manage the data and provided an overview of the characteristics and features of the data collected.

An important consideration for the researcher at this stage of the study was to consider what constitutes a discourse? How can discourse be defined and how can this definition influence what one may uncover during a discursive and analytical study? There are a multitude of definitions, understandings and applications of discourse and the
majority of academic disciplines have their own conceptions around what discourse is and these definitions will be specific to that particular discipline (Howarth & Howarth, 2000). For example, within linguistics, discourse is commonly understood by how it contributes to the language used and how this language communicates information and knowledge between subjects (Brown & Yule, 1983). Discourse in psychology focuses on gaining insight into particular moments of interaction and how the discursive domain of interaction functions to provide meaning and understanding of the social relations existing between subjects (Wiggins & Potter, 2007). Alternatively, for FCDA (and CDA), discourse is understood as the use of language which produces and contributes to an individual’s reality and regulates their actions and behaviours (Chilton, 2005; Jäger & Maier, 2009). Therefore, one should avoid attempting to come to or arrive at a concrete definition of what discourse is, not only because discourse has such a complex history (Mills, 2004), nor because each discipline employing discourse analysis does so to answer different questions (Willig, 2008), but also because the critical discourse analyst would oppose the possibility of ever coming to a single, unified or permanent meaning or understanding of a concept. In fact, Foucault comments on this very issue: “instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe I have in fact added to its meaning” (Foucault, 1972, p. 80). His refusal to offer a clear and consistent definition of discourse is significant since it emphasises the individuality and distinctiveness of knowledge and meaning, which is unable to be reduced to a singular definition.

As such, drawing inspiration from Foucault, the researcher did not approach this study with a specific ‘definition’ of discourse. The researcher felt too restricted to have to define what discourse is or what constitutes discourse, as the researcher felt this could largely influence what was found during an FCDA on the weight loss centres. Therefore,
the researcher developed a loose idea or construct of what discourse is. This helped to guide the research and the analysis but did not tie the researcher down to one specific definition or understanding of discourse. Therefore, for this study, the researcher understood discourse as the system of words, actions and rules that share common viewpoints, beliefs and understandings (Vick, 2006). By exploring the meanings, ideas and language embedded within any one text (which can be either spoken or written), the researcher can come to understand how language is used. How this language is used and communicated to others can offer insight into the discursive meanings or practices that are favoured in a specific context or environment. For FCDA, there is a specific focus on exploring or uncovering the discourses that contribute to or “sustain a patriarchal social order” (Lazar, 2005, p 5). For this study then, it became important for the researcher to recognise and explore discourse from this standpoint and point out the main discursive understandings within the success stories that appeared to contribute to the privileging of patriarchy over femininity within the success stories (Lazar, 2005). As there was an explicit focus on how the discursive meanings of gender (and weight) for this study, some examples of discourses that were identified in the secondary analysis included discourses of selfishness, discipline and accountability, the abject body, the transformative experience and effects of losing weight, the institution of the family and the discourse of simplicity.

Having grouped and organised the information from within the success stories into similar themes, the next stage of analysis involved exploring in more detail the discourses and discursive concepts that emerged throughout the previous stage of identifying the initial themes. From the themes, these discourses were explored in how they provided insight into larger understandings of health, illness, disease, gender and gender relations. With a specific focus on the gendered hierarchy embedded within social relations (Lazar,
2005), FCDA offers and provides a suitable scaffold to explore such ideals. FCDA also allows the consideration of how individuals come to understand themselves as gendered beings and how their gender interacts with various social facets. This study has a particular focus on the facets of health and weight and its intricate relationship with gender (Bell & McNaughton, 2007). The range of discourses within the success stories, regardless of whether they are conflicting, dominant, subservient, suppressed or secondary (Dyson & Brown, 2005; Coates, 2012), can be explored in how they create, produce, represent and circulate meanings relating to weight, health, illness, gender, femininity and masculinity. Both the coherent and conflicting relationships that exist between discourses within any one text are important, regardless of whether this discursive relationship is perverse or pleasant. Therefore, exploring the extensive range of discourses within these success stories can allow for and encourage this discursive relationship to emerge between the dominant and subservient discourses, as well as the conflicting, converging and alternative discourses (Litosseliti, 2013). In addition, the success stories are written from both a first person and third person point of view. For example, first person: “I make more of an effort with make-up and I love clothes shopping (Michelle, Weight Watchers) and third person: “Having overcome postnatal depression, Ally Redding lost an impressive 30 kilos [kilograms] and developed a passion for stand-up comedy!” (Ally, Weight Watchers). The tense that these stories are written, and who is positioned as the speaker can have an impact on how these success stories are read and the meanings that can be derived from the stories. For example, first person narrative allows the text to become more personable to the reader and feel personally connected to the subject in the text (Ciccomascolo & Sullivan, 2013). For this current study, this process is significant as it may encourage readers to empathise with the experiences of the participants and to experience the journey of weight loss alongside the participant. This may encourage them to consider joining the weight loss
centre. Alternatively, when a text is written in third person, the author takes on the role of ‘omniscient narrator’, whereby the author is not personally involved in the story but exists in a position of ‘all-knowing’ of the story (Brown, 2016). This is particularly important for this current study as it can highlight the influence that the weight loss centres can have in contributing to ideals around weight and dieting. In third person narrative, the ‘omniscient narrator’ acts as the ‘expert’ and exists in the position of power to dictate how these stories are written and how they are read, such as how the ‘fat’ person is talked about or represented, and how fatness or overweight in general is described. Is fat talked about in a negative way in these success stories? If so, then the reader of the text may also take on this viewpoint of fatness as well. As such, who is positioned as the speaker of a text has discursive effects for how the text, and the subjects in the text are discursively constructed. This can have an influence on the meanings derived from the text and can also influence what kinds of messages are circulated throughout society based on the messages that individuals are receiving from these texts.

4.4 Multimodal analyses of images

Along with exploring and critically analysing the text in question, an FCDA (or more precisely CDA) approach often includes an analysis of the images or features within this text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). A multimodal approach to analysing discourse can be useful because it not only adopts a wider, more fruitful approach to analysing discourses within differing modes, but it also allows for the consideration of the discursive relationships that may exist between the text and its accompanying images (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). Paltridge (2012) states that interaction and meaning making through the use of language is rarely achieved and conducted through one realm - or mode - of communication. Other modes to assist individuals in communication or conveying a
particular message can include hand gestures, body positions, video or images, whereby images can include photographs, map or diagrams. Therefore, in exploring both the text of the success stories, along with the images that accompany these success stories, hopefully this can produce a more in-depth and comprehensive discursive analysis of not only the written text and the images, but also of the discursive interrelationship between these two modes of communication and meaning making. As such, the semiotic and discursive relationship between these two modes - written text and the images - is a vital and significant process for this current study (Phillips et al, 2002). These two modes exist in a functional discourse and act to produce meaning through not only their relationship between each other, but also in their relationship to the consumer of the text (O'Halloran, 2004). Employing a multimodal discursive analytical process has been conducted within a range of disciplines. For example, Stamou and Paraskevopoulos (2004) conducted a CDA to explore the discourses of tourism and environmentalism within Greek visitor’s books, whilst also focusing on the important role that the images in these visitor’s books played in helping to transmit and portray discourse of tourism and environmentalism to the public. Similarly, Wang (2014) applied a CDA approach to examine the specific news images found on magazine websites from China and the United States of America. Both studies allowed the researcher to understand the importance of including a visual imagery component when conducting a study with CDA as its framework. In addition, these studies have been useful for the researcher to understand the discursive and symbiotic relationship that the images within a text have with other features of the text and highlighting the importance of observing the discursive relationship between these images and the text in focus. For FCDA, there is a focus on exploring how particular discourses are emphasised within a text through language use or the choice of particular phases or the inclusion of
features such as images. For this study, the quotes from the success stories demonstrate how these are examples of or indicate to discourses of weight or gender.

An example of the process of FCDA that was undertaken for this current study will now be explored. This specific example explores the process of applying an FCDA approach to an image found within the weight loss centre success stories:

1: Different colours are used to highlight and emphasise some of the details in the success stories.

2: The large majority of the success stories have both ‘before’ and ‘after’ images. Some of these ‘before’ images are in black and white, a photographic technique that is sometimes used to symbolise the past (Shaden, 2014) and therefore to convey to the reader what they are now not (i.e. obese) or what they used to be.
3: The first sentence of Brooke’s success story identifies her as a mother. This is further reinforced by including an image of her holding her child. This can influence how the text is read and the opinions the reader may form about Brooke, as both a mother and an individual wanting to lose weight.

The next section of the methodology will explore the concept of reflexivity. Reflexivity is important to consider throughout the research process; to consider how an individual’s own values may influence the research process. Reflexivity could affect how individuals approach the research, or what findings may emerge during analysis. As such, it was necessary for the researcher to continuously reflect on her own reflexivity throughout the research process and remain aware of the potential impact of this on how the researcher approached and analysed the data.

4.5 Reflexivity

Throughout the process of data collection and data analysis, the researcher ensured she was aware of and had acknowledged the concept of reflexivity and the important role or impact this may have on how the success stories were analysed and what findings emerged during the analysis. The researcher of any project must ensure they take the time to reflect upon themselves as they conduct and inquire into the research, but also reflect “outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political and other forces that shape everything about the inquiry” (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002, p. 216). Reflexivity can be broken down into two main areas, both of which are important to this current study: personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. These two will now be explored.
4.5.1 Personal reflexivity

Personal reflexivity entails that the researcher reflects on their own values, interpretations, beliefs or viewpoints whilst conducting research (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001; Willig, 2013). Personal reflexivity is often unavoidable, especially in qualitative research, because our individual circumstances, beliefs and viewpoints may be placed on the research (King & Horrocks, 2010).

For this current study, this process of reflexivity (and the influence reflexivity may have on the study) was handled through keeping a ‘reflexivity journal’. As explored briefly in the data analysis section of this thesis, a reflexivity journal was used throughout the process of both conducting an FCDA on the weight loss centre success stories, as well as when writing the analysis, discussion and conclusion sections of the current thesis. This journal can assist in allowing the researcher to write down notes or comments during the research process, related to how their experiences, reflections, opinions, values, attitudes and methodological stance can influence the discourses, ideas or interpretations extracted or inferred from the research data and findings (Harrison et al, 2001; McLeod, 2015). For this current study, one example that the researcher included in her ‘reflexivity journal’ was her awareness that she was coming from a feminist standpoint from both a methodological and a personal position. As such, the researcher was aware that her personal feminist standpoint might influence how the weight loss centre success stories are deconstructed and analysed, as well as how it may influence which discourses are extracted from the success stories and presented as most ‘relevant’ or ‘important’. The researcher has also recognised and accepted that other individuals who do not share this same feminist viewpoint may draw different and perhaps contradictory discursive meanings from these success stories. Such a process should not be avoided but should be viewed as productive.
Rather than trying to control what one finds or discovers when analysing discourse (Ortlipp, 2008), it should be accepted that differing and contradictory interpretations within these discourses may be discovered. This can enhance the richness of the data and provide alternative ways of considering and questioning the discourses in focus (King et al, 2010).

The fact that the researcher has acknowledged she is coming from a feminist standpoint from both a methodological and personal position is important. It indicates that the researcher’s own values and constructs of knowledge are being developed, formed and (re)created during the research process. Adopting a reflexive, feminist standpoint lends itself to the fact that there is a focus on building knowledge and working towards greater equality and justice (Jaggar, 2014). As such, reflexivity is an important consideration in this current study, because it plays a role in how the researcher, as both a researcher and a feminist, contributes to the construction, discussion and circulation of knowledge around gender, identity, values and power relations. In itself, the feminist-based methodology for this study provides an indication of the motivation for this study; it is to explore the discourses of gender (and weight) within the success stories of weight loss centres and to enhance the understanding around how dieting and weight loss are gendered processes. How females and males experience such processes is different. By highlighting these differences, the researcher can hopefully come to a place of better understanding how males and females not only experience these processes, but also understand the lived experiences of these better and the discursive meanings males and females both attribute to and derive from these processes.

Another consideration of personal reflexivity for this current project is the researcher’s own experiences with weight related health issues. This consideration and its potential impact was noted in the researcher’s reflexivity journal. The researcher was aware
and conscious of her own experiences relating to weight loss, and how these experiences may influence how the data is both approached and analysed. Albeit that the participants in the success stories were obese or overweight, the researcher has personal experience around being underweight, and the prejudice and negative judgements relating to weight and health. The researcher is highly aware that her own weight loss health issues and experiences are likely to have a profound impact on how these weight loss centres success stories are read, interpreted and analysed. The researcher believes that her own weight-related experiences can enrich the data analysis process, because the researcher can draw on her own experiences to interpret the data. In addition, the researcher responds to fatness and excess weight with empathy and compassion, because the researcher understands the struggles of not only having to deal with weight-related issues, but the researcher is also aware of the social stigma attached to such issues. In the process of conducting an FCDA on the weight loss centre success stories, the researcher recognises that there was a strong sense of drawing upon her own values and discourses of health, weight and physical activity in addition to the theoretical framing of the study. It is the combination of exploring a personally relevant topic along with employing the relevant feminist-based methodology that enriches this study and permits a thorough analysis and discussion around discourse of weight and gender in the success stories.

4.5.2 Epistemological reflexivity

Epistemological reflexivity involves asking questions about the research and the collected data to determine and bring forward possible assumptions individuals produce about the world and about knowledge. In highlighting these assumptions, it allows researchers to think about how they are interpreting a phenomenon or idea and what can result from interpreting this in a particular way. Questions may include:
• How have the research questions defined and limited what can be ‘found’?
• How could the research questions have been investigated differently?
• To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation? (Willig, 2013).

Like personal reflexivity, the epistemological framework that underlies a study may influence what is found throughout the research process. Epistemologically, this study is grounded in feminist scholarship. The methodology of FCDA paves way for there to be a substantial focus on addressing the gendered and asymmetrical hierarchical arrangements that may contribute to a hegemonic patriarchal order throughout society (Lazar, 2005). Therefore, the employment of this specific epistemology will almost certainly influence the research process, and the researcher is very much aware of this process and acknowledges the impact this may have on the research process and research findings. In addition, the researcher acknowledges that the application of a different methodology to these weight loss centre success stories may produce or point to different or contradictory discourses than what was found when FCDA was applied to these success stories.

4.6 Ethical considerations

The researcher followed the relevant guidelines outlined by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University of Sydney, and followed any appropriate ethical guidelines relating to document research and the collection of publically available advertising material and resources. The data collected was freely and publically available on the Internet for all interested parties. Even though this information was publically available on the Internet, the researcher did understand the need to respect potentially private and sensitive information contained in the weight loss centre success stories.
Therefore, the researcher did remain considerate and respectful to the success stories, the individuals mentioned in the success stories (including doctors or personal trainers as part of the process of joining the weight loss centre program), as well as any private or sensitive information also found in the success stories, by storing the collected information in an appropriate manner. A hard copy of the success stories was kept in a locked room, with no potential access from other individuals. An electronic copy of the success stories was kept on a password-sensitive computer, and the data was only shared between the researcher and the researcher’s supervisors.

4.7 Anticipated problems and limitations

As with any methodological framework, there may be limitations or weaknesses, and the researcher must acknowledge and identify how these can be considered. For example, in the application of a discursive approach, Morgan (2010) acknowledges that because meaning is never final or complete, as it is always contingent on the context by which it is explored and because any meaning an individual derives from a text is individualised to one’s own interpretation, “the door is never closed on any analysis and each new interpretation gives rise to a further intense critique” (Morgan, 2010, p.4). Therefore, the researcher has acknowledged that the discourses drawn from the weight loss centre success stories are highly contingent on the time, place and context within which these discourses are revealed. The researcher is also aware that each individual exploring the discourses within these success stories will most likely uncover potentially different discourses to what the researcher discovered. Although Morgan (2010) stated that this process was in fact a limitation of discourse analysis, the researcher instead views this process as a positive. The researcher advocates that because meaning is in fact incomplete and that because there are always going to be more and different interpretations of any discourse or
discursive topic, this allows for discourse analysts to obtain a much larger, comprehensive understanding of the complex discourses that are uncovered by different individuals at different times and in different contexts. Individuals create and produce knowledge and understanding of themselves, of others and of the social world through the various interactions, associations and transmissions of language within the social world. This therefore indicates that an individual’s own interpretations and subjective understandings of events, situations or concepts are constructed based on their experiences and social engagement, rather than the development of any one truth. Thus, in outlining and mapping the discourses that one may uncover within these weight loss centre success stories, the aim is not to determine whether these identified discourses are true or false (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987), rather it is to focus on the wide range of discourses that can be discovered within these success stories and explore the different meanings and ideals that can be derived at any one point in time. Discourse analysis needs to encourage the exploration of the numerous ambiguities and incongruities that exist within society (Choudhry, 2016). The fluidity and flux of the human subject, of society and of human experience paves the way for the researcher to delve into the social ideals and discourses that many take to be true and attempt to enquire into such understandings (Holmes, 2007). With the rejection of there being one essential truth (Thomas, 2002) that pre-exists meaning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), the researcher encourages discursive analytical approaches to not shy away from the fact that meaning is never complete or that there is a never ending process of interpretation that can be applied to these discourses. Instead, the researcher invites and encourages examination into the multifarious and discursive versions of truths that are being constructed within these success stories at that point in time. Since the central aim of this thesis is to explore the multiple discourses that may exist around weight and gender
within the context of weight loss centre success stories, FCDA proved the most helpful methodological tool for this thesis.

Secondly, being aware of researcher bias is vital. Some degree of bias will always occur during the research process (Panucci & Wilkins, 2010). Rather than trying to avoid this bias, the focus should instead be on accepting that some bias will exist and therefore reflecting on how the researcher can limit the influence this bias has on the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As such, being aware of one’s reflexivity is perhaps the most important approach to ensuring bias is acknowledged, addressed and limited throughout the research process (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011). The keeping of the reflexivity journal throughout the study facilitated this process.

Another possible limitation of the current study is that only successful weight loss centre success stories were collected and discursively analysed. The stories of participants who relapse or do not lose weight are usually not offered up for public viewing by these weight loss centres. Since a large majority of participants regain weight upon completion of a weight loss program (Harmon, 2008), the researcher is conscious that the discourses one can draw from the success stories are transient and may only exist at the specific time that the weight loss success story was written. The experience of weight cycling is not explored in these weight success stories. Hence, the weight loss centre stories available to the public only represent a partial view of how these individuals approach, experience and talk about weight loss and dieting.
Chapter five: Findings

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five of the thesis includes an analysis of the major discourses found upon completing an FCDA on the success stories of Australian weight loss centres. Discourse one to four focuses on gendered discourses that emerged from the success stories, whereas discourse five to nine are weight related discourses found throughout the success stories. Throughout this chapter, the researcher refers extensively to Jarvis’ (2009) study, because of its similarity to the current investigation. Jarvis (2009) analysed weight loss magazine success stories collected from ‘Slimming World’ magazine, whereas this current study explores the success stories from online sites. Since this current study drew inspiration from Jarvis’ (2009) study, the analysis and discussion section may identify how this current study diverges or converges with the findings from Jarvis’ (2009) study. By doing so, the current study will add to a wider understanding of how new modes of communication help to shape the development of discourses around weight and bodies. In addition, some of the ideas explored have relevance to multiple discourses, considering the context within which they are explored in. This multiplicity of meaning and context for discourse-based studies is a real strength to the study; it highlights the practice of working with various productions of knowledge, discourse, meanings and ideas (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). As such, the researcher found it possible to use some of the same material to explore and analyse a number of points from different angles.
5.2 Gender discourses

5.2.1 Discourse one: ‘Doing’ gender

Within the weight loss centre success stories, there are various examples of individuals ‘doing’ gender and engaging in gendered performances of masculinity and femininity, as well as gendered practices of weight loss and dieting. ‘Doing gender’ was coined by West and Zimmerman (1987), where they contend that gender does not reside in the individual but is a socially located achievement and an accomplishment that emerges through interactions and engagement with others (Wharton, 2012; Gailey, 2014).

Zoe (Weight Watchers) ‘does’ gender by labelling herself as a mother and a partner and identifies how she achieves and fulfils both this ‘mother role’ and ‘partner role’: "I've gone from living on KFC and McDonald’s to cooking low-fat, low-salt meals for the family…my healthy living has also had an impact on my partner - he's started working out and eating the healthy foods I prepare". The following examples from the success stories refer to the females ‘doing gender’ by identifying themselves as females:

“My colleagues call me the amazing shrinking woman” (Karen, Weight Watchers).
“I'm in great shape for a woman of 74 [seventy-four years old]” (Barbara, Weight Watchers).
“No one calls me the 'big girl' anymore” (Leonie, Weight Watchers).
“I hid behind my persona as the ‘friendly fat girl’” (Stacey, Weight Watchers).
“I’m half the woman I used to be” (Melissa K, Weight Watchers).
“I am a blind woman who’s suffered from an eating disorder and a really poor attitude towards food for many years” (Ali, Lite n' Easy).

Following are examples that show the individual acting or behaving in a stereotypical female way or displaying stereotypical feminine traits, such as being emotional or in tune with their feelings. These quotes demonstrate females acting in stereotypical ways or demonstrating stereotypical female qualities, such as happiness, satisfaction and enjoyment over their new body, getting to experience clothes shopping at their ‘new weight’ and also sadness and a deep sense of shame about how their bodies used to look. This shame around the body is deeply rooted in our society and many individuals are made to feel ashamed and embarrassed about their bodies and how they look (Gilbert & Thompson, 2002):

“It was such an emotional experience. It felt as if I was throwing away the old me. Losing weight has been a great journey and I’ve discovered so much, but mostly I’ve learnt about myself. I’m learning to love the happier, healthier new me” (Jan, Weight Watchers)

“A few months ago, I found myself nearly crying while I was reading one of my old Weight Watchers’ journals” (Penelope, Weight Watchers)

“Writing in a journal helped me work through some of my major issues” (Erin, Weight Watchers)

“I used to cringe every time I saw photos of myself and, if I was alone, I would cry” (Weight Watchers)

“Over the years, I developed a relationship with food whereby every time I was stressed or upset by something, I turned to the fridge or pantry for comfort. I used food to ‘fill the gap’” (Rheanan, Weight Watchers)
“I make more of an effort with make-up and I love clothes shopping” (Michelle S, Weight Watchers)
“I dreaded shopping for clothes and remember shopping for bras and crying when I discovered my new larger bra size” (Shannon, Lite n’ Easy)
“I just got really, really sad about the way I felt and looked, and I thought ‘I can’t go on like this’” (Barbara, 12WBT)
“Jacqueline's a big fan of Michelle’s Mindset Video Lessons. “They keep you focused and get you to deal with the underlying reasons why you became what you were” (Jacqueline, 12WBT)

The above examples detail how the females are ‘doing gender’. West et al (1987) note that the performance of gender involves the conscious doing of behaviours or actions in light of what someone believes is suitable or not suitable for one’s gender. These behaviours or actions are expressions of one’s masculinity and femininity (Goffman, 1976). Three examples of individuals acting in stereotypically suitable ways for their gender is found in the success stories of Michelle S (Weight Watchers), Elizabeth (Weight Watchers) and Tracey (12WBT). Since losing weight, Michelle now makes “more of an effort with make-up and I love clothes shopping”. Here, Michelle’s weight loss has allowed her to feel comfortable enough to display and ‘perform’ her gender (femininity) to society in a way that allows her to be successfully deemed as an appropriate female. One of Elizabeth’s ‘top weight loss tips’ is to “reward yourself with a new dress or hairdo”. Similarly, Tracey (12WBT) states that prior to joining 12WBT, she “fell into a slump and haven’t dedicated any time to pampering myself. Not only do I feel fantastic, but this makeover made me feel so special and showed me I can feel and look beautiful!” Thus, what can be witnessed happening here for Michelle, Elizabeth and Tracey is that they
construct these practices as female-suitable ways to reward oneself for losing weight. In engaging in these practices, they are not only successful in rewarding themselves appropriately for their weight loss, but they are also successful in ‘performing’ as appropriate females, suitable enough for other gendered bodies to acknowledge that they are both feminine and female. As a result of social conditioning, we are engaged in a continual process of gender display. At any one time, we engage in a simultaneous process of displaying our own gender identity, as well as interpreting and deconstructing the social, cultural and gendered cues that other individuals are displaying from within their own discourses of gender and sexuality. As social beings, we can recognise a behaviour or action and deem it as either suitable or not suitable for an individual of any one gender to perform.

West et al (1987) define sex as being biologically and physiologically male or female, which in itself is socially constructed since an individual is identified as either male or female through “the application of socially agreed upon criteria for classifying persons as females or males” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127). An individual is placed in a sex category, based on their outward presentation or display of male or female qualities (Kamada, 2010). Gender can be defined as “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127). In other words, gender can be understood as the doings or enactments of masculine or feminine behaviours or actions (Mavin & Grandy, 2013). These doings or actions are part of a performance as a gendered being. Butler (1990) states that “gender proves to be a performance... [where] gender is always a doing” (p. 25). This performance involves the continuous and repetitive ‘doings’ or performances of gender, the “stylized repetition of acts” (Butler, 1990, p. 140). However, these doings or
acts are not stable, nor do they provide for or produce a fixed or permanent gendered identity. An individual’s gendered identity is in a constant state of flux, of becoming, modification, adaptation and reiteration. It is a cyclical and reiterative process whereby they discursively exist and reside within the world and exist around and interact with other gendered bodies (Bordo, 2004; Fisher, 2010; Vick & Martinez, 2011), a process that Butler (1990) recognised as resignification: the continuous and constant adaptation and modification of culturally gendered norms and standards within a society at any one time (Stone, 2007). This performance of gender can be performed on both a subconscious and conscious level. Some individuals may be actively aware that their gender displays or enactments are subject to normative discrimination, judgment and categorisation. This is based on their doings or actions as a male or female and the expressions and displays of their masculinity and femininity (Goffman, 1976). These displays are discursively situated within the stereotypical expectations of what society believes to be acceptable for how a male or female ‘should’ be and ‘should’ act (Brubaker, 2007; Behnke et al, 2011, Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013).

What was also found within the weight loss centre success stories was mention of females ‘doing masculinity’ and males ‘doing femininity’. Females do not exclusively just ‘do femininity’ because they are female, nor do males ‘do masculinity’ exclusively because they are male. In fact, how was or is it ever possible for individuals to come to understand or accept that a certain behaviour, action or response is considered to be more masculine or feminine and considered a suitable way for a male or female to act? Weatherall (2002) makes an interesting point in saying that individuals are able to label a behaviour, action or role as either masculine or feminine because we ourselves are engaged in the social appropriation of prescribing certain traits or behaviours to males and females. As such,
individuals can recognise when someone ‘does femininity’ or ‘does masculinity’ both appropriately and inappropriately because they are “culturally competent members” (Weatherall, 2002, p. 106) of a society that recognises and then stereotypes a behaviour as being suitable and appropriate for females, for males or for both females and males. Therefore, because gender and gender identity are fluid, fragmented and not fixed, individuals can move in and out of the categories of female or male, as well as moving in and out of ‘doing’ femininity and masculinity. One’s femininity or masculinity is not permanent or tied down to the body that one occupies. Therefore, females can do both femininity and masculinity and males can do both masculinity and femininity. Erin’s (Weight Watchers) success story is an example of a female ‘doing masculinity’ within the success stories:

“Strength training is so important, too. At first I was worried I wouldn’t look feminine anymore, but my trainer explained to me that an overly muscly look requires extremely hard and deliberate training” (Erin, Weight Watchers).

Here, Erin not only identifies herself as a female but also identifies herself as a non-male, in that she wants to have muscles but is fearful that this muscularity will deem her as an unacceptable female. Erin is also simultaneously constituting a particular notion of femininity, which sees her accepting of herself as having muscle. She is engaging in this body work but is making sure it fits an appropriate version of being a female. For females, there is a particular focus on emphasising their femininity in appropriate ways. Defined by Connell (1987), emphasised femininity is the “form of femininity that is defined around compliance with subordination and is orientated to accommodating the interests and desires of men” (Connell, 1987, p. 183). Emphasised femininity looks at females behaving and
acting in such a way to ensure the interests and needs of hegemonic masculinity are met and satisfied. Societal and cultural control is enforced to discipline females to act, maintain and consequently be portrayed in a suitable feminine way for the benefit of the male hegemony (Hargreaves, 1994).

Whilst the notion of females ‘doing masculinity’ has a strong presence in this discourse, there is only one example from within the success stories of males ‘doing femininity’. Here, Jeff engages in or speaks in a way that is stereotypically believed to be feminine or ‘womanly’ and he may be constructed in a way that signifies he is acting or ‘doing’ femininity or feminine behaviours:

“At first, it felt weird as a man doing [exercise] videos in the garage, but I started to love them” (Jeff, 12WBT)

Jeff’s 12WBT quote referring to him feeling ‘weird’ also refers to stereotypical gendered behaviour. Does Jeff believe that, as a male, he should be exercising outside and engaging in stereotypical masculine sports or activities? Or perhaps he feels ‘weird’ because he is following a weight loss centre exercise program that he (or society) believes is stereotypically for females. Here, the ‘femininity’ Jeff refers is constructed by his own understanding around the discourse based on the cultural environment and experiences of joining the weight loss centre and following its program. The discourses of gender, sexuality and identity that Jeff draws on provides insight into his own discursive constructions of femininity and masculinity and what he believes to be suitable female or male behaviour or conduct.
5.2.2 Discourse two: Self-presentation during weight loss

Throughout the male and female success stories, there was a strong emphasis on the differing and multiple roles or subject positions that all individuals adopted during the process of joining the weight loss centre and following its program. The four most common roles that the individuals refer to throughout the success stories are: a parent, a partner, an employee in the workforce and an individual joining the weight loss centre. Not all the success stories refer to these four roles because not all individuals are parents or have partners or are employed in the workplace. The only role that all the success story participants have in common is that of an individual joining the weight loss centre. Leonie (Weight Watchers) refers to three of the four most common roles undertaken in these success stories. She identifies herself as a parent (“I have more energy to play with my kids”), a partner (“one day my husband cut out a picture”) and joining the weight loss centre (“I make time each week… to attend Weight Watchers meetings”) but does not mention or identify herself as an employee in the workforce. Similarly, Zoe’s Weight Watchers success story also does not make mention of a role in the workplace, but does refer to the other three most common roles: a parent (“when Zoe Gebbie was still wearing her size 18 [eighteen] maternity pants 10 [ten] months after her daughter’s birth, she knew something had to change”), her role as a partner (“my healthy living has also had an impact on my partner”) and her role of joining the weight loss centre (“I joined Weight Watchers and had to make some huge changes to my diet”). Alternatively, Tanya fulfils two of the four most common roles: an employee in the workforce (“I work full time”) and of joining the weight loss centre (“I started ordering [Lite n’ Easy] online and never looked back”), whilst Anita (Weight Watchers) fulfils the mother role (“Now I walk with my boys in the double pram”) and the role of joining the weight loss centre (“Having lost 17kg [seventeen kilograms] in 2003, I knew that the [Weight Watchers] program works for me”). Among the male success
stories, detail is also provided about these roles. For example, Dane (Weight Watchers) talks about the ‘partner’ role and how he and his wife lost weight together, while Raun (Weight Watchers) also talks about how his weight loss has allowed himself and his partner to still eat out and enjoy food. Likewise, Brian (Weight Watchers) also refers to the partner role and how both his and his partner’s eating habits have changed since joining Weight Watchers. For Ross (Lite n’ Easy), he briefly mentions the father role in the context of his daughter had also recently began Lite n’ Easy as well, which provided him the motivation to also join the program. For Nav (Lite n’ Easy), detail is provided about his busy work schedule and how Lite n’ Easy allows him to have freedom and flexibility around his work schedule. Jeff’s 12 WBT story highlights him fulfilling all four main roles: partner, parent, individual in the workforce and individual losing weight.

Whilst the male success stories do provide some detail about the various roles adopted by the males, there is much less emphasis of this compared with the female success stories. Whereas all the female success stories explore in detail the difficulty, pressure and stress in trying to manage responsibilities of work, family and losing weight, the male success stories display far less emphasis of this process. What can be witnessed is that both the female and male success stories adopt different roles during the weight loss process; perhaps they act in certain ways and adopt these roles due to their belief in the expectation of how males and females should act.

There is a lack of focus around the familial responsibilities and obligations that the males in the sample adopt throughout the success stories. This can point to the suggestion that there is a sense of a lack of pressure that the males feel in having to provide support for the family during the process of losing weight. The main focus among the female success stories is trying to juggle different roles, responsibilities and obligations whilst also
trying to lose weight, as well as having a much stronger focus on how familial or social relationships have been improved by losing weight. Conversely, the main focus among the male success stories is the adverse health effects caused by excess weight, which then leads to exploring how losing weight has benefitted their physiological health and wellbeing. The weight loss centres structure and present the male and female weight loss centre success stories in varying ways to target and encourage males and females through different means. Although there may be “dominant discourses constructing stereotypical assumptions about masculinity, femininity and binary gender differences” (Baxter, 2003, p. 8) which can influence how individuals come to understand and construct gendered behaviour, FCDA allows the researcher to explore both the conflicting and converging discourses, of gender, obesity and weight rather than simply accepting these discursive constructs as the truth (Brock, 2012).

5.2.3 Discourse three: The ‘good mother’

More commonly understood in relation to feminist scholarship rather than its literal meaning, the formation of the ‘good mother’ discourse is concerned with the social and cultural construction of motherhood and the stereotypes placed on mothers in terms of how they should act, behave and exist in this world (Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010). These stereotypes (and the ideologies and discourses attached to these stereotypes) of how mothers ‘should be’ are in a continuous state of flux, ever-evolving depending on the social, cultural and economic milieu of a society at any one point in time (Porter & Kelso, 2010). For example, around the time of World War II, descriptions and constructions of what the ‘good mother’ should be involved the stereotypical ‘stay at home mother’ who cared for her husband and children, whilst her husband financially supported and provided for the family through full time, paid employment (Caplan, 2001). The discourse of the ‘good
mother’ can also create the subject position of being the ‘good mother’ because it helps to shape the detail about the actions or behaviours of an individual (Duits, 2008). These repertoires help structure the ways in which a shared meaning of parenting come to the fore. These subject positions are made available in particular gendered discourses of parenting, whereby these discourses “always designate positions for people to occupy as subjects” (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002, p.41). The ‘good mother’ subject position is explored first within the success stories, followed by a consideration around the construction of the ‘good person’.

The following two quotes are examples from the Weight Watchers success stories that explore the female’s understanding of what they believe it means to be a ‘good mother’. They both identify their occupancy within this ‘good mother’ subject position:

“I decided on Weight Watchers because their guidelines were easy and the program fitted around my family life. I wanted to cook healthy meals the whole family could enjoy and benefit from. It also suited me because I could still eat everything; it just required a little organisation” (Alison, Weight Watchers)

“I’ve always tried to be strong in the face of life’s challenges and hope I’ve taught my children the importance of being determined” (Gabrielle, Weight Watchers)

Other examples also show occupancy of this ‘good mother’ subject position. For example, Tara (Weight Watchers) states that “many women are so busy looking after everyone else that they forget to look after themselves”, whereas Amanda (Lite n’ Easy) states that “it’s one of those things being a mother, you always put your kids and their needs first”. Here, both Tara and Amanda access this ‘good mother’ subject position and use it to construct the discourse
of what a ‘good mother’ should be: putting her children and their needs before her own. Similarly, Leonie (Weight Watchers) states she “had my second daughter 13 [thirteen] months after my first and was so busy raising two babies that I didn’t think about my health”. Additionally, Ally (Weight Watchers) states that she would “get up early before the household needed me so I could go for a walk to clear my head and squeeze in exercise”. In this example, Ally is juggling familial needs and responsibilities with her weight loss and exercise goals and so wakes up earlier in the morning to fit in exercise before she is required to commence the ‘good mother’ role for both her husband and two children. For Leonie, a mother is deemed to be acting appropriately if she puts her family’s needs before her own and ensuring her family is looked after and cared for: “all this [losing weight] gives me more energy to play with my kids, and makes me a better mum” (Leonie, Weight Watchers). Other examples from the success stories of the ‘good mother’ include:

“I always remind myself that the reason I’m doing it [losing weight] is so that I can be a happy, healthy mother” (Lauren, Weight Watchers)
“I’m a more energetic person and a better wife, mother and teacher because of it [the Lite n’ Easy program]” (Ali, Lite n’ Easy)
“I feel I have become a better mum, a better wife and moved towards being the type of person that I want to be” (Bella, 12WBT)

Cook and Cusack (2010) suggest that females can often be identified as being a mother and nothing else, with their main contribution to society being to domestically provide and care for the family home (Kinnick, 2009). However, there is also a different trend within the success stories that contradicts Cook and Cuascks’ (2010) claim through examples of the ‘working mother’. For example, Alison (Weight Watchers) juggles
working as a flight attendant with looking after her two children, whereas Jan (Weight Watchers) works, is married and juggles looking after her four children. In the 12WBT success stories, Bella, Sandra and Kelly are employed, are married and are mothers. Among the Lite n’ Easy success stories, Kylie D notes that she has two children and works from home: “life was hectic”, so she decided to join Lite n’ Easy because “having meals pre-prepared meant I could spend more time with my children and on my job”. Josephine (Lite n’ Easy) juggles full-time employment and looking after her two children, and there is no mention of a partner, whilst Kylie F, Melissa P, Rae, Jodie G (Lite n’ Easy) and Jodie (with husband Damien; Lite n’ Easy) are married, employed and are mothers. Carie (Lite n’ Easy) notes that both her and her husband are employed in full-time work and both cook and clean for themselves and their young child. In this example, Carie (and her husband Mark) seem to share the workload. They both contribute to the family economically by working full time and both contribute to the family domestically by cooking, cleaning and household chores. In joining Lite n’ Easy, the amount of time Carie and Mark spent cooking and preparing food is reduced: “we were spending our entire evening cooking and cleaning but now with Lite n’ Easy we have more time to just relax and spend it with each other”. Interestingly, could it be suggested that they are both residing in ‘the good mother’ and ‘the good father’ roles simultaneously? In other words, Carie is functioning from a discursive stance of both ‘the good mother’ and ‘the good father’ because she is caring for the family in a domestic sense (‘the good mother’) as well functioning as ‘the good father’ (in the traditional sense) by financially providing for her family. Likewise, with Mark, he is contributing to the family in both a domestic and economic sense, which can also suggest he is fulfilling ‘the good mother’ and ‘the good father’ role simultaneously. What this can suggest is that being a ‘good mother’ does not necessarily mean the individual is a female, whilst being a ‘good father’ does not necessarily lend itself to being filled by a male. Thus,
gender roles and positions are not fixed (Dragseth, 2015). This could equally apply, in this context, to the fluidity of gendered parenting roles too; where individuals can be both the ‘good mother’ and the ‘good father’ (Broad, 2002).

Traditionally, females were seen as less dedicated to wanting to raise and provide for their children if they were employed in the workforce (Etaugh & Nekolny, 1990). Although this stereotype may still exist to some, the contemporary ‘good mother’ nowadays is not like the stereotypical 1950s ‘good mother’ who was not employed, had no intention of becoming employed in the workforce, and looking after and domestically providing for her husband and children was her main goal. This 1950s ‘good mother’ stereotypical discourse has undergone some changes in contemporary society and has been replaced with a discourse that considers the different roles that females can adopt both within and outside of the family. Over the recent years, with the introduction of flexible working arrangements, such as part-time work, working from home, shift work or taking leave for a certain period of time, more females have been able to enter the workforce, whilst still caring for their families, and sometimes still remaining as primary carers within the family. Other less popular flexible working arrangements can also include compressed working weeks or flexitime contracts (Gerdenitsch, Kubicek & Korunka, 2015), which may assist females to better manage work and familial responsibilities. However, despite these changes there does appear to be some societal tensions between the achievement of being a ‘good mother’ whilst also adopting the ‘working mother’ role.

For example, Blair-Loy (2003) interviewed fifteen mothers who were all employed part-time within the workforce. During the interview process, Blair-Loy (2003) discovered that many of these females experienced difficulty in trying to manage the responsibilities and obligations of being both an employee and a mother. To manage such demands, eleven
of the fifteen females had tried or were currently trying to adopt a suitable part-time work role to manage both work and familial demands and responsibilities. There was also evidence among the females that co-workers were viewing them negatively for being a working mother whilst they had children at home (and therefore appeared to be choosing work over familial needs and responsibilities). Therefore, even though many mothers may also be working mothers, there is a socially constructed impression that one cannot satisfactorily and effectively fulfil and achieve the ‘good mother’ role and status whilst also being a ‘working mother’ (Blair-Loy, 2003; Hertz, 2013). Other examples of the ‘working mother’ within the success stories include:

“I accepted the job and I’m now teaching a body step class a few days per week and am about to take on a body pump class as well!!... But you need to make sure you are making time for yourself and your health goals as well. I always remind myself that the reason I’m doing it is so that I can be a happy, healthy mother and a good role model for my daughter” (Lauren L, Weight Watchers)

“I went back to work fulltime when she was three months old, and the pressures of juggling a job and taking care of my baby meant that I had no spare time [to exercise]” (Melissa K, Weight Watchers)

“I’ve married Liam, moved states, had a beautiful baby boy named Dempsey and have already gone back to full time work” (Racheal, Lite n’ Easy)

“I had my two children very close together and was working from home so life was hectic” (Kylie, Lite n’ Easy)

“After having my two girls only 18 months apart my weight had crept up. When I returned to work I
realised just how much extra weight I was carrying”

(Jo B, Lite n’ Easy)

“Sandra Soo knew that if she was to be an active, healthy mother to her two children, she needed to change her habits…Sandra is good at maths – she’s a financial controller, it's her job” (Sandra, 12WBT)

“I felt selfish because I went to work in the morning, came home, had dinner, then went walking in the evening and didn't get a lot of time with them [her children]” (Jacqueline, 12WBT)

The ‘working mother’ appears prominently throughout the weight loss centre success stories. Perhaps this reflects the steady increase in the number of working mothers over the last decade. In 1991, the percentage of families with children under eighteen years old that had a working mother was 55%. This percentage has been on a gradual rise since then: 56% (1996) to 59% (2001) to 63% (2006) and to 65% (2011) (Baxter, 2013).

In terms of statistics relating to flexible working arrangements in Australia, 2002 saw 56% of families (with at least one parent employed) use flexible work arrangements to support the care of their children. Of these, flexible working hours and a permanent part-time working schedule was most common (35% and 24% respectively) (ABS, 2006). Of all employed mothers in 2002, 70% of these females made use of some form of flexible working hours to assist in caring for her children, whilst there was an increase in fathers interested in working part-time in order to contribute to caring for their children. In a study run by the ABS in 2010, they asked parents what working arrangements they had or are currently using to care for their children aged eleven years and younger. Among females, the most common forms of flexible working arrangements were in the form of part-time work and flexible working hours, whereby 43% of females made use of part time work and 44% of females made use of flexible working hours. 19% of the females in the study
worked from home, whilst 7% worked shift work in order to accommodate to the caring of children (ABS, 2010). What this highlights is the complex task that females face in trying to manage familial, employment and other responsibilities. Gender stereotypes and ideals around what roles mothers and fathers should or should not undertake can have a large impact on the roles they do adopt and how they are perceived within the workplace and wider society (Zemore, Fiske & Kim, 2012).

Exploring the family and its structure as an institution has long been a focus of sociological study, where there has been a particular focus on the work-family balance (Perrone-McGovern, Wright, Howell & Barnum, 2014), and how this can influence the roles and responsibilities that individuals adopt within the family. Different work arrangements can allow families to better manage the juggling of different roles and responsibilities both within and outside of the family. Whilst Mapedzahama (2014) recognises that flexible working times can accommodate for females to better deal with both work and familial responsibilities, this flexible working time does not necessarily mean that the caring and domestic responsibilities within the family are better divided up between the mother and father (among the heterosexual population) in the family.

Females are often assigned roles based on their gender and the stereotypical view that the mother role is caring and nurturing (Ejrnæs & Boje, 2013). This gendering of roles can influence a child’s own understanding about what roles, responsibilities and social roles males and females should engage in and whether these are socially acceptable. This social acceptance is largely based on traditional gendered stereotypes that typecast the male (father) as the financial provider for the family, whilst the female (mother) is the nurturer who looks after the children and the household whilst the father is at work. Despite an increase in the number of mothers entering the workforce and undertaking paid
employment, there are still traces of a social discourse that typcasts males as the financial provider and females as the nurturer.

Due to the complex and often stressful task of having to manage familial, employment and other roles and responsibilities, females may find that they have to compromise/sacrifice one area of responsibility to attend to another. For example, females may have to leave work early to attend to the needs of the family (more so if the children are young), or they may have to cease familial responsibilities in order to begin work (Heilbrunn & Davidovitch, 2011). In their study, Charlesworth, Baines and Cunningham (2015) found that some of the females accepted that the work/family binary would overlap at some stage, creating a ‘trade-off’ effect between these two areas, meaning that one area may be negatively impacted on because of responsibilities or obligations of the other area. However, they also found that there were females who actively put in effort to reinforce this boundary between work and family, wanting to keep these two spheres separate. Nguyen and Sawang (2016) also found that what may work for one family may appear to increase stress and familial conflict for another. It is important to remember to not focus solely on females and the difficulty in trying to manage familial and work responsibilities, but to focus also on males and the roles they may adopt both within the family and the workforce, more so now that it has become more common and acceptable for males to adopt domestic roles within the family (Strong, DeVault & Cohen, 2014).

There is no one correct way to organise and manage work and familial and work arrangements. How a family decides to manage such responsibilities is heavily cultural, political and gendered, perhaps mostly influenced by the gendered practices of what is viewed as acceptable or unacceptable for one’s gender.
The discourse of the ‘good mother’ also produces an oppositional discourse: the ‘bad mother’. Here, the ‘good mother’ and ‘bad mother’ are two subject positions that are taken up and inform the discourse of the ‘good parent’. Meaning and understanding comes to be constructed through the production of the difference between these two discursive constructs (Mikics, 2009; Stables, 2010). The ‘good mother’ has many attributes, such as being nurturing and intuitive to her family (Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010), places her family’s needs before her own (Robinson & Diaz, 2006) and knows how to be a good mother since motherhood ostensibly comes naturally to all females (Schmidt, 2008). Consequently, the ‘bad mother’ puts their own needs first, is too emotional to provide adequate care for her children and is passive to her husband and the father of her children (Mariskind, 2008; Waldman, 2013). One example of the ‘bad mother’ position is presented by Anita (Weight Watchers): “I wasn’t being the mother I wanted, always tired and lethargic, struggling to play with my children”. Five other examples of females accessing this ‘bad mother’ discourse in their success stories include:

“I hardly have any photos of myself while I was pregnant, and after my daughter was born I wouldn’t let anyone take any photos of us together” (Lauren, Weight Watchers)

“Whenever we went to the beach as a family, my daughter and my husband would run into the waves, while I would stay behind on the sand, covered in head-to-toe clothing because I wasn’t game enough to strip down to a swimsuit, watching them having a great time” (Melissa K, Weight Watchers)

“My energy levels were at an all time low and I was really struggling to cope both at work and at home, running after my girls” (Jo B, Lite n’ Easy)
“In the past on weekends I would take the kids on a breakfast date to McDonalds and then we would just kind of slop around” (Bella, 12WBT)
“Looking back, she now realises her children were missing out too. She’d avoid activities, like her daughter’s swimming lessons, because of her dread of putting on a bathing suit and a lack of energy” (Sandra, 12WBT)

To adopt a term from Jarvis’ (2009) study, these females reside within a metaphorical ‘bad place’ because of their uptake of the ‘bad mother’ discourse. Here, the females provide detail about how a physiological or psychological health crisis negatively affected their role or ability as a mother. Most of the stories detail a crisis which places them in a ‘bad place’, positioning them as a ‘bad mother’:

“After having two babies, I felt big and unhealthy and knew I needed help to slim down, as exercise alone wasn’t working” (Alison, Weight Watchers)
“I hated the way I looked and was worried about developing serious health issues, such as diabetes, in the future” (Melissa W, Weight Watchers)
“I had my baby last April and stacked on so much weight. I had no time to cook healthy meals for myself so I was grabbing whatever quick and easy food I could find and would often skip meals or just grab a couple of biscuits on the run” (Bree, Lite n’ Easy)
“After giving birth to her second baby, Angela was committed to lose her baby weight. By following healthy recipes and going to the gym, she was able to lose weight over 12 [twelve] months, but over time she noticed old habits were creeping back in,
like ordering takeaway instead of cooking healthy meals” (Angela, 12WBT)

In discussing the discursive construction of both the ‘good mother’ and the ‘bad mother’, there is a common theme of the females feeling the need to justify that by putting themselves first is not actually a selfish move because doing so will benefit the family in the long run. For example, Lauren (Weight Watchers) states that her doctor required her to lose weight and become healthier, because she “didn't want to leave my kids early - they deserved better than that - and I wanted to be a positive example. I decided to put myself first, knowing it would benefit my family in the long run”. Upon initially entering a subject position of selfishness (putting their own needs before the needs of the family), the females then restructure this by emphasising that the process of losing weight was and is for the sake of the family. For example, Jan states that “in the past, I used the excuse that I didn’t have time to look after myself because I have four kids, but I realised that if I don’t look after me, then who’s going to look after them? When I’m fit and healthy, everyone else’s life improves”. Although the act of confession within a Foucauldian context will be explored later in this thesis, three other examples from the success stories that explore the females confessing to their decision to put themselves and their health first:

“I realised that in order to be there for everyone in my family, I had to put myself first” (Kay, Weight Watchers)

“Juggling a young daughter and two jobs is a challenge. But you need to make sure you are making time for yourself and your health goals as well. I always remind myself that the reason I’m doing it is so that I can be a happy, healthy mother and a good role model for my daughter” (Lauren, Weight Watchers)
“I used to feel guilty about having this [exercise] time but it’s made me a better mum, wife and so much happier” (Shellie, Weight Watchers)

Here is the inherent ‘good mother contradiction’ that prevents the women from becoming constructed as a ‘bad mother’; ‘I am selfish for wanting to look after my own body, but I do so because of the benefit to you, my family’.

This latest section has explored the discourses of ‘the good mother’, in addition to the oppositional discourse of the ‘bad mother’. Whilst much of the focus on the discourses of the ‘good mother’ and ‘bad mother’, as well as the ‘good mother contradiction’ has been on the success stories of mothers, there also appears to be examples within the success stories of childless individuals (both males and females) of this label of selfishness. There are specific ways that these individuals escape or evade being labelled as selfish for putting their health or weight needs before others. For example, Therese (Weight Watchers) is childless but still accesses the discursive concept of selfishness. She justifies that “everyone has the right to feel great about themselves” and that “I respect my body, so [I] want to make sure I’m being kind to myself and feeding myself foods that make me feel good”.

Here, Therese justifies that putting herself first is ‘allowed’ because she has the right to feel and be healthy, as well as recognising that her relationship with her boyfriend has improved since they began exercising together: “Scott [her boyfriend] and I work out together - we love it! It’s a great way to communicate, have fun and laugh together”.

Similar to the avoidance of mothers being labelled as selfish for putting their own health needs first since they are in fact thinking about the needs of the family in the long term, Therese manages to escape the selfish label because she justifies that she put herself first for the sake of her relationship, rather than just herself.
It is possible, therefore, to also make an argument for the ‘good person contradiction’ in the stories. For example, like Therese, Penelope (Weight Watchers) justifies that losing twenty kilograms through Weight Watchers has improved her life in multiple ways, specifically her relationship with her husband: “my aim is to get as fit as possible, which has been wonderful for my relationship with my husband, James, too. He’s always been active and now, instead of sitting on the sidelines, I’m confident and fit enough to do active things with him”. Similarly, Shannon (Lite n’ Easy) is happy and enthusiastic about now being able to “really enjoy going to the beach with my husband for a swim or a stand up paddle”. These examples highlight how these childless females feel they need to justify putting their weight loss or health needs first because they have experienced positive benefits to their relationships since losing weight. The large majority of the success stories consider the ‘good mother contradiction’ or the ‘good person contradiction’ in terms of how these individuals value their family and the importance they place on familial relationships. Hence, they come to escape the selfish label of putting their own needs first because it is done for the sake of the family. It is this contradictory process that is interesting, seeing as one of the stereotypes that exist around mothers and motherhood is that they are unselfish and are always putting her children’s needs before her own (Aneja & Vaidya, 2016). As such, even though most females (both mothers and non-mothers) in the success stories may be deemed selfish because they are putting themselves and their needs first, it is this inherent contradiction that allows them to escape such a label. In this way, there is an argument for regarding these females as complicating their role as a ‘biocitizen’. Whereas the ‘fat’ body constitutes someone failing to achieve the standards of the biocitizen and classifies them as a ‘bad citizen’ (Halse, 2009), the ‘bad’ mother is then rescued from being a bad citizen because they have in a sense, sacrificed their health (and therefore their weight) for the sake of their family. The mother places their role as a mother
before their own health, and they become embroiled within this simultaneous discourse of failing to achieve ‘biocitizen’ status but doing so for the sake of their family and therefore they achieve the ‘good mother’ status.

Perhaps this highlights the complexities that some females may face in contemporary society in terms of the roles they undertake or feel they should undertake. Regardless of whether females are mothers or not, perhaps some females feel they should still exist within the ‘housewife’ discourse, whereby their main contribution is to care for the family and the house (Mandapaka, 2014). Gender stereotypes are constantly changing and adapting based on societal trends or cultural influences (Duehr & Bono, 2006). Some of the changing trends include more females entering the workforce, especially in managerial positions that are more likely to be male-dominated, having more of a voice in terms of sexual reproduction and contraception and greater access to learning and education (Lazar, 2014; Flanagan, 2015). Yet, despite these advancements, females as a collective whole still appear to struggle breaking out of the stereotypical positioning of the ‘housewife or mother’ role. As such, employing a feminist-based discursive approach to exploring these and other social issues may allow for a better understanding of the traditional or contemporary social and cultural forces or barriers that may reinforce such gendered stereotypes (Lazar, 2005). Such an approach allows for the exploration of the dominant discourses that exist around gender, and to explore how these discourses contribute to gendered power imbalances between males and female and to the hierarchical and patriarchal gender order of society (Darroch & Giles, 2016). It also allows us to explore how the discourses within the success stories make visible or unearth discourses associated with gendered relations, expressions of masculinity and femininity, weight and weight loss.
5.2.4 Discourse four: The ‘good father’; the ‘good husband’

In addition to exploring how femininity and females are discursively constructed and developed within the weight loss centre success stories, there needs to be a consideration of males and the construction of how masculinity and males are discussed and discursively produced within these success stories too. By doing so, the researcher wants to explore how gendered ideologies and social relations are hegemonic in nature (Lazar, 2005) and what effect these ideologies and relations have in terms of how individuals come to understand themselves and others as gendered bodies. Similar to the ‘good mother’, the ‘good father; good husband’ discourse also creates the ‘good father; good husband’ as a subject position that becomes occupied by the individuals in the success stories.

Just as the construction of the ‘good mother’ creates the oppositional discourse known as the ‘bad mother’, the ‘good mother’ also creates another oppositional discourse of the ‘good father’. These differences construct a binary opposite that FCDA is interested in interrupting or challenging. This methodology therefore offers a useful and appropriate means to rupture open and examine the complex and intricate discourses that come to reside within phenomena such as gender or weight, and to consider how these phenomena construct and contribute to the understanding of society, culture and individual bodies.

Whereas ‘the good mother’ discourse centered mainly around the females identifying that this includes caring for her family, as well as feeling they ‘should’ be putting other’s needs before their own, the ‘good father’ discourse focused more on the stereotypical role of the male financially providing for the family. For example, Jeff (12WBT), states that he “had been coming home exhausted and ravenous after working a 10 [ten]-hour shift on his feet as a production manager”, Other examples of the working ‘good father’ from both the male and female success stories include:
“The rest of the day would be crammed with whatever [food] I could find until my husband Mark came home and we’d have a healthy dinner” (Victoria, Weight Watchers)
“I am a single dad with a busy work, sporting and social life” (Ken, Lite n’ Easy)
“Lite n’ Easy was suggested by a work colleague” (Kym, Lite n’ Easy).
“I found that Lite n’ Easy fits so well into my busy work schedule” (Steve, Lite n’ Easy)
“I was generally fit due to my work as a self-employed electrician (Ray, Lite n’ Easy)
“My partner had just started working away again so I needed something that would take the pressure off me being a solo parent for long periods of time” (Bree, Lite n’ Easy)
“Lite n’ Easy is also really convenient as my husband works away [from home]” (Shannon, Lite n’ Easy)
“The meals and snacks are great to take to work” (Anthony, Lite n’ Easy)

The ‘good father’ discourse has far less attention within the success stories compared with the ‘good mother’ discourse, probably partly due to the much larger corpus of female success stories compared with the male stories. Insight into this discourse may offer a means to explore how individuals who occupy the ‘good’ (mother or father) role become visible as representations/challenges to particular versions of femininity and masculinity. In addition, motherhood often comes to be constructed as a natural component of a woman’s identity and purpose, and that all females have an innate drive to be a mother and to care for her children (Caplan, 2005). Thus, perhaps society constructs the ideal that the
‘good mother’ should be or needs to be open to criticism and scrutiny to keep her behaviour and actions in check and to ensure she is developing disciplined and productive children.

There are various mentions to or inferences of the good male’ not only in the male success stories but also in the female success stories. Indeed, there appears to be a stronger focus of this ‘good male’ in the female success stories rather than in the male success stories. Here, the ‘good male’ is constructed in the success stories in terms of how he as a husband, partner or father, occupy the role of the supportive, encouraging and ‘good’ male. One example of the ‘good male’ within the female success stories is discussed in Elizabeth’s Weight Watchers success story. She details how her husband (Wayne) was and is very supportive of Elizabeth throughout the process of losing weight, and they now exercise together. Here, Wayne comes to occupy the role of the supportive partner and was a major source of inspiration for Elizabeth to stick to the Weight Watchers program and be successful at losing weight. Another ‘good male’ example in the female success stories is provided by Tracey (12WBT). She details how her relationship with her husband has improved since joining 12WBT: “my husband and I are closer and he’s so proud and supportive which helps, he’s really embraced the 12WBT program and cooks all the meals for us [Tracey and their children”]. Here, not only does her husband fulfil the ‘good male’ role by being supportive and encouraging of his wife, but he also helps with cooking meals for his family, as well as wanting to spend time with his wife and children. Some other examples within the corpus of female success stories that detail how their husband, partner, father to their children (or all three) come to occupy and adopt the ‘good male’ role:

“There are strategies I can put in place to stay on track, from being supported by my wonderful husband” (Gabrielle, Weight Watchers)
“Mark [her husband] is proud of my mental and physical transformation. It’s awesome to hear how proud he is of me. I feel like we fit and look like a real partnership” (Victoria, Weight Watchers)

“My biggest support has been my partner. He embraced my journey whole-heartedly and encouraged me every step of the way” (Lauren, Weight Watchers)

“My husband has been such an amazing support- encouraging me and giving me a hug after each weigh in” (Shellie, Weight Watchers)

“My husband has been very supportive” (Rae, Lite n’ Easy)

“Now with Lite n’ Easy we [Carie and her husband] have more time to just relax and spend it with each other” (Carie, Lite n’ Easy)

I “have a great husband and kids who have supported me all the way through [the weight program]” (Lite n’ Easy)

“My partner is my biggest supporter in everything - my recovery, 12WBT, and my new business” (Barbara, 12WBT)

“Reaching them [her fitness goals] is something Kellie says she couldn’t have done without the support of her husband” (Kellie, 12WBT)

The ‘good male’ discourse exists within the female success stories in terms of how the male (as a husband, partner or father to the children) comes to occupy the role of the ‘good’ (i.e., supportive and encouraging) male. As such, the ‘good male’ is represented in both the female and male success stories as supportive of the wife in her process of losing weight and exemplifies the role of the ‘good husband/father’. On the contrary, there is
hardly any mention in the male success stories about the supportive or encouraging role of females (either as a wife, partner or mother to his children). Perhaps this is because there is a strong social stereotype (and expectation) that the main role of the female is to care for her family, including her husband and children (Walsh, 2004). The only male success story that provides detail about the ‘good female’ is in Brian's Weight Watchers success story, whereby he details how he “couldn't be more proud of her [his mother] achievement. She’s always been my main support and I’ve really enjoyed sharing this [losing weight] with her”. This strong focus of the ‘good male’ amongst the female success stores is interesting and has a strong focus within gender studies. Mostly explored within the context of sport, the success or achievements of females are often attributed to males in terms of how the male has allowed this success to be achieved. Two examples of this within the sporting domain was in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games. Swimmer Katinka Hosszu (Hungary) won a gold medal and broke the World Record in the 400m individual medley event. Upon winning the gold and breaking the World Record, the NBC focused in on her male coach (who is also her husband) in the crowd, naming him “the man responsible” [for her achievements] (Gray, 2016, para. 3). The second example is of trapshooter Olympian Corey Cogdell (United States of America). Upon winning a bronze medal, she was featured in an article in the Chicago Tribune newsletter. However, her name was not even stated once in the article. Instead, underneath her image, she was simply referred to as the “wife of a Bears’ lineman” (Gray, 2016, para. 2). What this highlights is that female success (not just in the sporting arena, but in other areas such as the workplace or in weight loss) is often seen within the context of how a male has contributed to the success this female has achieved. Not only does this reinforce the hegemonic positioning of masculinity over femininity, it also categorises female’s achievements and success as being possible only because of a male. Discourses within society are directly linked to gendered power
constructs between males and females, and between masculinity and femininity. Females are categorised and suppressed within society which reflects the power of hegemonic masculinity in homogenising the oppressive relationship between masculinity and femininity (Klein, 1988). There are key gendered differences in how males and females are constructed, not only within the success stories but also throughout society. The expectation of how females and males are expected to act is significant in this construction. The females emphasise the ‘good male’ in the success stories in terms of how he is supportive in looking after the children or encouraging during the process of losing weight, but there is a marked absence of this process in the male stories about the females. Here, this expectation of the ‘good mother’ becomes so engrained that there needs to be no mention of these behaviours in the female stories because it is just expected the ‘good mother’ will act in this way, and it is therefore accepted as a given. This process is significant because it highlights the gendered differences in how males and females are expected to act. It also highlights that there are differences between the males and females about what behaviours come to be contribute to the recognition and labelling as a ‘good parent’.

The strong focus on what the ‘good male’ looks like within the familial context is interesting seeing as much of the historical focus on the male within the family was his role in the workforce and how he contributed financially and economically to the family (Gatrell, 2005). This ideal has undergone changes over recent decades, with many males now adopting different or additional roles or positions within the family, such as more males taking paternity leave to care for children or males taking on more of a practical role in caring for and looking after his family in a domestic sense. The expectations of males have increased over recent decades, both in the areas of employment and in the family life.
(Collier & Sheldon, 2008), with part time employment for males being on the rise, increasing from 5% (1978) to 17% (2010) and an increase in older males (aged sixty-five years and older) remaining employed in the workplace (15% in 2001-2002 to 24% in 2012) (ABS, 2012). The impact or effect of working long hours on the health and wellbeing of males (and the effect on the family) is well documented (e.g., Weston, Gray, Qu & Stanton, 2004; Akhtar, Kashif, Arif & Khan, 2012; Eek & Axmon, 2013). Whilst this thesis does not delve into the negative effects that working long hours can have on the individual (and the family), what is being emphasised here is the idea that changing social circumstances in terms of how many hours males work or contribute to the family can provide insight into how males (and females) come to understand themselves as gendered bodies. It can also provide insight into the meanings they place on themselves and others based on their work and familial arrangements and caring obligations. With the general increase in the number of hours that males are now working over the last few decades, coupled with the increase of females in the workforce (Weston et al, 2004), the roles and responsibilities that males and females adopt both within the workforce and within the family are changing. Thus, it can be helpful to explore how these changes can influence how individuals come to understand and the meanings individuals impose on themselves and other social, gendered bodies.

The four discourses explored so far in the results section (‘doing gender’, self-presentation during weight loss, the ‘good’ mother and ‘the good father; good husband’) are the four main gender based discourses to emerge from an FCDA conducted on the weight loss success stories. Attention will now turn to exploring the more weight-related discourses that emerged from the success stories.
5.3 Weight discourses

5.3.1 Discourse five: Biomedical discourse of weight

Both the male and female success stories tend to adopt and refer to two main discursive positions when talking about weight and health: 1) a biomedical discourse of weight and 2) an emotional/psychological discourse of weight. Both of these discursive positions are gendered in terms of how males and females talk about understandings of weight, weight loss, bodies and health. The body is gendered; hence it makes sense that the practices, experiences and ‘doings’ of dieting and weight loss that this body draws on are also gendered. As gendered bodies, individuals exist within and through a multitude of gendered stereotypes around what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour based on their outward gender display. Certain discourses of weight and the body become legitimated and appropriated within the arena of gender, masculinity and femininity (Kehler, 2010). For example, the biomedical discourse of weight becomes legitimated throughout most of the male success stories as a male-appropriate way to practice and ‘do’ weight, dieting and weight loss. Alternatively, the emotional/psychological discourse of weight has become constructed in the female success stories as the most appropriate way for the females to ‘do’ weight, dieting and weight loss. Thus, how males and females ‘do’ or practice methods of dieting or losing weight are highly gendered, reflecting wider social constructs of masculinity and femininity. How the participants talk about gender or gender roles and the language they use or don’t use can highlight which discourses they are taking up to explain their experiences and how they understand their positioning within these discourses (Wright, 2006). Exploration into these discursive constructs of masculinity and femininity can provide insight into the realities these individuals live in and experience during their weight loss journey, as well as the various identities and subject positions they adopt during this process (Wickramasinghe & Alawattage, 2007).
There are various examples in both the female and male weight loss centre success stories that construct both excess weight and weight loss as a biomedical health issue with a range of medical complications. These stories reflect a strong focus on the physiological health effects resulting from excess weight, and there is also a strong emphasis on measuring, defining and understanding weight through scientific processes. These include the assessment of BMI, counting calories, weight (loss or gain) or detail about the physiological health effects of excess weight experienced by the participants. Three examples from the female success stories that refer to this biomedical discourse of weight are:

“I had a pre-existing heart condition, which became worse as my weight increased over the years. My doctor had been advising me to make healthier lifestyle changes, but I never did. When I experienced heart palpitations, dizzy spells and chest pain, he told me that if I didn’t lose weight, I would die within six months” (Erin, Weight Watchers)

“At eighteen years old I had a list of health concerns that was nearly as big as I was. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, fatty liver and rapid pulse meant that if I didn’t make the decision to take control of my life, I was facing a very uncertain future” (Kaitlyn, Weight Watchers)

“I received a telephone call from my doctor one afternoon… he told me I had a cholesterol reading of 8.7 (mg/dL) and that I needed to get the extra weight off quick smart - or else I was going to have a stroke or heart attack” (Barbara, Weight Watchers)
The above quotes from the female success stories highlights that the doctor - the medical expert - warns the patient of the risks associated with their excess weight. The risk of death is emphasised and the doctor functions to classify and instil in these females that they are suffering from poor health, and that the risk of death is perhaps imminent as a result. As will soon be explored, this process is also evident among the male success stories. Sandra (12WBT) identifies another example of the biomedical construction of weight, noting that she “wanted to lose 40 kilos [forty kilograms] and be in a healthy BMI by her 40th birthday in August”. Here, Sandra adopts a biomedically-based discursive understanding that reaching a healthy BMI (based on her height) equates to being healthy. These portray a primarily biomedical, scientific and mathematical approach to understanding health and weight (Ali & Lindstrom, 2005). Such understandings can influence the social, cultural and political meanings, beliefs, biases and prejudices that become attached to weight and bodies at any one point in time. This scientific construction of weight, with its inclusion of weight related statistics and discourses surrounding the medicalisation of obesity as a disease, acts to establish its credibility and legitimacy as a medical condition (Vick, 2006).

For obesity to be constructed as a biomedical ‘fact’ and problematic medical condition, it has to be based on assessment practices that are ‘legitimate’ i.e. scientific. These practices include the use of scientific instruments to measure weight (Brady, Gingras & Aphramor, 2013) and the inclusion of scientific, medical and quantifiable knowledge, such as statistics, epidemiological data, BMI, height to weight ratios (Richardson, 2010), skin-fold tests (Markula et al, 2006), the use of medical jargon and the clinical measurement of weight (Aston et al, 2011). The inclusion of such methods reinforces the credibility and legitimacy of excess weight as a disease and medical condition because it
also then requires biomedical and scientific intervention (Simmers, Simmers-Nartker, & Simmers-Kobelak, 2016). This biomedical discourse of weight has a strong focus among the male success stories:

“I had a medical checkup at work and was advised I had very high blood pressure and needed medication immediately. My weight was 119 kilos [one hundred and nineteen kilograms]. My doctor suggested I lose weight and begin some light exercise in order to bring my blood pressure down and prevent further weight related complications down the track” (Ross, Lite n’ Easy)

“My GP warned me that my blood sugar levels, cholesterol and blood pressure were all in the “extreme” range and that I was a prime candidate for cardiovascular disease with a waist measurement of 38 [thirty-eight] inches” (Ray, Lite n’ Easy)

“Megan [his wife] is a nurse, so she’d tell me, ‘The bigger you get, diabetes is going to be an issue and your joints are going to play up,’ and I’d had trouble with my back for a while” (Jeff, 12WBT)

Ross’ Lite n’ Easy success story above centres entirely on the physiological consequences of his excess weight and he goes on to recount the change that took place during the process of following the Lite n’ Easy program and losing weight:

“I lost 25 kilos [twenty-five kilograms] in the first year and smaller but still significant amounts in the following years”

His success story concludes with the physiological health and wellbeing changes he has experienced because of losing weight:
“After about 6 [six] months my blood pressure was almost back to normal and for the last 6 [six] years has always been normal”

Similar to Ross, Lukes’ Lite n’ Easy success story also focuses entirely on the physical and physiological effects of his weight gain:

“You can train as much as you want, but if you’re not filling your body with the right foods and making sure you’re at the correct weight to perform, you're not going to get the best out of yourself”

Luke’s quote above refers to the biomedical discourse of weight because he highlights the importance for him to focus on being at a physically healthy and physically appropriate weight. Luke also highlights how following the Lite n’ Easy plan has allowed him to not only lose weight but to feel physically better during football training:

“I’m now a comfortable 88 kilos [eighty-eight kilograms] thanks to Lite n’ Easy and I keep using it just to maintain my weight. It’s because it’s flexible and just fits in with my training program. I eat Lite n’ Easy dinners once or twice during the week and then again the night before a game because I feel lighter and more energetic the next day”

Other examples of the main focus on the physical and physiological health effects of excess weight and the potential benefits of losing weight include:

“Tipping the scales at 149 kilos [one hundred and forty-nine kilograms] became a turning point for Dane Squance” (Dane, Weight Watchers)

“It wasn’t until I went to the doctor that I really got a wake-up call. He asked me to weigh myself and the number read 130kg [one hundred and thirty kilograms] - it was a shock. My family has a history
of heart disease so my mum sat me down and told me if I didn’t do something about it, I would regret it” (Phillip, Weight Watchers)

“I’m really tall so I can get away with a few extra kilos but when I reached 120 kilos [one hundred and twenty kilograms] I thought enough was enough” (Dan, Lite n’ Easy)

“Less than a year ago I was so big and unfit that I couldn’t even run around the block” (Ben, Lite n’ Easy)

“I started to neglect myself a little and fell into the trap of eating junk food and putting on weight. At 93 kilos [ninety-three kilograms] I felt I was getting too heavy and needed to do something about it” (Anthony, Lite n’ Easy)

“For all of my 30s [thirties] and 40s [forties] I was eating for convenience rather than health, putting on more than 20 kilos [twenty kilograms]” (John, Lite n’ Easy)

All of the success stories, both male and female, draw on a biomedical model of health to some degree. What differs between the males and females however is that the majority of the women’s success stories begin with a biomedical model of weight and (ill) health, to then explore their weight loss within a more emotionally-based discourse, often in the context of how they have become a ‘better’ mother or partner, or how they now love going clothes shopping or socialising. Alternatively, the majority of the male success stories begin in this biomedical discourse of weight, and then remain in this discourse to discuss the physiological benefits of losing weight.
Since processes of losing weight and dieting has long been considered to be a feminine process (Bentley, 2005; Drew, 2009), it is almost as if the males justify and declare that they will be knowingly entering into this apparent ‘feminine’ discursive domain of dieting, weight, calories and fatness, but are only doing so because losing weight is a ‘do or die’ type situation. This is undertaken purely for health reasons, rather than for stereotypically aesthetic ‘female’ reasons such as to improve body image, feel better about themselves or improve familial relationships. Some males may be reluctant to admit they are dieting or attempting to lose weight due to the cultural construction of dieting as a feminine activity and the idea that dieting may undermine their masculinity (De Souza & Ciclitira, 2005; Gilman, 2008b). In this way, it shows that dieting and weight loss is a gendered process. How individuals approach, discuss or practice processes of weight loss is also gendered in terms of some dietary or weight loss practices considered to be more socially and culturally acceptable for females to engage. Among the male success stories, the need for weight loss is always explained in terms of their (ill) health, whereas this is much less common in the female success stories, whereby the need or desire for weight loss is explained within the context of emotional or psychological improvements.

For example, in Phillip’s (Weight Watchers) success story, he states that he was aware he was both overweight (“I remember going to the cinemas and hardly being able to fit in the seat, and also struggling to get an aeroplane seatbelt around my waist”) and engaging in unhealthy food behaviours (he would “come home after school and eat three large meals”). However, despite the fact he had this awareness and knowledge about his poor health, the trigger to join Weight Watchers and lose weight was when his doctor weighed him and “the number read 130 kilos [130 kilograms]”, coupled with his mother informing him that his “family has a history of heart disease”. It was these two
physiologically-based ‘triggers’ (borrowing the term from Jarvis’ (2009) study) that prompted him to join Weight Watchers to lose weight. Phillip knew that he was overweight and unhealthy, but it was not until his doctor (as the medical expert) constructed his weight and poor health within a biomedical and physiological context that allowed Phillip to gain insight into the fact that he needed to do something about his weight and unhealthy eating habits. Similarly, for both Kym (Lite n’ Easy) and Ray (Lite n’ Easy), both of their ‘triggers’ were from a physiological and biomedical position:

“At 173 kilos [one hundred and seventy-three kilograms], my weight had reached a point where I was prescribed blood pressure medication and had to start using a CPAP [Continuous Positive Airway Pressure] machine for severe sleep apnoea” (Kym Lite n’ Easy)

“I started Lite n’ Easy after a health scare” (Ray, Lite n’ Easy)

Hence, for males who engage in this stereotypical female activity of dieting and weight loss (Guptill et al, 2017), it appears some of them may draw on or adopt biomedical and physiological discourses to justify that their dieting practices or actions are necessary to save their lives. That they are only attending to their health because it is a medical necessity, rather than a more aesthetically-based choice that females may decide to lose weight for, which endorses a very particular type of hegemonic masculinity (Gilman, 2008b).

The biomedical discourse of weight is featured strongly in the weight loss centre success stories. Whilst features of the biomedical discourse of weight include mentioning weight, calories or health effects of excess weight, there are other features of the biomedical discourse that appear throughout the success stories. For example, the featuring of doctors
within the success stories is also an indicator of the individuals drawing on a biomedical discourse of health. For example, Amy (Weight Watchers) states that her “doctor advised me that I would never be able to have more children being overweight for the risk of having another stroke”. The doctor functions as the ‘expert’ and resides in a position of power and authority to be able to inform the patients they have significant health effects because of excess weight. The patients then take this knowledge as true and act in a way that reinforces the legitimacy and authority of the medical profession. Another feature of the biomedical discourse of weight throughout the success stories is the attribution of causal factors, such as eating unhealthy foods or not exercising. These factors contribute heavily to the existence of excess weight on these participants. There is a strong biomedical emphasise within this understanding, because there is this underlying link between these biomedically based causal factors and having excess weight on the body. What this highlights is that these features mentioned above are all different expressions of the dominant biomedical discourse of weight. The classification of the doctor as ‘expert’, the attribution of certain causal factors of weight gain and the strong emphasis on weight gain, and weight loss all strongly represent aspects of the biomedical discourse of weight found within the weight loss centre success stories.

5.3.2 Discourse six: Emotional/psychological discourse of weight

As explored above, both the male and female success stories adopt a biomedical discourse and model of weight. This process is more common among the male success stories compared to the female success stories. In addition to this discourse, there are traces of other discursive understandings around weight found within the success stories, both in the female and male success stories. These alternate discourses take on a more holistic and wider approach to health and weight and move beyond seeing weight as primarily a
scientific and medical condition to one that reflects a more psychological, social or emotional focus. Therefore, what discourses these males draw on (i.e., whether they draw on a physiological discourse of weight or on a more emotionally based discourse of weight) may be influenced by the gendered understandings that come to exist on the (male) body. The emotional/psychological discourse of weight sees a strong focus on the psychological reasons behind someone having gained weight, the emotional consequences of that weight gain, and the reasons why the participants have decided to join the weight loss centre. This discourse is more common among the female success stories compared with the male stories. Some of the examples from the female success stories that refer to this more psychologically and emotionally based discourse of weight include:

“Writing in a journal helped me work through some of my major issues. I felt silly when I first started doing it, but jotting down bullet points regularly gave me insight into my headspace. There’s so much more to weight loss than just eating the right kinds of food and exercise - I had to reflect on why I became overweight in the first place. Food wasn’t going to fix my problems and, once I knew that, I really began to succeed” (Erin, Weight Watchers)

“When Jan Lorimer, 39 [thirty-nine years old], ditched the fad diets and changed her mindset, she lost much more than just 42.5 [forty-two and a half] extra kilos [kilograms]” (Jan, Weight Watchers)

“One of the biggest changes I made was learning to manage my feelings towards food” (Rheanan, Weight Watchers)

“I have returned to my bubbly, happy, positive self again. My self-confidence is back” (Zoe, Lite n’ Easy)
“The emotional strength that came with the 12WBT program has been amazing and with that I feel I have become a better mum, a better wife and moved towards being the type of person that I want to be” (Bella, 12WBT)

“While the weight didn’t drop off as she’d first hoped, Barbara completed her first Round having achieved something just as valuable: “I finally got my head right, and I learned that I had to be kinder to myself’” (Barbara, 12WBT)

In wanting to lose weight and become healthier, these individuals are drawing on their own experiences and understandings of health and weight. Perhaps this indicates or points towards the understanding of weight within a more psychologically based discourse. The majority of the female success stories focus on weight, dieting and weight loss not only in terms of it being a biomedical process, but also in the context of an emotional process. The female success stories focus on the emotional and psychological improvements they have seen in themselves through losing weight. As already explored in discourse three of this thesis, most of the females also emphasise how social and familial relationships have improved. This process involves justifying that they needed to put themselves and their health first to benefit the family in the long term.

Discourses and understandings around health are varied and depend largely on each individuals’ experience, lifestyle behaviours, self-understandings and the daily decisions (Crisp, Ungerer & Goodnow, 1996) made in regards to health, disease and illness. The definitions of health and illness that individuals have show how the discursive understandings that individuals draw on contribute to how individuals come to not only view and understand health, but also how they come to practice - or enact - health. For example, in Barbara’s 12WBT success story, she states that “with her self-esteem at an all-
time low, an emotional recovery seemed impossible”. Here, Barbara is drawing on her own experiences and understandings of health to construct a view of health that extends beyond just the physiological or biological. As she states: “when you go through a health crisis like a stroke, you find yourself with a new life. You just have to give yourself time, and it does get better. It totally comes down to mindset”. She initially draws on a physiological discourse of what happened to her body (“she was close to death, as blood clots in the brain were blocking the blood flow”) to produce and generate a more holistic discourse of health. Here, good health and wellbeing extends beyond just the physical: her “whole life changed as she became happier, braver, stronger and more proud of herself”. The discourses individuals have around weight and health are worthwhile to explore because it allows insight into how the experiences they go through shape and contribute to the discursive understandings they have around health and weight at any given time. As explored above, Barbara initially draws on a biomedical and physiological discourse of weight and health to explain what happened to her and to explain why she decided to join the weight loss centre. This is followed by drawing more on a holistic and emotional discourse of health. This process highlights that discourses of health, weight or disease are drawn upon by these participants are somewhat influenced by the time and the stage they are at during their weight loss; certain discourses are drawn on to describe or point to certain points in time. Many of the individuals draw on a biomedical discourse of weight at the beginning stages of their weight loss, but as they begin to lose weight and experience weight loss, they may gain insight into the experience that allows them to access a more emotionally based discourse of weight and health. It therefore becomes useful to explore how their understanding and the knowledge they have around weight, health and dieting can change or transform as they experience weight loss.
Interestingly, despite the trend for the male success stories to focus more on a scientific or biomedical discourse of weight and health, there are examples of males accessing a different, more emotional discourse when they discuss the changes they have experienced due to joining the weight loss centre program. In Jarvis’ (2009) study, she found an element of ‘the plot’ within the weight loss magazine success stories she collected from ‘Slimming World’: ‘the transformation’. This element provides detail about how the individual and their life has changed since joining the weight loss program. Traces of ‘the transformation’ was also evident in the weight loss centre success stories. For example, the two 12WBT male success stories (Jeff and Nick) tend to mainly focus on the physical and physiological transformative effects that have come from joining the weight loss centre, such as getting fitter, more toned and physically stronger:

“He got right into the exercise as well. “I bought a road bike and got out on it at least twice a week,” he says. “I also have free weights in my garage, and then I started smashing out Michelle Bridges’ online cardio videos…All Jeff’s hard work paid off - he lost 16 kg [sixteen kilograms] in his first Round [of the program]. He was even able to fit into skinny jeans for the first time in years. “I bought three pairs - I couldn’t believe it!” (Jeff, 12WBT)

“Nick’s hard work certainly paid off. Despite his injuries, he lost 5.4 kg [kilograms] and added lean muscle to his frame during the Round [of the program]” (Nick, 12 WBT)

Alternatively, the male Weight Watchers and male Lite n’ Easy success stories have some examples of these males accessing an alternative discourse. This alternative discourse shows that the males are focusing on and can recognise (and perhaps admit) the emotional
or psychological benefits of losing weight. For example, whilst a physiological event was
the trigger for Dane to join Weight Watchers (reaching a weight of one hundred and sixty
kilograms), he also accesses a discourse that suggests losing weight was more than just a
physical process: “my outlook on health has shifted massively - I have a can-do attitude
and have stopped worrying about other people’s opinions. I'm happy in my own skin and
my confidence levels have skyrocketed”. Three examples from the male Weight Watchers
success stories (two examples are from Phillip) portray a more specific focus on the
psychological benefits of losing weight, compared to the stronger focus on the biomedical
or physical benefits of weight loss found among the Lite n’ Easy and 12WBT male success
stories:

“Since I’ve lost weight, I’ve had the confidence to follow my dreams!” (Phillip, Weight Watchers)
I love my new body, life and confidence. I’ve never forgotten what my [Weight Watchers]
Leader Rachel said when I started all those years ago: you’ve got to move it to lose it! It's taken me
a long time to feel so self-assured, but these days I love my new body, life and confidence” (Brian,
Weight Watchers)
“I used to feel angry, anti-social and intolerant when I carried extra weight, but now I feel
positive. Getting healthy has changed more than my weight it’s changed the way I feel about
myself” (Phill, Weight Watchers)

The existence of this alternative, more psychologically-orientated discourse found
among the male Weight Watchers and some of the Lite n’ Easy success stories is interesting
since research has suggested that the majority of male’s diet or decide to lose weight for
more physical and physiological (i.e., health) reasons (Hankey, Leslie & Lean, 2002).
However, over recent years, there appears to have been a shift, a greater acceptance for males to be dieting for reasons other than health issues, such as for aesthetic reasons (O’Brien, Venn, Perry, Green, Aitken, Bradshaw & Thomson, 2007), as well as it being more acceptable for males to be concerned over their health (Monaghan, 2008; Tischner, 2013). Among the success stories, yoga appears to be common among the females, with three females identifying they now have incorporated yoga into their exercise schedule:

“I incorporated some regular yoga sessions into my routine” (Kelly, Weight Watchers)
“I’ll shake up my routine and sign up to do something new, such as a two-week Bikram yoga course” (Therese, Weight Watchers)
“Nowadays, I fit in a session with my trainer, a run, a training session with a girlfriend, yoga for my spinal arthritis” (Erin, Weight Watchers)

Strength training, which is often viewed more as a masculine activity (Klomsten, Marsh & Skaalvik, 2005) is common among both the male and female success stories:

“After losing so much weight, I had saggy skin but the weight training has really toned me up. I wouldn’t stop it if you paid me now!” (Erin, Weight Watchers)
“Use strength training to build muscle and tone (Elizabeth, Weight Watchers)
“But once I built up my confidence, I added more weights” (Therese, Weight Watchers)
“I can now do 60 sit ups every morning, stretching on the pilates ball and use some weights” (Anthony, Lite n’ Easy)
“I also have free weights in my garage” (Jeff, 12 WBT)
“I already had my weights set up at home” (Nick, 12 WBT)

Throughout the success stories, it can be identified that poor health, weight gain (and the reasons or triggers behind this weight gain) and obese bodies come to be constructed in gendered ways. Some of the male success stories emphasise the physiological side effects of excess weight, as well as focusing on the physiological benefits they have experienced because of weight loss. Whilst a minority of the women also talk about weight within a biomedical context, the focus of the success story then moves quickly to the familial and social effects of this excess weight. Conversely, most (but not all) of the male success stories tend to remain within the biomedical discourse of weight and the effect this excess weight has on their physiological health, rather than extending this discourse to the familial or social context. Therefore, are the males more comfortable talking about weight gain, weight loss and overall health and engaging in weight talk when they access such constructs from a physiological discourse, rather than constructing and discussing these discursive positions within a more psychologically and emotionally based discourse that the female success stories tend to do? If so, this may signify that the male obese body and his fat is indeed gendered differently to that of females (Kyrölä, 2016). His occupancy within a predominately feminised domain may be problematic. Hence, these males reinforce their right to be in this domain by asserting they are still masculine enough to be considered male because they are losing weight for physiological reasons (and thus there is a biomedical need for them to lose weight) rather than choosing or wanting to lose weight for more aesthetic, social or emotional reasons that females may choose to lose weight for (Tischner, 2013; Monaghan & Malson, 2013).
It appears that both the biomedical discourse and the emotional/psychological discourse of weight throughout the weight loss centres serve an important purpose. The biomedical discourse appeared to have been invoked to explain the reasons why the individual decided to join the weight loss centre. In other words, the biomedical discourse functioned as the ‘trigger’ (borrowing the term from Jarvis’ (2009) study), for wanting to join the weight loss centre and wanting to lose weight. For the participants, it was the experience of negative health effects because of excess weight that was the catalyst for joining the weight loss centre. This was far more prominent in the male success stories, compared to the female success stories. Alternatively, the emotional/psychological discourse of weight was invoked for different purposes: this discourse was employed more in terms of the process of losing weight and the reasons for wanting to change their lifestyle, eating or exercise habits. Once weight loss occurred, the participants - especially the females - seemed to draw strongly on this emotional/psychological discourse of weight to not only justify their decision to join the weight loss centre, but to also justify that they are being a ‘good’ mother, wife or partner for deciding to lose weight. What this process highlights is the idea that discourses serve an important function; they ‘do’ things. For Foucault, discourses influence and shape how individuals think (Stanley & Longwell, 2004) and can therefore shape their behaviours and actions. As such, behaviours and actions can be determined by an individual’s understandings of concepts. How participants practice, experience and ‘do’ weight loss and dieting is influenced by how they think and what knowledge they have about weight loss, health, disease and their own bodies. Therefore, examining this process allows individuals to gain greater insight into the world of dieting and how gender may influence that practice.
5.3.3 Discourse seven: The abject body

Discourse seven of this current study explores the construction of the body as abject throughout the weight loss centre success stories. Partly continuing on from discourse one (‘doing’ gender), discourses seven also focuses on this process undertaken by the males and females whilst joining the weight loss centre. As explored in discourse one, females do not exclusively just ‘do femininity’ because they are female, nor males ‘do masculinity simply because they are males; this can happen simultaneously. Erin’s (Weight Watchers) success story is one example of this simultaneous ‘doings’ of both masculinity and femininity: “strength training is so important, too. At first I was worried I wouldn’t look feminine anymore, but my trainer explained to me that an overly muscly look requires extremely hard and deliberate training”). Here, Erin is inferring that if she were to begin weight training, this may lead to her looking ‘masculine’ or ‘manly’ (or in another words ‘not feminine’). Erin's trainer subsequently reassures her that “an overly muscly look requires extremely hard and deliberate training”. She acknowledges that she can ‘do masculinity’ by engaging in the stereotypical male activity of weight training but is also simultaneously following her trainer’s guidance to avoid “not looking feminine anymore”, by aiming to “build muscle and tone” to a level that abides by the feminine ideal.

When Erin explores her hesitancy to undertake strength training for fear of not “looking feminine anymore”, she is marking her body as potentially unintelligible if she were to go too far. Erin is showing here how being a female as well as acting, looking and behaving as a female is a “regulatory, disciplining process” (Butler, 1993, p. 232). Here, both acceptable and unacceptable, unreadable bodies are produced and discursively constituted within the realms of heteronormative limits of masculinity and femininity. Not only does this intelligibility construct Erin as an acceptable female (considering that she
acknowledges her conscious effort to remain within the acceptable limits of femininity), but this intelligibility also constructs the ‘Other’ - the unacceptable female body who has transgressed social norms, understandings and performances of what is constitutively regarded as appropriate femininity. In this instance, the ‘Other’ would be a female who has entered masculine ‘territory’ by developing too much muscle mass or muscularity and transforming her body to be unintelligible as a female.

To have an intelligible body means to abide by the accepted social norms that render an individual to be classified as a suitable and acceptable human being. If these social norms are not met in some way, then the body cannot be legitimated as a ‘real’ body because it has fallen outside this discursive sphere of what constitutes a suitable, appropriate and legitimate human life. A body is intelligible or recognisable when others (most often those in specific positions of power or authority) can comprehend their identity and social position without confusion. If confusion arises about one’s position within the social world, then there is possibility that this body will forgo the ability to be recognised as a human being and the chance to be classified as such. For this specific study, the focus is on how bodies undergo processes of intelligibility based on the existence of weight and how this can cause certain bodies to be seen as transgressing social norms or standards of bodily appropriation. The overweight or fat body presents a discursive space of unintelligibility since it falls outside the realms of what is considered normal, acceptable and conventional for males and females (Torish, 2012). Within the collected weight loss centre success stories, discourses that refer to the unacceptability of certain bodies are numerous. There are examples of individuals who, through the process of losing weight, have come to be acknowledged and regarded as a ‘better’ person since the weight loss, becoming intelligible. For example:
“I am a better person because of it [Weight Watchers]” (Raun, Weight Watchers)

“We are better parents now” (The Cassidy’s, Weight Watchers)

“All this [exercise and following the Weight Watchers program] gives me more energy to play with my kids, and makes me a better mum” (Zoe, Weight Watchers)

“We are rapt with the results and thanks to Lite n’ Easy we feel like much better parents and partners” (Rachel and Phillip, Lite n’ Easy)

“My life has certainly changed for the better since I lost all that weight. I feel much better about my physical appearance. I used to feel disappointed when I would look in the mirror trying on clothes. Now I am very happy with the way I look and feel” (Kylie, Lite n’ Easy)

“Tracey's biggest motivator was her family, the 12WBT program helped her to feel better within her self [sic]” (Tracey, 12WBT)

“The emotional strength that came with the 12WBT program has been amazing and with that I feel I have become a better mum, a better wife and moved towards being the type of person that I want to be” (Bella, 12WBT)

In the process of becoming better or becoming ‘more’, this suggests that prior to joining the weight loss centre, these individuals were lacking in some way; having social capital. Ironically, it was the existence of something more on their bodies (i.e., fat) that classified them as having less of something else (i.e., discipline or control). One example of this is found in Melissa W’s Weight Watchers success story:
“My youngest son came home from school and told my then-husband that his friend had called me fat and overweight. I was mortified, but it ignited something in me: it drove me to finally lose the weight for good. At that moment, I knew I’d found the determination to succeed”

Here, Melissa's residence within the socially discursively constructed notion of a fat body was the catalyst for her deciding to lose weight and become healthier. Her existence within this fat body constructs her as subversive and sick, as a body that is lacking something and as a body that requires intervention and change (Eli & Ulijaszek, 2014). Hence, in joining the weight loss centre and losing weight, these individuals become embroiled within a simultaneous discourse of loss and gain: in losing weight, the individual gains the right to be both acknowledged and recognised as intelligible, suitable and acceptable (now not fat) body within society.

Relating to that of being recognised as a human being, what arises is the question of livability. Are these now not-fat bodies viewed as being worthy of a life? For there is a difference between living a mere existence and living a livable life; this difference is intelligibility. To exist in the social world does not lend itself directly to living in the social world, and certain bodies (e.g., fat bodies) are at risk of being removed from this sphere of livability because their abnormality and deviancy places them outside the social boundary of what is considered normal and acceptable for a social being (Butler, 2004). This abnormality and deviancy of fat on the body becomes physically marked and therefore recognisable on the body through excess weight and through the negative health effects of excess weight. Just some of the many examples of the physical health effects of excess weight mentioned within the success stories include:
“I was out of breath, perspiring, aching and feeling truly sad about my condition [being overweight]” (Raun, Weight Watchers)
I was “always tired and lethargic, struggling to play with my children” (Anita, Weight Watchers)
“I had a medical checkup at work and was advised I had very high blood pressure and needed medication immediately” (Ross, Lite n’ Easy)
“My GP warned me that my blood sugar levels, cholesterol and blood pressure were all in the “extreme” range and that I was a prime candidate for cardio vascular disease with a waist measurement of 38 inches” (Ray, Lite n’ Easy)
“I was at work and felt like I couldn’t breathe - I felt pressure on all my internal organs” (Jacqueline, Weight Watchers)

Here, the physicality of excess weight becomes embroiled in discourses of abjection. The body is cast as sick, disgusting and repulsive and something to feared. Termed by Kristeva, the abject is “one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1). In other words, the abject is understood as the process one undertakes to abject - or reject - that what is not of themselves (McAfee, 2004), a process whereby the ‘Other’ - the abject - is produced, a place of filth and un-cleanliness. Abjection threatens life and order and the self, so a border is formed between I and ‘not-I’, between what I am and what I am not. This border is a psychologically imposed limit placed between I and anything that threatens the safety of the self (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2013). It is not the “lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). The abject
is anything that threatens the safety, ‘cleanliness’ or routine and order of normality (Holmes, Perron & O'Byrne, 2006; McCabe & Holmes, 2011), and so abjection functions to protect oneself from contamination, defilement and chaos.

In relating this abjection back to the weight loss centre success stories, there are some examples that construct a negative view and conceptualisation of the fat body. For example, Hayley (Weight Watchers) states, “the old me would have been worried that people were laughing at me, thinking, “Oh, there’s that fat girl”. I used to cringe every time I saw photos of myself and, if I was alone, I would cry”. Here, Hayley resides and exists within a fat body that is seen and constructed in a doubly negative way: negative from the individual themselves and negative from society. As Jarvis (2009) also found in her study, the weight loss centre success stories initially locate these individuals within a discursive position of ‘the bad place’, which details the negative effects of excess weight, including the physiological, emotional, psychological and social consequences that may arise. Eventually, these individuals are then rescued from being both a ‘bad’ person and of residing in the ‘bad place’ and come to exist within a discourse of positivity that details the large extent to which their lives have changed for the better since joining the weight loss centre and losing weight. Here, fatness exists as an abject substance that comes to exist on a body, a substance that comes to represent the failure of the individual to exert control over bodily processes, such as controlling food intake and losing weight. The body defies boundaries and enters a realm of disgust, possible contamination and repulsion (Lupton, 2015).

The abjection of weight and bodies is an interesting field of sociological study. Abjection produces a psychological boundary around anything that threatens the safety or order of the self. Since weight comes to mark discourses of disgust and sickness on the
body, the body becomes abject though the risk and danger and potential contamination these bodies impose on society and the threat these bodies pose to order, normalcy and familiarity. Bodies with excess weight are commonly viewed in very negative ways within society, often as being lazy, indulgent, greedy, selfish and repulsive and someone who is unable to control themselves around food and eating (Bordo; 1990; LeBesco, 2010; Grønning, Scambler & Tjora, 2013). An example of the negative construction and viewing of the ‘fat’ body in the success stories is explored in Melissa W’s Weight Watchers success story, whereby she states that “my youngest son came home from school and told my then-husband that his friend had called me fat and overweight”. Here, the presence of fat on Melissa’s body is viewed in a negative manner, as something abhorrent and disgusting. In this example, it is another individual that views and constructs the existence of fat on the body as a negative ‘thing’, whereas in both Jan’s (Weight Watchers) and Abby’s (Lite n’ Easy) success story, it is the individuals themselves that classify their obese body as negative:

“When I got on the scales I was horrified to discover I was the biggest I’d ever been” (Jan, Weight Watchers)

“My heaviest at this point was 80 kilos [eighty kilograms] and I was disgusted in myself” (Abby, Lite n’ Easy)

These weight loss centres produce the abject body throughout their success stories. This is achieved in various ways, such as negatively promoting how ‘bad’, ‘wrong’ and disgusting excess body weight is, using negative language to emphasise they are ashamed about their obesity or excess weight and by emphasising the extent to which an individual’s life can change for the better, just by losing weight and becoming healthier. The abject
body is also produced using ‘before’ and ‘after’ images, whereby the ‘before’ images are employed to focus on how unhealthy and disgusting these bodies used to be (the analysis of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ images within the weight loss centre success stories will be analysed later in the findings section). Such discourses of weight can strongly influence how individuals come to understand, view and talk about bodies and the abject existence of fat on these individual bodies.

5.3.4 Discourse eight: The simplicity discourse

The collected weight loss centre success stories strongly emphasise the relative ease or simplicity of losing weight and of following the requirements of the weight loss centre program. This discourse is associated with specific words that appear throughout the success stories, such as ‘just’, ‘easy’, ‘simple’ or ‘simply’. For the quotes provided in the results section, the word or words that are in italics have been italised by the researcher to emphasise a particular idea or discourse that is in focus, and do not appear italised in the original quote, unless otherwise stated. Examples in the Weight Watchers success stories that refer to this discourse of simplicity include:

“She once considered lap band surgery, but a few simple changes saw Brigitte Irving shrink from a size 18 to size 12” (Brigette, Weight Watchers)

“Cutting down portion sizes and switching to more filling foods was not only simple, it was enjoyable” (Elizabeth, Weight Watchers)

“If I ever notice that weight is creeping on, I just reread my Weight Watchers books, which gets me straight back on track” (Rheananm Weight Watchers)

“I accept there are bad days, but don’t give up on myself anymore. I just stick to my ProPoints budget
for the next day” (Jan, Weight Watchers [bold and italics in original])

“If I’ve got the kids with me, I’ll put one in a pram, the other on his bike and off we go! It’s just become part of my daily routine” (Brooke, Weight Watchers)

“Just get started. That’s my advice to people who want to lose weight” Barbara, Weight Watchers)

“The best bit was buying three Weight Watchers cookbooks; the recipes looked delicious and were so easy to cook” (Hayley, Weight Watchers)

The discourse of simplicity is also present throughout the Lite n’ Easy success stories, with most examples referring to the ease of fitting in the organisation of eating and food preparation into their daily working lives:

“Knowing that when we get home from work we don’t have to cook something healthy is a relief. Plus it’s so easy to order our meals. “I just open the fridge and freezer and everything’s ready to go” (Steve (a), Lite n’ Easy)

“I have maintained this weight loss ever since [December 2013], just by ordering for the working week” (Juliet, Lite n’ Easy)

“With just a moderate amount of daily exercise, I was soon noticing the changes [weight loss]” (Ray, Lite n’ Easy)

“I lead quite a hectic lifestyle. Every day I start around 7:30 in the morning and most nights I work back. In the morning I’ll just take my Lite n’ Easy to work and I’m sorted. At night it doesn’t matter if I finish late, I’ve got a perfect meal waiting for me” (Nav, Lite n’ Easy)
“I also loved how I could just grab my breakfast and lunch bags out of the fridge and pop them in my bag for work” (Jo (a), Lite n’ Easy)

“For more than 10 [ten] years it has really blended into my life and it has just worked like clockwork” (Jo (b), Lite n’ Easy)

“The fact that it comes all packed by day makes it so easy” (Jo (b), Lite n’ Easy)

“I just open the fridge and freezer and everything’s ready to go” (Steve (b), Lite n’ Easy)

“The food is delicious and already prepared for me, conveniently labelled with the day and the meal so all I have to do is grab and go” (Kate, Lite n’ Easy)

The simplicity discourse is also visible in the 12WBT success stories:

“She’s lost an amazing 45kg over three rounds [of the program] and it’s all because of a simple decision she made to start getting up at 4am” (Jacqueline, 12WBT)

“Everything in the program works together… I just followed the 12WBT Meal Plans” (Jacqueline, 12WBT)

“A shoulder injury and ruptured Achilles tendon didn’t stop Nick from achieving his 12WBT goals - he simply bought a wheelchair and carried on with his training” (Nick, 12WBT)

“I was beginning to understand that it could be done [successfully lose weight] if I just stuck to the program” (Sandra, 12WBT)

“I lost 12.5 kilos just working out in a local park” (Tracy, 12WBT)

In addition to the ‘just’ word used in relation to the discourse of simplicity, there are also various other key words that are mentioned throughout the success stories that point to or reveal traces of this discourse. For example, the word ‘hard’ is used in various
instances to suggest or refer to how it was not hard to either lose weight or to follow the requirements of the weight loss program. For example, in her Lite n’ Easy success story, Abby emphasises that “it’s not hard to lose weight and be happy with yourself”, whereas Lite n’ Easy appealed to Robyn since she “wanted a program that required no hard work in preparation or calorie counting”. Amongst the Weight Watchers success stories, the presence of the ‘hard’ work in context with the ‘simplicity discourse’ is also evident. Jan makes a note that “healthy eating doesn’t have to be hard” whereas Stacey was “enjoying exercise, so it wasn’t a hardship”. Similarly, the word ‘easy’ has been used in the context of the family member losing weight or following the weight loss centre program:

“Their [Weight Watchers] guidelines were easy and the program fitted around my family life” (Alison, Weight Watchers)

“The meal plan has been very easy to follow” (Robyn, Lite n’ Easy)

“Ordering my Lite n’ Easy online each week is easy” (Shannon, Lite n’ Easy)

“I have well surpassed that [his weight loss goal] and maintained it easily with Lite n’ Easy and some exercise” (Ross, Lite n’ Easy)

“The lifestyle change has been really easy” (Maire, Lite n’ Easy)

“It [Lite n’ Easy] really is the easiest thing ever” (Lisa, Lite n’ Easy)

“The food is fabulous, varied and easy. Nothing takes me much time at all to prepare” (Tracy, 12WBT).

The overall notion of the discourse of simplicity is most evident in the 12WBT weight loss centre success stories. For example, in Nick’s 12WBT success story, he states,
“you just have to get up and do it”. Additionally, Michelle Bridges (the creator of the 12WBT program) has a slogan she instils in her clients known as ‘JFDI’ (‘Just Freakin’ Do It’ or ‘Just Frickin’ Do It’). Her clients refer to this slogan multiple times throughout the 12WBT success stories, such as Jacqueline: “sometimes in the morning I hear Mish’s [Michelle Bridges] voice in my head saying JFDI - Just Freakin’ Do It!”), Steve (b): “yes, there are times when I don’t want to exercise, but that’s too bad: Just Frickin’ Do It”) and Nick: “there was that moment when I thought I could go that way [stop the program] but then I thought, ‘Nah, I’m JFDI now, I’ve come this far and it’s the only way for me”. The weight loss centres deliberately emphasise and enforce this discourse of simplicity throughout their programs and through their success stories. The centres produce this discourse of simplicity because they are projecting the idea to society that losing weight is easy and simplistic, that just by following their food and exercise guidelines, everyone can easily lose weight and keep this weight off over the long term.

However, the construction and existence of this ‘simplicity’ discourse contradicts the abundance of literature that details the difficulty or struggle many individuals face in losing weight (Anderson, Konz, Frederich & Wood, 2001; Wadden, Butryn & Byrne, 2004; Brock, Chandler-Laney, Alvarez, Gower, Gasesser & Hunter, 2010). The discourse of simplicity that is produced and enacted by these weight loss centres in their success stories appears to be effective in encouraging individuals to join the weight loss centre, with the guarantee that weight loss is easy. However, this discourse is largely established on the false premise that long term weight loss and maintaining this weight loss is in fact very difficult and perhaps highly unlikely for the majority of individuals that join the weight loss centre.
Slogans can be key in creating a mantra for the individuals involved in weight loss with the term ‘JFDI’ (‘Just Freakin’ Do It’ or ‘Just Frickin’ Do It’) prominent in a number of the success stories for 12WBT. This slogan, termed by Michelle Bridges is used as a literary and linguistic technique, an aphorism, to reflect the discourse of simplicity. The slogan includes the word ‘just’, which again refers back to the discourse of simplicity, and reflects that losing weight and following the 12WBT program is a simple and easy process. An aphorism is defined as a “concise expression of doctrine or principle or a generally accepted truth conveyed in a pithy, memorable statement” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 480). As a rhetorical literary device, aphorisms function as strong declarations or statements, generating or producing an effect, response or reaction from the reader of the text (Morell & Burrow, 2014). These success stories (and any text in general) seek out a reaction or response from the consumer of the text, and aphorisms are one example of how this reaction or response is elicited. The JFDI aphorism functions to impact on the consumer of the text; it encapsulates the philosophy or ethos of the 12WBT program. Engaging with, connecting with and reacting to an aphorism is the ultimate purpose of this literary technique. The aphorism effect of JFDI might enable a consumer of the 12WBT success story to begin thinking about his or her own situation in regards to weight, health, dieting or food. This introspection may illicit internal reflection or action, such as contacting the weight loss centre, talking to friends or family about losing weight or exercise, or beginning to do some research on weight, weight loss centres or programs available to them or weight related topics such as obesity, BMI, health effects of excess weight or exercise programs. Alternatively, another consumer of this text might be an individual who is currently completing the 12WBT and may motivate and encourage them to continue; if other, similar individuals can ‘Just Frickin Do It’, then perhaps the individual may feel they are also able to achieve their weight related goals and be successful with the
12WBT program as well. This specific response is explored in Barbara’s (12WBT) success story and how she was persuaded and influenced to join the 12WBT weight loss centre program: “with her self-esteem at an all-time low, an emotional recovery seemed impossible. Then Barbara watched The Biggest Loser: “I saw these really big people running and I thought ‘if they can do it, surely I can do it’. And I loved how Michelle [Bridges] genuinely wanted the best for them. I cried during the finale, and then I signed up for 12WBT”. Aphorisms can also be used to promote a relationship between the text and the consumer of the text. Such a relationship, and the feelings or emotions that emerge are important and should be considered in terms of how they produce meaning or how individuals come to understand language and meaning as discursively constructed through the interplay or interchange between the individual and the text (Morell et al, 2014).

It is important to recognise that there is evidence of contradictory discourses within these weight loss centre success stories. These contradictions offer up the opportunity to explore the complex relationship not only between the two conflicting discourses, but also its relationship to other discourses that emerged from the analysis of the weight loss centre success stories. Instead of discounting the incongruities or tensions surrounding conflicting discourses, FCDA is not only interested in exploring these conflictions, but it also encourages it. One specific example of a discourse that conflicts with the discourse of simplicity is what can be labelled as the discourse of difficulty. For example, Melissa (Weight Watchers) identifies that her “Weight Watchers journey wasn’t smooth-sailing”, she “didn’t want to return to my [Weight Watchers] meeting because it all felt too hard” whereas Sandra (12WBT) confesses she was aware that “losing the weight wasn’t going to be easy” and that it “definitely didn’t feel easy”. Similarly, there are various other instances that refer to the difficulty in following the 12WBT program:
[Jeff] and “Megan [his wife] struggled with the 12WBT menu and food plan for the first few days because it wasn’t as easy as throwing something unhealthy in the oven” (Jeff, 12WBT)

“The weight didn’t drop off as she’d first hoped” (Barbara, 12WBT)

“Tracey has met some challenges on the program” (Tracey, 12WBT)

These traces of the discourses of difficulty are not as extensive as the discourse of simplicity. The above-mentioned examples regarding the hardships or difficulty around weight loss or exercise being are the only examples within the whole corpus of the collected success stories that refer to the contradictory discourse of difficulty. The existence of the discourse of difficulty in the Weight Watchers and 12WBT success stories is slightly different compared with the discourse of difficulty found in the Lite n’ Easy success stories. Whereas both Weight Watchers and 12WBT had references to the hard work or difficulty some individuals experienced during the process of losing weight or following the program (as shown in the examples above), Lite n’ Easy had no mention of any discourse of difficulty throughout the whole corpus of the fifty-four (54) Lite n’ Easy success stories collected.

It is interesting to reflect on the existence of this discourse of difficulty within the success stories. What is the reasoning behind constructing this difficulty discourse within the same space as the more explicit discourse of simplicity? In terms of the discourse of simplicity, could it perhaps be about the weight loss centres wanting to encourage individuals that everyone can lose weight? That regardless of their familial, social or employment arrangements or obligations, all individuals can be successful at losing weight and keeping this weight off in the long term. Perhaps by identifying the difficulties or
problems these individuals have had to face and thus overcome to lose weight or improve their health, other individuals can realise that they too can also lose weight despite various other factors or responsibilities in their life, such as family or work. In addition, perhaps the difficulty discourse also targets those individuals that have tried to lose weight and have either failed to lose weight or lost weight in the short term but gained it back over time. To allow individuals to recognise that losing weight is a simultaneously difficult and simple process, but by following the program set out by the weight loss centre, they should be and can be successful at losing weight. Therefore, with the existence of both the discourse of simplicity and difficulty, it offers an opportunity to explore the meanings of this for individuals. Hence, FCDA has proven to be a suitable methodology to guide this exploration. FCDA not only welcomes these discursive contradictions and ambiguities, but it actively seeks them out to more deeply explore and delve into the discursive understandings that underlie a topic (Coyle, 2007). Thus, by exploring the simultaneous discourses of simplicity and difficulty that surround weight, dieting and weight loss, perhaps health researchers can come to a greater understanding of why some individuals become obese and why weight loss appears to be so difficult to treat and manage over the long term, despite the strong discourse of simplicity that is constructed within these weight loss centre success stories.
5.3.5 Discourse nine: ‘The plot’

As already emphasised, this current study draws heavily on Jarvis’ (2009) study, in which she conducted a critical discourse analysis on the ‘Slimming World’ magazine and the weight loss success stories contained in them. Her study revealed that many success stories tend to follow a ‘plot’ in terms of how the success stories were structured and the information included in them. This plot involved seven elements: ‘the bad place’, ‘the trigger’, ‘the meeting’, ‘early success’, ‘what I ate’, ‘the problem’ and ‘the transformation’. Considering Jarvis’ (2009) framework may help to see how the narratives in the weight loss centre success stories produce particular discourses of weight and gender in the current study.

‘The bad place’

As Jarvis (2009) identifies, ‘the plot’ begins by introducing the individual’s life before they have accessed help for their excess weight or health issues. It may detail the reasons why this person is overweight or obese, as well as how excess weight has affected their health. This stage may also provide detail about previous (unsuccessful) attempts at losing weight. There is strong evidence of ‘the bad place’ element in the weight loss centre success stories, but this seems to disappear once detail is provided about how much the individual’s life has positively changed. Here, the detail focuses on the total physiological, emotional, psychological and social transformation the individual has experienced. One example of this initial ‘bad place’ from within the weight loss centre success stories is in Sandra's 12WBT success story:

“My back would hurt when I got out of bed in the morning and I had issues with my ankles from the extra weight. My biggest fear was that I would end up
not being able to move, not being able to get in and out of the car, that I would be at home all the time because I couldn’t go anywhere”.

What can be witnessed happening here, is that the initial self-placement of the individual within the discourse of ‘the bad place’ involves a confession of a truth that reveals their unhealthy lifestyle and the consequences of this ‘bad’ lifestyle, such as negative health effects. This truth becomes embroiled within a discursive web of power and knowledge of the self and produces a confessed body that requires help, assistance and salvation. To present oneself as piteous, distressed and fully aware of their failure in terms of excess weight or eating unhealthily, these individuals have presented themselves as lacking something. They have therefore identified themselves as worthy enough to receive sympathy, concern and understanding from other patients, doctors and wider society (Bordo, 1990). These individuals are admitting to a physical excess of fat and are therefore confessing to having failed to abide by a socially constructed understanding of what their weight, diet or exercise regime should look like (Duncan, 1994; Markula & Kennedy, 2011). Excess weight is constructed as a sin, a moral responsibility (Scholz, 2009) and a behaviour that requires the individual to seek salvation through accepting individual responsibility for failing to successfully control and manage their body. The weight loss centres have a role in constructing the texts to be read in a certain way, and the centres construct and talk about weight in a negative light, which may influence how the texts are read by the public. Therefore, this negative judgement of excess weight becomes evident throughout the stories for readers of the texts.
It is useful to explore Foucault’s work around confession and how ‘the bad place’ element may be similar in this current study and to Jarvis’ (2009) work. Foucault focused on the confession as a process that individuals undertake to produce a truth. The confessional act and process is concerned with how power produces subjects (McLaren, 2009). When a truth is confessed, the subject becomes entangled within a discursive web of truth, power, productions of the self and knowledge. The following examples from the weight loss centre success stories explore the ‘declaration’ or confession of the individual admitting that they are overweight or unhealthy:

“I felt big and unhealthy and knew I needed help to slim down” (Alison, Weight Watchers)

“My wake-up call came after the birth of my second child, when I realised I was 10 kilos [ten kilograms] off from weighing in at 100 kilos [one hundred kilograms]. It was a shock! I’d struggled with my weight since I was a teenager, but, at that moment, I thought, I can’t live like this, I have to do something”” (Brooke, Weight Watchers)

“After having my two girls only 18 [eighteen] months apart my eight had crept up. When I returned to work I realised just how much extra weight I was carrying. I work as a flight attendant and trying to work in the tight spaces on the plane was uncomfortable. My energy levels were at an all time low and I was really struggling to cope both at work and at home, running after my girls” (Jo, Lite n’ Easy)

“I hate being fat sometimes!” (Jeff, 12WBT)

“I realised that all in all I was about 12 kilos [twelve kilograms] overweight, and I just needed to get on
top of it. I wanted to fit back into my clothes!”

(Kelly, 12WBT)

The following quotes are examples from the weight loss centre success stories that explore the individuals confessing to their sins or ‘bad’ behaviour, such as their unhealthy eating patterns or unhealthy food choices:

“Muesli with coconut. Biscuits. Peanut butter on toast. Mugs of hot chocolate. Cheese toasted sandwiches. McDonald’s drive-through. Chocolate. More toast and biscuits. Welcome to my former food diary - and that was all before afternoon tea. The rest of the day would be crammed with whatever I could find until my husband Mark came home and we’d have a healthy dinner. Little did he know what I was eating when he wasn’t around. No-one knew, not even my family or close friends” (Victoria, Weight Watchers)

“I struggled with food control. Half a tub of ice-cream. An entire bag of lollies. A large packet of chips. Looking back, it’s fair to say I struggled to control the amount of food I ate. Over the years, I developed a relationship with food whereby every time I was stressed or upset by something, I turned to the fridge or pantry for comfort. I used food to ‘fill the gap’, but it never helped in the long run” (Rheanan, Weight Watchers)

“Over the past few years though, I had fallen into some bad habits and was grabbing whatever foods I could prepare and eat quickly” (Amanda, Lite n’ Easy)
“I had no time to cook healthy meals for myself so I was grabbing whatever quick and easy food I could find and would often skip meals or just grab a couple of biscuits on the run” (Bree, Lite n’ Easy)

“After tucking into a huge dinner, he’d head to bed and have a restless night. The next morning, he’d wake up exhausted, skip breakfast and drag himself to work. By mid-morning, he’d hit the vending machine for a chocolate bar. Although lunch was a relatively healthy sandwich and muesli bar, he didn’t eat anything else until dinner - and the cycle would start all over again” (Jeff, 12WBT)

“Over time she noticed old habits were creeping back in, like ordering takeaway instead of cooking healthy meals” (Angela, 12WBT)

The next set of examples, still concerned with confession, are some examples from the weight loss centre success stories that explore the individual confessing to ‘hitting rock bottom’ and confessing that they knew they needed to do something about their weight or poor health:

“The first time I attended a Weight Watchers meeting I was petrified about getting out of the car, but knew I was at rock bottom and had to try something” (Leonie, Weight Watchers)

“After putting on weight during my engagement and honeymoon, I was shocked to see how big I appeared in the photos. I knew I had to do something, so I joined Weight Watchers” (Tara, Weight Watchers)

“Finally, after a very frank chat with my GP, followed by some helpful counselling sessions, I
admitted that my weight had spiralled [sic] out of control” (Victoria, Weight Watchers)

“After many years of struggling with my weight and losing count of how many other weight loss programmes I have tried, I desperately needed a new food solution” (Robyn, Lite n’ Easy)

“At 93 kilos [ninety-three kilograms] I felt I was getting too heavy and needed to do something about it” (Anthony, Lite n’ Easy)

“In December 2012, I pretty much hit rock bottom. I just got really, really sad about the way I felt and looked, and I thought ‘I can't go on like this’” (Barbara, 12WBT)

“I kind of felt it was my last chance to do something. I mean I had done everything, every weight loss program and fad diet around. I had taken weight loss pills, tried everything on the market and nothing had ever worked” (Sandra, 12WBT)

In one of Foucault’s seminal works - Discipline and Punish (1975) - Foucault identifies these truth games as practices of coercion. In his later works (such as The History of Sexuality: Volume one [1978]), Foucault shifts from seeing confession as a coercive practice to identifying confession as an act and process of self-management and self-formation of the subject (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013). Foucault identifies that the modern process of confession bears some similarities to the Christian confessional process occurring in church. Confession presents the subject with the opportunity to admit their misbehaviour and disobedience to God (Rail et al, 2009). Contrary to the Christian confession and its relation to the Church, Foucault’s confession concerns itself with the rising process of medicalisation within the health, medical and psychiatric arena. The
Christian confession sees to the awarding of salvation from the priest, Foucault’s confession sees the patient seeking salvation and approval (often in the form of treatment) from those in the position of ‘expert’, such as a doctor, psychiatrist, dietician or personal trainer (Rail et al, 2009). The act of confession occurs through the self-identification of being abnormal, of lacking something (Markula et al, 2006). Subjects who self-confess to being overweight, obese or not the ‘ideal’ body type make evident their self-confession and hence their ‘lack’ to society. The ‘expert’ encourages the individual to admit their ‘crime’, to admit their wrongdoings of being unable to abide by a suitable exercise regime or nutrition plan (Scholz, 2009), if you confess your body, then you can be redeemed. As such, the doctor encourages redemption. The doctor firstly diagnoses the patient and then prescribes treatment, a way to ‘redeem’ oneself from sin. Redemption could involve the decision to undergo weight loss surgery, to begin an exercise program, setting a weight loss goal or to see a dietician for dietary advice. Here, confession acts corporeally; it acts to reveal the fat body. The fat body confesses to a ‘crime’, confessing to the succumbing to the war and battle against obesity. As such, the doctor provides mediums through which to achieve salvation, ways that the obese body can be saved, ‘rescued’ and returned to normalcy (Rail et al, 2009).

Individual bodies can be read and understood through visible physical markers, such as excess weight. Such markers position subjects as ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal’, as abiding by or diverging against what it means to be a healthy, fit and socially-acceptable body (Murray, 2009). This positioning of bodies as normal or abnormal produces confessions of truth, a means through which meaning is inscribed on the body of the self and on the body of others (Grosz, 1995). Bodies come to exist as a visible representative of confessional truths through the construction and positioning of the body as normal or abnormal, as ‘fat’
or ‘not fat’ (Murray, 2009). The confession of a body as ‘fat’ involves the individual recognizing and owning this confession, of “taking ownership of a body of transgressions” (Murray, 2009, p.83), a process of self-identification of abnormality and lacking something (Markula et al, 2006).

Within the weight loss centre success stories, there are various examples of individuals engaging in the process of confession, whereby they identify, assert and admit that they embody and occupy a failed body. For example, Lauren L (Weight Watchers) states that she “gained a lot of weight during my tough pregnancy. I stopped exercising completely, I ate junk, and not surprisingly, I gained 32kg [thirty-two kilograms]. I felt horrible and I was so disappointed in myself but felt too low to do anything about it”. Similarly, Leonie (Weight Watchers) confesses that her “weight kept creeping up, and suddenly I was struggling to fit into a size 18 [eighteen]” and Anita (Weight Watchers) identifies how she “gained a monstrous 40kg [forty kilograms] in my first pregnancy and at 6 [six] months post partum from my second son I tipped the scales at 117kg [one hundred and seventeen kilograms] ...Each day I knew that I was obese. I felt stressed, lethargic, anxious, unhappy and simply terrible about myself”. In these examples, the individuals not only confess to being overweight, but they also confess to occupying within a body that has failed. The body they occupy is deviant and diseased and therefore a ‘bad’ citizen within society (LeBesco, 2010). The visibility of the fat body itself is not enough to warrant a confession, since all bodies are exposed and visible. The ‘fat’ body has to firstly know they are fat and then be able to admit they are pathologically obese in order to seek redemption in the form of medical help and support (Murray, 2009).

The process of both recognising and confessing one’s own fatness is not a neutral process. Processes of power are played out because the confession is only ‘real’ and
legitimated if this confession is professed to someone who resides in a position of authority, of someone who “holds the power to forgive, correct, alter or transform the newly purged confessor” (Murray, 2009, p. 84). Hence, the confessional exists within discourses of disciplinary power and power relations, whereby the confession (and the confessor) exist within productions of truth, practices of the self and discourses of legitimisation and authorisation (Foucault, 1975; Mayes, 2016). Exploring Foucault’s confessional within the arena of health and weight is valuable, as it can allow for the examination of the confessional as a discursive process that produces a truth about the body within practices of subjectivity and practices of the self (Schee, 2009). The confessed, fat body speaks; they speak of and admit to failure and greed and deviancy. Once they have confessed to these ‘crimes’, the fat body becomes liberated and unburdened, and can now make changes towards the creation and development of a ‘new’ (i.e., not obese) body. Hence, these weight loss centres function as a site where individuals can both confess to their obesity and poor health, as well as a place where they can redeem themselves. It is important to acknowledge, however, that these weight loss centres and their success stories are marketing strategies. They function as devices through which redemption can be achieved if individuals follow the prescribed program. As such, this perpetuates the idea that the fat body needs and is actively seeking redemption through these centres. These centres function as the means through which you can redeem and ‘save’ yourself, but as marketing tools, they only represent their (weight loss centre) version of how to do this. Thus, focusing on these success stories can allow the researcher to explore how these weight loss centres both produce and encourage confessional processes of redemption and salvation. In addition, the researcher can also explore how these centres produce a confessed body who has confessed to a truth within discourses of power and knowledge. The now-not fat body has undergone disciplinary processes of regulation, modification, surveillance
discipline and reconstruction to develop into and come to reside within a more appropriate and privileged social body (Norman, Rail & Jette, 2016).

‘The trigger’

Jarvis (2009) highlighted that this stage identifies the reasons or events that prompted the individual to access ‘Slimming World’. All the weight loss centre success stories explore the trigger or triggers behind the individual deciding to a) do something about their poor health or excess weight and b) join the weight loss centre. For example, Leonie (Weight Watchers) states that the trigger for her to join Weight Watchers was because she was “sick of being asked if she was pregnant”, whilst for Bree (Lite n’ Easy), giving birth caused her to gain weight since she had “no time to cook healthy meals for myself so I was grabbing whatever quick and easy food I could find and would often skip meals or just grab a couple of biscuits on the run”. Four other examples of the ‘trigger’ which resulted in the individual joining the weight loss centre include:

“My youngest son came home from school and told my then-husband that his friend had called me fat and overweight. I was mortified, but it ignited something in me: it drove me to finally lose the weight for good. At that moment, I knew I’d found the determination to succeed” (Melissa W, Weight Watchers)

“My [weight loss] journey began in June 2014 when I booked a trip to South Africa for Christmas. I wanted to feel and look my best for the trip and needed to drop some excess kilos. I also work really long hours and was training for a 200km [two hundred kilometre] Ride to Conquer
Cancer in the October, so I needed a way to lose weight with minimal stress and organisation” (Lisa, Lite n’ Easy)

“When Jeff wasn’t able to complete the treetop adventure course his wife had given him as a birthday gift, he decided it was time to turn his life around” (Jeff, 12WBT)

“Active, happy, healthy and only 35 [thirty five years old], Barbara’s shock health crisis was the catalyst for a complete life overhaul” (Barbara, 12WBT)

All the weight loss centre success stories provide detail around an event, situation or occurrence that triggered them into making the decision to join the weight loss centre, as demonstrated in the quotes above. The process of being triggered to join the weight loss centre functions to produce an unhealthy body that can now be medically and scientifically measured, classified and understood. Under the guise of ‘seeking help’, the help is in fact what causes these bodies to come under medical scrutiny and judgement. These individuals obtain an understanding that they (and the failed body they reside in) are transgressing social and cultural norms and therefore they must undergo a process to redeem and transform themselves into a more socially accepted form of being and existing. Foucault’s three modes of objectification explore this process; his modes explore the three ways that subjects are turned into medical objects of knowledge and how the State can obtain data and information about the health and wellbeing of its subordinates. The ‘trigger’ acts as the catalyst for the implantation of an idea in the subject’s mind that they are in a ‘failed’ body, that something is wrong or lacking with their body. The individuals thus undergo a transformative process whereby the loss of weight allows them to produce and eventually occupy a ‘healthy’ (i.e., non-fat and productive) social body.
Foucault’s three modes of objectification are useful to explore within discourses of weight, specifically in relation to the development of the obese body as an object of medical and scientific intervention. These three modes - 1) scientific classification; 2) dividing practices; and 3) subjectification - are three processes, methods or techniques that individuals experience in the social world, resulting in the development and attainment of certain attitudes or viewpoints about the self and others (Markula et al, 2006). Exploring such processes can allow the delving into the different ways that individuals are socially and culturally transformed into objects of meaning and knowledge (Hall, 2004). These modes produce and transform human beings into discursive subjects of power (McLaren, 2002) that enable subjects to be socially recognised by others (Butler, 1997).

Foucault’s first mode of objectification looks at the application of a scientific label on various models of inquiry (Griffiths, Roach & Solomon, 2009), which produces the knowledge that subjects have of themselves as subjects and objects (Markula et al, 2006). Here, scientific and medical forms of knowledge take precedence and function to objectify, label or categorise subjects (Mohanty, 1993). Knowledge produced from these modes of inquiry (e.g., psychology, sociology, criminology) help to create subjects (Katz, 2001). For example, the medicalisation of obesity became increasingly evident during the 1960s and 1970s (Reissman, 1983; Sobal, 1995). At this time, advancements in medical understanding and technology began to situate obesity within various modes of medicine, such as endocrinology, genetics, bodily illnesses and lifestyle behaviours (Chang & Christakis, 2002). As such, weight and related concepts shifted from being understood as an immoral deviation of character to being scientifically classified as a disease by the WHO in 1990 (although perhaps immorality and deviancy have come to be reattached to discourses of weight over recent years). The labelling and classification of obesity as a medical condition
allowed for the resultant identification and classification of obesity as a medically quantifiable condition requiring medical, scientific and rational intervention (Simmers et al., 2016). The rise in medical technology surrounding weight has led to the process of subjects being scientifically measured and classified through processes such as skin-fold tests (Markula et al., 2006), the BMI index or height:weight ratios (Richardson, 2010). Results derived from these processes then quantifiably, categorically and legitimately situate subjects via norms and standard deviations to other subjects who have also been measured (Markula et al., 2006). Such a process objectifies the subject; the body has a constant surveillance and watchfulness on it, a ubiquitous gaze of its nutritional and physical activity choices. The body becomes a scientific site of correction (Bordo, 1990), continuously observed and scrutinised by ‘experts’ in the position to tell the truth (e.g., a doctor) (Curtis & Harrison, 2001). Subjects are scientifically measured, resulting in the categorisation and labelling of subject into medically identified groups, such as the obese, the diabetic, the depressed (Markula et al., 2006).

One example of this process within the success stories is from Natasha G’s (Weight Watchers) success story: “I went online and discovered I was obese - I couldn’t believe it. I joined Weight Watchers immediately”. Hence, what can be seen here is that the process of scientific classification produces knowledge that individuals take to be truthful because this knowledge is coming from a source that is deemed not only authoritative but also trustworthy to be telling the truth to these subjects. Other examples from the success stories that identify how health professionals can turn individuals into scientific and medical fields of classification can include:

“When I experienced heart palpitations, dizzy spells and chest pain, he [her doctor] told me that if I didn’t
lose weight, I would die within six months” (Erin, Weight Watchers)

“After a very frank chat with my GP, followed by some helpful counseling [sic] sessions, I admitted that my weight had spiraled [sic] out of control. I needed to save my marriage and - above all - save myself” (Victoria, Weight Watchers)

“My wake-up call happened when I noticed large, red marks on my stomach. Thinking I had a strange rash, I went to the doctor, who told me they were stretch marks from gaining weight so quickly. Until that point, I’d been in denial about my size” (Lucy J, Weight Watchers)

These quotes all identify interactions with the doctor, which again highlights the power play between the medical profession and fat bodies. The medical profession has the ability to legitimise and classify bodily measurements as ‘sick’ and therefore the individual requires help in the form of medical intervention and assistance.

Foucault’s second mode of objectification looks at the dividing practices which objectify the subject as a method of power (Smart, 2002). Certain social organisations or institutions produce knowledge about bodies (Foucault, 1982) to create and normalise (Katz, 2001) the existence of distinctions or divisions between individuals by labelling individuals as normal or abnormal. The development of institutional sites, such as schools, hospital and prisons function to divide, segregate and thus label subjects into categorical divisions (Markula et al, 2006; Penttinen, 2008). The knowledge that subjects have of these dividing practices is ultimately what leads to the categorisation, labelling and management of subjects into certain groups (Markula et al, 2006). For example, the labelling and
objectification of individuals as ‘insane’ saw these subjects be physically isolated and separated from ‘normal’ society (Markula et al, 2006; Penttinen, 2008).

In this current study, there is a focus on exploring the dividing practices that exist and take place around the division of fat bodies (who are type casted as abnormal or defective) and the separation between these and normal (i.e., not fat) bodies. There is a differential process that functions to separate and categorise individuals as ‘us’ and ‘them’, between what I am and what I am not. This process of dividing practices can also be seen throughout the success stories. One example of a divisionary process from the weight loss centres is the process of the individuals attending the Weight Watchers weekly meetings to be weighed. This process of being weighed in front of other individuals function as a means for the body to confess and divide individuals based on whether they have been successful or have failed at losing weight. Another example of a divisionary practice that is dominant within the discourse of weight is the use of the BMI. For example, Natasha (Weight Watchers) states that she “went online and checked my BMI and discovered I was obese”. This example refers to the divisionary processes embroiled within the use of the BMI. The BMI functions to quantify, classify and divide. The BMI, along with the weight loss centres, function to separate ‘obese’ and ‘normal’ bodies. The BMI scientifically and medically labels and categorises Natasha as obese. These weight loss centres, and other mediums such as The Biggest Loser television show act to divide and classify obese bodies as sick and disgusting (Gay, 2017). It is in these mediums that binary opposites (i.e., not obese) are also constructed and brought into existence. With the binary opposition of thin/fat, the thin body become privileged over the fat body through the difference in meaning between thin and fat bodies. Certain bodies are privileged over others (Krane, Choi, Baird, Airmar & Kauer, 2004), regarded as dominant and (discursively) powerful
than others. In addition, this oppositional binary also constructs the ‘Other’ which inherently produces values and attitudes: the fat body, the ‘Other’ comes to exist as subordinate, inferior, deviant and anomalous (MacNaughton, 2005; Aston et al, 2011). Meaning becomes inscribed on the social body (Mohanty, 1993), with the ‘thin’ body coming to represent an individual in control of one’s life, as someone who is morally superior to the failings of the ‘fat’ body (Stephenson & Banet-Weiser, 2007). Similarly, Dan (Lite n’ Easy) not only categorises himself as overweight but also equates being overweight with being unhealthy. Here, a binary opposition comes into existence and for Dan, individuals who are overweight are automatically divided into, classified and labelled as unhealthy. Likewise, for Zoe (Weight Watchers), she categorises herself as unhealthy based on the fact she was still wearing her maternity pants ten months after her son was born, whereas Karen (Weight Watchers) categorises herself as unhealthy based solely on her weight. In these examples, the common societal construction that being overweight (or weighing a certain amount) equates to the individual being labelled (either by themselves or society) as unhealthy.

Described as “the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject” (Foucault, 1983, p. 208), Foucault’s third mode of objectification, subjectification, looks at how the subject consumes and produces knowledge about the self through recognising, acknowledging and internalising one’s existence within social categories (Penttinen, 2008; Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010). During this process of subjectification, subjects come to understand themselves in certain terms, with this study being interested in how subjects understand and eventually accept and submit to being labelled as gendered and ‘fat’ bodies. For example, Melissa (Weight Watchers) states “my youngest son came home from school and told my then-husband that his friend had called me fat and overweight. I was mortified,
but it ignited something in me: it drove me to finally lose the weight for good”. Here, in the process of being labelled as fat and overweight by her son’s friend, Melissa came to realise and accept that she had a weight issue, which then was the trigger for her to seek help in the form of joining Weight Watchers. Thus, Melissa has taken in and adopted a discourse that has allowed her to accept and acknowledge that she had a weight issue. In this process, subjects come to recognise themselves as obese, with this self-classification of their excess weight being necessary for the process of confession (and therefore intervention) to take place.

This confessional process has already been explored above in relation to the ‘bad place’ and the individual’s confession of having a weight issue. As such, the point being made here is that the gaze can be revolved inwards onto ourselves: to discipline, control and produce the self through social interactions (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; Ekbia & Nardi, 2012). In doing so, subjects turn inwards onto themselves and come to self-discipline, self-control and self-manage themselves. Here, individuals have become their own discipliner. Thus, an individual does not require an outside force to instruct or manage their behaviour since she or “he becomes the principle of his own subjectification” (Foucault, 1978, p. 203). Here, processes of self-surveillance and self-discipline become intertwined within discourses of subjectification.

‘The meeting’

The third stage of ‘the plot’ details the process of joining the weight loss centre or meeting up with staff that work at the weight loss centre. For the current study, ‘the meeting’ had a focus on the positive nature of support meetings as part of the weight loss program, specifically for Weight Watchers. In ‘the meeting’, Jarvis (2009) states that this stage explores how the individual pushes through anxiety and fear they have around seeking help. Further
aspects or details about what ‘the meeting’ process involves is not identified in Jarvis’ (2009) study.

Leonie (Weight Watchers) remembers “the first time I attended a Weight Watchers meeting I was petrified about getting out of the car, but knew I was at rock bottom and had to try something”. The Weight Watchers stories have a strong link to ‘the meeting’ stage, whereas both Lite n’ Easy and 12WBT state that they do not have meetings as part of their program. Whilst Leonie’s quote above refers to her pushing through her anxiety to attend a Weight Watchers meeting, the rest of the collected success stories detail a slightly different focus of ‘the meeting’ compared to Jarvis’ (2009) study. ‘The meeting’ for the Weight Watchers success stories focus strongly on the positive, motivating and encouraging nature of the meetings as part of the weight loss experience; individuals share their stories or ‘weight loss tips’, get weighed, talk with other members and seek advice from their Weight Watchers group leader. For Jarvis (2009), ‘the meeting’ explored the individual experiencing anxiety and fear, but she does not provide further detail about what ‘the meeting’ process actually involved. Following on from Leonie’s anxiety explored above, she also refers to the positivity of the meetings: “my [group] leader Debbie was also a huge help. Every week she had us in stitches, giggling about the funny side of life. I knew a couple of other women there and they became an extra support group that ensured the journey stayed social and fun”. Other examples that explores ‘the meeting’ as part of the Weight Watchers process include:

“Receiving advice and encouragement from my meeting members” (Gabrielle, Weight Watchers)

“I think my success stems from never missing a meeting. Everyone was so supportive and taught me
to think about what I was putting in my mouth before I put it in, rather than leaving myself to feel guilty after overindulging” Zoe (Weight Watchers)

“I go to meetings every week. They’re a regular part of my routine and great for staying on track” (Penelope, Weight Watchers)

“After the meeting finished, I felt empowered” (Jan, Weight Watchers)

“The meetings were a great help, as I learnt so much from everyone else’s experiences” (Victoria, Weight Watchers)

“After the meeting, Mum and I went to the supermarket so I could stock up on healthy foods. My Weight Watchers journey was off to a great start and I made lifestyle changes straightaway” (Brigette, Weight Watchers)

“I walked out of every meeting full of great ideas and thoughts on what I could tackle that week” (Melissa W)

“But everything changed when one of my colleagues encouraged me to come along to a meeting” (Hayley, Weight Watchers)

“Having a good support network also helped. I love talking about and sharing my experiences, so attending meetings suited me” (Ally, Weight Watchers)
“The weekly meetings became so important - I needed that interaction with other people. Sometimes, I didn’t feel as motivated as I should have, or would have a bad day, but there was always someone to pick me up and help me get back on track. While I may not have felt motivated when I walked into my meetings, I always left them feeling really inspired and as if I’d learnt so much from the other members and my awesome Leader, Lynn… I’ve been able to look the way I want by attending regular meetings to refresh my knowledge and help motivate me” (Elizabeth, Weight Watchers)

“The meeting and everything that gets said there is why I still keep going – even though I’ve reached Goal. I go to help people who may be struggling, but I also go for myself, as there’s always something new to learn, even if it’s just a delicious new recipe. I get great support from my meetings” (Barbara, Weight Watchers)

“Weight Watchers meetings became invaluable support for me, especially as a single mum. My advice is to attend meetings, stay the full duration and ask for support from others in your group - you’ll get so much more out of it than if you just weigh in and leave” (Mary, Weight Watchers)

“To keep myself on track and to support her, I still attend meetings weekly. It also helps me stay in the loop with weight-loss tips” (Michelle, Weight Watchers)
As is evident, Weight Watchers has a strong focus on the role that ‘the meetings’ play and reinforce a discourse of positivity and support. This discourse of positivity will be revisited again later in the analysis section of this thesis.

‘Early success’

Although Jarvis (2009) found a strong focus in the magazine success stories related to the initial and rapid weight loss upon joining the program, the researcher found very little indication of this process throughout the weight loss centre success stories. Perhaps this might relate to the goal the different organisations have and their choices around what they want to focus on in their stories.

‘What I ate’

Stage five of the plot from Jarvis’ (2009) study details ‘what I ate’. For Jarvis (2009), this stage focused on how the individual’s eating habits have changed and the foods they are now eating whilst losing weight. These characteristics in Jarvis’ (2009) study are also similar to what was found in this stage for the current study. For this study, ‘what I ate’ details the meal plan being followed and identifies how their eating habits have changed since accessing the weight loss centre, such as what they now cook and the meals and snacks they take to work. Referring to the weight loss centre success stories in this current study, there also appears to be a heavy focus of the discourse of ‘what I ate’ (Jarvis, 2009). For example, Lauren Rankin (Weight Watchers) details the extensive change in her diet since joining Weight Watchers: “Previously, I wouldn’t eat until lunchtime, when I’d have a slice of cake or biscuits, then a few chocolates in the afternoon. Now, a normal breakfast is oats with honey and milk. Lunch is a sandwich with leftover meats from the night before and loads of salad, then I’ll have something like low-fat chicken enchiladas, spaghetti bolognaise or steak or fish with vegies and baked or mashed potato for dinner”. Similarly, Tracy
(12WBT) states that “one of the best things about 12WBT is the food - her favourite recipe being the Butter Chicken”. Interestingly, the Lite n’ Easy success stories provide minimal detail regarding what the participants ate. This is possibly because the Lite n’ Easy meal plan that the participants follow is set and pre-planned. Even though both Weight Watchers and 12WBT do have a meal plan, there is more variety and more choice that the participants have in deciding what to eat. Three other examples from Weight Watchers and 12WBT that explore the discourse of ‘what I ate’ include:

“I picked up some great tips such as freezing grapes and dates for snacks. As a treat, my family enjoys takeaway fish and chips every fortnight. To make it healthier, I’ve switched to grilled fish and a smaller serve of chips” (Alison, Weight Watchers)

“I started filling myself up on fresh fruit and vegies and instead of having a few glasses of wine as a reward after a hard day’s work, I enjoyed a nice hot tea or a spritzer before dinner” (Leonie, Weight Watchers)

“I absolutely love the 12WBT menus” Angela adds. "From Michelle’s recipes I learnt how to substitute ingredients and try new things. One of my breakfasts was bread with cottage cheese, banana and walnuts. I’d never have had that before!” (Angela, 12WBT)

Similar to Jarvis’ (2009) study, this study has explored what the participants ate whilst following the weight loss centre program and this formed part of the structure of meetings that helped to shape the behaviour or actions of individuals on a daily basis. Furthermore, the weight loss centre success stories in this current study also provide detail of ‘what I used
to eat’. Detail around ‘what I used to eat’ is most common throughout the Weight Watchers success stories. For example, Lucy (Weight Watchers) states that “my boyfriend at the time and I had poor eating habits and it was normal for us to order takeaway like pizza or fish and chips regularly, or just eat a whole box of cookies when we were together”. ‘What I used to eat’ is also detailed (but not as extensively) in the Lite n’ Easy and 12WBT success stories. For example, Reece (Lite n’ Easy) acknowledges that he “also had to give up soft drink and late night snacks, but these were not doing me any good anyway”, whereas Jeff’s 12WBT success story details how he would “wake up exhausted, skip breakfast and drag himself to work. By mid-morning, he’d hit the vending machine for a chocolate bar. Although lunch was a relatively healthy sandwich and muesli bar, he didn’t eat anything else until dinner”. Three other examples from the success stories detailing ‘what I used to eat’ include:

“Half a tub of ice-cream. An entire bag of lollies. A large packet of chips” (Rheanan, Weight Watchers)

“Before, I’d skip breakfast, and then indulge with cake or muffins for morning tea. At work, I pretended I was healthy, opting for salads, but was never satisfied, so would stuff my face with more cake, muffins or biscuits in the afternoon. I’d also drink a 2L [two litre] bottle of Coke throughout the day. When I got home after a long day, I’d polish off a 200g [two hundred grams] packet of chips. Dinners varied, but we often had fast food like fried chicken or McDonald’s. If we did have meat and vegies, the portions were enormous. If I was bored afterwards, I’d also have a Milo or ice-cream” (Jan, Weight Watchers)
“I was grabbing whatever quick and easy food I could find and would often skip meals or just grab a couple of biscuits on the run” (Bree, Lite n’ Easy)

These examples highlight a discourse of ‘being out of control’ and the language used emphasises being in excess: *Half a tub of ice-cream. An entire bag of lollies. A large packet of chips*, and also acknowledges the act of the individual confessing to their ‘bad’ eating habits. Could this type of language be used in the success stories to highlight the extent of transformation that these individuals have undergone during their process of losing weight? To emphasise how out of control, sick, unhealthy and ‘bad’ these individuals were before losing weight, and therefore how different their eating habits now are since joining the weight loss centre? If this is the case, perhaps the weight loss centres are emphasising the importance of self-discipline and self-control that these individuals had to adopt when they joined the weight loss centre, and what they therefore had to display around food.

Fatness has come to indicate someone who lacks self-discipline and self-control, someone not able to manage or control their actions and behaviours (Grønning et al, 2013). Throughout society, one of the main functions of discipline is the *effective* control, distribution and management of society (Dostie 1998). Foucault was interested in exploring how this process of discipline was enacted on individual bodies. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault (1975) looked to the nineteenth century as a period of the development of the disciplinary system and the emergence of the subject (Tischner, 2013). He looks to the transformation of punishment and the subsequent emergence of the disciplinary, penal system (Smart, 2002). The eighteenth century saw public executions as the accepted and established form of punishment (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008), with the first chapter of
Discipline and Punish (1975) beginning with the corporeal, public execution of the criminal Damiens. However, following this, practices of punishment moved to focus more on imprisonment and depriving the prisoner of basic rights (O’Farrell, 2005). This shift in punishment did not occur due to society becoming more civilised and humanised (O’Farrell, 2005) and therefore against public executions (Appelrouth et al, 2008), as many historians often wrongly conceive (O’Farrell, 2005). Instead, Foucault argues this shift in methods of punishment occurred because public executions began to fail as an effective mode of punishment. Public executions were actually encouraging and provoking civilians to commit more crime and therefore causing and perhaps promoting public and social disorder. Thus, methods of punishment turned to disciplining the criminal within prison structures, hence the birth of the disciplinary society.

The development and emergence of the disciplinary society produces and reinforces power at an individual level - onto the body of the subject to produce a productive, useful and disciplined body (Foucault, 1975; Vestergaard, 2009), within a society “that evaluates, corrects and encourages responses according to a norm” (Ransom, 1997, p. 19). In doing so, punishment is not enacted through violence or physical means, but through the internalisation of disciplinary practices and processes which is achieved through subjects internalising and adopting the social rules and social norms required for a docile and productive society (Welsh, 2011). Power here is productive. It “works to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it” (Foucault, 1978, p. 136) and it operates on the level of the individual (Beaulieu, 2006). The need for external disciplinary measures disappears (Cliff, 2010) because individuals discipline and regulate themselves, a “form of surveillance that is internalized” (Harwood, 2009, p. 19). The potential of the gaze
that watches and observes these individual bodies is the mechanism for the control and
disciplining of individual bodies and their behaviour.

This disciplinary process can be seen in the examples from the weight loss centre
success stories. By joining the weight loss centre and transforming their old ‘unhealthy’
eating habits, the individuals are disciplining and ‘forcing’ themselves to change their eating
habits, stop eating ‘unhealthy’ food and in unhealthy amounts and instead adopt healthier
eating patterns and behaviours. By being educated about food and weight, the individuals
are disciplining themselves. They are making the correct choices for their health when they
could potentially ‘get away’ with making unhealthy decisions, such as not following their
meal plan, eating ‘unhealthy’ foods or choosing to not exercise. They are disciplining both
their bodies (e.g., “I tracked my food intake vigilantly and memorised the ProPoints values
of every type of food” [Gabrielle, Weight Watchers]) and their minds (e.g. “There’s so much
more to weight loss than just eating the right kinds of food and exercise - I had to reflect on
why I became overweight in the first place. Food wasn’t going to fix my problems and, once
I knew that, I really began to succeed” [Erin Weight Watchers]). The enactment and
production of disciplinary practices on social bodies act to create noticeable representations
of power.

This power becomes represented on individual bodies, with this representation
making visible the complex discourses and workings of dominance, supremacy and control
of certain bodies over others (Rail et al, 1995). Within these workings of dominance and
supremacy, bodies are prescribed a rank, “the place where one occupies in a classification”
(Foucault, 1975, p. 145). The meanings placed on bodies are unstable, a precarious act
between current discourses of obesity, social interactions with medical ‘experts’ and
constructions of subjecthood (Kupferman, 2013), and this rank hierarchises and
categorically positions subjects within discourses of obesity, fatness, health and medicine (Grimes, 2005; Wright, 2003).

**Self-governing practices**

There are various examples throughout the success stories that refer to methods or techniques of the participants self-governing themselves in the process of following the meal plan and exercise schedule set out by the weight loss centre. For example, Therese (Weight Watchers) states that the Weight Watchers “iPhone app helped me keep track of what I was eating, and the kilos [kilograms] soon dropped off”. Here, Theresa engages in a process of governing and disciplining herself and her body to follow the exercise requirements of the weight loss centre, as well as remaining accountable to these requirements. In recent years, new technologies in the form of smart phone applications, watches that track calories expended or computer programs have made it easier to monitor weight, calories expended, or calories consumed. This practice may play a role in the surveillance of individual bodies during the weight loss centre experience. The advancements of technology have also encouraged a process of self-tracking, whereby individuals keep track of data, and may share with other individuals in health forums or health professionals (Lupton, 2014). These technologies, such as calorie or weight trackers or phone apps function as disciplinary measures that lead to the surveillance and discipline of one’s behaviour and actions (Rail et al, 1995; Duncan, 2006). Whilst there appears to be a very heavy focus on these self-surveillance and disciplinary measures and practices throughout the corpus of the Weight Watchers success stories, there is very little mention of such processes in the Lite n’ Easy and 12WBT success stories. Some of the many examples of this governance and disciplining of the body from the Weight Watchers success stories include:
“I keep my ‘before’ photo on the fridge, which reaffirms on a daily basis that I never want to go back to that unhealthy lifestyle” (Rheanan, Weight Watchers)

I “started writing everything I ate in my tracking diary” (Leonie, Weight Watchers)

“After reading the program material, I set a goal to religiously track what I ate and stop drinking alcohol for three months” (Erin, Weight Watchers)

“I started reducing my portion sizes, tracking every bite that passed my lips, and putting a lot more thought and planning into our family meals” (Kelly, Weight Watchers)

“I started reducing my portion sizes, tracking every bite that passed my lips, and putting a lot more thought and planning into our family meals” (Kelly, Weight Watchers)

“I can clock up my [walking and running] progress on the RunKeeper app on my phone” (Alicia, Weight Watchers)

“I got a Weight Watchers pedometer, which showed me how many steps I was already taking on a daily basis” (Melissa, Weight Watchers)

“These days, I measure my food before I eat it, cook in bulk and freeze portions, or have leftovers for lunch the next day” (Victoria, Weight Watchers)

These examples from the Weight Watchers success stories are concerned with the idea of self-surveillance and self-governance. Lite n’ Easy takes away a lot of the responsibility away from participants by pre-measuring and pre-portioning out food portions and delivering the ready-to-go meals to participants, whereas there is much more
autonomy in both the Weight Watchers and 12WBT programs. For Lite n’ Easy participants, this seems to be a feature that many participants feel strongly about:

“The portions are right and it’s good healthy food”  
(Amanda, Lite n’ Easy)

“Having our meals prepared is such a great convenience for us” (Carie and Mark, Lite n’ Easy)

“The convenience of having healthy, pre prepared meals delivered to my front door was fantastic”  
(Nathalie, Lite n’ Easy)

“Lite n’ Easy really appealed because everything was already done for me. Having meals pre-prepared meant I could spend more time with my children and on my job.  
(Kylie D, Lite n’ Easy)

“I chose Lite n’ Easy because it seemed like a no brainer, knowing that I didn’t have to count points or weigh and measure every ingredient” (Jo B, Lite n’ Easy)

“I couldn’t believe how much more time I had to myself now that I didn’t have to go out grocery shopping, prepare meals or find take away options”  
(Ben, Lite n’ Easy)

“We [Kent and his children] don’t want to spend our time shopping for food and cooking, so having Lite n’ Easy meals delivered means we can relax and have more fun together” (Kent, Lite n’ Easy)

“The freshness of the ingredients is great and the convenience of having my lunches ready to take to work makes mornings much easier for me” (Ali, Lite n’ Easy).

It is interesting to examine the fact that Lite n’ Easy prepares and pre-portions the food for their participants as part of the program, whereas for Weight Watchers and
12WBT, both programs, and their participants have much more freedom around food, since there is not a set meal plan they are made to follow. Whilst Weight Watchers does have a ‘points’ system whereby the participants are encouraged to eat under a certain number of points per day to ensure weight loss, there is still much more freedom around food and eating compared to Lite n’ Easy. Inherent in these processes are ideas that subjects need to discipline themselves to be successful at weight loss.

Foucault consistently made a strong emphasis on the idea that disciplinary methods of control and power are not physically palpable. Instead, such processes became internalised, therefore producing docile subjects who self-govern and self-manage themselves without the need for external control (Marion & Gonzales, 2013). This internal disciplining of bodies focuses on producing docile, efficient and obedient social bodies (Coleman & McCahill, 2011) who can police and govern their own behaviour.

Subjects come to adjust, monitor and manage their behaviour due to the constant watchful gaze (Giovanelli & Ostertag, 2009). How one manages and controls (or fails to manage and control) their body weight has become a social and visibly accessible discourse (Grønning et al., 2013). The body has become the site for the expression of the level of control and discipline an individual has over one’s health. Meaning becomes prescribed on the obese body, socially portraying its failure and inability to impose restriction and restraint (Gilman, 2008a). The physical, social body “transfigures into an active utopian project” (Chrysanthou, 2002, p. 469), a personal source of identification that socially portrays one’s identity and ability (or inability) to abide by social, cultural and medical norms around weight, health and bodily control (Grønning et al., 2013). The gaze circulates inwards to see the individual impose (or attempt to impose) restraint, control and order on the body. The body becomes personally motivated to portray an ‘acceptable’ self-identity.
Yet, more importantly, the body feels obliged to portray this ‘acceptable’ self-identify for the sake of abiding by the acceptable social norms of society (Grønning et al., 2013).

‘The problem’

Following early (and usually dramatic) weight loss in the beginning stages of the program, the individual experiences a plateau in their weight loss (Jarvis, 2009). Despite their best efforts, the individual may find themselves stuck in terms of not losing any more weight or deviating from their meal plan. Whereas most of the ‘plot’ elements the Jarvis (2009) found in her study has also been found throughout the weight loss centre success stories, one element of the ‘plot’ – ‘the problem’ - seems to be quite absent within most of the weight loss centre success stories, or at least has a slightly different focus. Perhaps the difference in this focus relates to the different aims the success stories have.

The weight loss centre success stories may be trying to avoid emphasising anything too negative in case, such as highlighting weight loss plateaus experienced by the individuals or difficulties in trying to fit in exercise, it may deter individuals from deciding to join the weight loss centre. Instead, the weight loss centres want to emphasise the ease in losing weight, if you join the centre and follow its program. ‘The problem’ within these weight loss centre success stories focuses more on 'the problem' that the individuals experienced prior to joining the weight loss centre. There is extensive focus on the problematic nature of excess weight, which then functions as ‘the trigger’ for the individual to decide to join the weight loss centre and address this ‘problem’ (i.e., excess weight or poor health). For example, Anita (Weight Watchers) explores how her excess weight was problematic to her ability as a mother: “I wasn't being the mother I wanted, always tired and lethargic, struggling to play with my children”. Whilst Jarvis (2009) discovered that many of the ‘Slimming World’ magazine success stories explored the plateau in weight loss that
some of the individuals experienced during the process of losing weight, this process of weight loss plateau appears to be quite absent in the weight loss centre success stories. Conversely, as stated above, ‘the problem’ within these weight loss centre success stories seems to be more constructed in a way that explores ‘the problem’ of excess weight prior to joining the weight loss centre, which then tends to act as ‘the trigger’ for the individual to make the decision to join the weight loss centre. Perhaps the reason for this absence of ‘the problem’ in these weight loss centre success stories is because these weight loss centres want to focus on the success and positivity that can be experienced by joining the weight loss centre and losing weight, rather than constructing and focusing on the ‘problem’ of weight loss slowing down or plateauing, which may deter individuals from wanting to lose weight or from contemplating the decision to join these weight loss centres. Here, there is an avoidance of focusing on ‘the problem’ of excess weight, and instead focusing on how simple it is to lose weight and the wide range of positive benefits you can experience by following the weight loss centre’s prescribed program. The discourse of positivity that is found within these weight loss centre success stories will be explored in more detail later on in the findings section.

‘The transformation’

The analysis of images is an important part of conducting a project with a critical discursive analytic approach as its underlying methodology (Kress et al, 1996). Interestingly, the large majority of work conducted in discourse analysis has largely ignored the consideration and analysis of the visual side of discursive texts (Wang, 2014). Thus, this current study employed a multimodal approach to analyse the discourses that may have risen not only in the written text of the success stories, but also in the images that are included within these success stories. The transformation is emphasised, partly, using
highly positive and dramatic language, as well as through the material layout and organisation of the success stories. Accompanying each of the weight loss centre success stories are images. The images chosen were the ones that accompanied each of the success stories on the website. It is the use and placement of these images within the success stories that play an important role in what messages the public may derive from the stories and how they interpret both the story and the accompanying images.

**Weight Watchers**

Among the full scope of Weight Watchers success stories (forty-eight), all the success stories have both a ‘before’ and ‘after’ weight loss image accompanying it. Each of the ‘before’ weight loss images are a cropped image, showing the top half of the body. Each of the ‘after’ weight loss images are full length, with each individual being dressed up in formal clothing. Both the ‘before’ and ‘after’ images are placed at the start of the success story. These images also are aligned with text detailing ‘introductory’ information about the participant such as their age, height, weight before joining Weight Watchers and their weight after completing the Weight Watchers program. Out of the 'before' images in each of the (n=48) Weight Watchers success stories, five of these success stories have a ‘before’ image that also include their child or children in the image. What this can suggest is that Weight Watchers is specifically focusing on the familial aspect of weight loss in the female success stories and reinforcing that weight loss can be achieved despite these familial responsibilities. Image one below shows an example of Erin’s ‘before’ image with her child:
Image one: Erin Grant (Weight Watchers)

For mum-of-two Erin Grant, a dire medical warning was the ultimate motivation she needed to shed almost half her body weight.


Lite n’ Easy

On the Lite n’ Easy website, one image accompanies each success story, for example:
Image two: Luke Hodge (Lite n’ Easy)


The public then have the option to click into the success story for more detail. Clicking on the option to ‘read full profile’ at the bottom of the image then gives access to the reader to view the full success story. Accompanying the full success story is a set of anywhere between three to seven images (excluding Lisa’s Lite n’ Easy success story which is only accompanied by one image). The layout of the full success story, with one of three to seven images being rotated through is:
Each of the three to seven images being rotated around are shown for approximately two seconds, with there being a general trend in the type of images shown. For example, the image that accompanies Jo B’s success story before clicking into reading her full profile is a cropped ‘after’ image, showing the top half of the body. After clicking into the option to read her full profile, the five rotating images are: a) a three-quarter cropped ‘after’ image; b) an ‘after’ image of Jo with her husband and two children; c) another three-quarter cropped ‘after’ image; d) an ‘after’ image of Jo with her husband; and e) a ‘before’ image. Of similar photographic format is Rachael and Liam’s Lite n’ Easy success story. Three of the images displayed in her success story are shown below.

Image four: Rachael and Liam (Lite n’ Easy)


The majority of the Lite n’ Easy success stories (and their accompanying images) follow this same format. Generally, the majority of the female Lite n’ Easy success stories tend to include images that depict the female interacting with her family, especially their children. Alternatively, the majority of the male Lite n’ Easy success stories tend to focus more on the male exercising or eating a Lite n’ Easy meal. What this can perhaps suggest is that the female weight loss success stories are constructed in terms of how this weight loss has benefitted the family and the relationships within the family unit. Whereas for males, the male images accompanying their success stories present a discourse that focuses on emphasising how the male’s physiological health has improved (emphasised by the use of the images showing them exercising) and how their eating habits have changed (emphasised by the use of the images showing them eating a Lite n’ Easy meal). For example, in Luke’s success story, four of his images are of him engaging in physical activity such as football and running (with one image showing him eating a Lite n’ Easy meal).
meal), and the majority of the images in Nav’s success story are of him eating Lite n’ Easy meals (and one of him exercising). Alternatively, three of the five images that accompany Jodie G’s Lite n’ Easy success story are of her with her children (and one with her husband). These images accompanying Luke’s, Nav’s and Jodie’s Lite n’ Easy success story are shown below:

**Image five: Luke (Lite n’ Easy)**


**Image six: Nav (Lite n’ Easy)**

This relates to the way that these weight loss centres construct weight, dieting and weight loss through different means for different genders. This was explored in discourse four (the ‘good father’; the ‘good husband’), where the main focus for the male and female success stories were different, and therefore there was a different focus (and perhaps a different purpose) that these weight loss centre success stories attempt to achieve. For the male success stories, attention is centrally placed on visually portraying the transformation of the physiological benefits (being able to exercise) and the physiological behaviours (eating healthily) that these males can now engage in or experience since losing weight and joining the weight loss centre. Alternatively, among the female success stories, the weight loss centres emphasise the positive changes and benefits the family have experienced as a result of the mother or wife losing weight. Here again it becomes obvious that males and females ‘do’ or practice weight loss and dieting differently in terms of the possible reasons or ‘triggers’ for joining the weight loss centre. In addition to this, it also becomes obvious that these weight loss centres frame weight, dieting and weight loss within different contexts based on the audience of the text. For females, these concepts are framed within.
a context of familial relationships, whereas for males, weight, dieting and weight loss become situated within a discourse that focuses on the physiological benefits of weight loss. Such gendered processes are significant because it can allow us to explore how these weight loss centres (and other social avenues) approach dieting and weight loss based on the audience of the text. Since weight loss and dieting products and services have historically targeted females rather than males (Miller-Kovach, 2007), it is interesting to explore these products and services where it is more common and socially acceptable for males to enter the dieting discourse and be concerned about their health. Understanding how these products and services target males and females (and the discourses involved in this gendered process) can perhaps allow for a better understanding of how males and females interpret the social and cultural information that is presented to them in the area of weight, weight loss and dieting. In doing so, perhaps it can allow for a greater understanding of how this interpretation may influence or affect how an individual respond to this information. For example, since these weight loss centres predominantly frame female fatness, weight loss and health within a familial context, what this suggests is that the weight loss centres may be aware that framing female weight in this context is more effective at recruiting, encouraging and persuading action and behaviour change, rather than framing it in a more male-focused discourse of the physiological benefits of weight loss.

12WBT

Each of the 12WBT success stories begin with a large image before the success story begins. The theme or context of these initial images vary, with a short description accompanying this initial image. For example, the caption for Bella’s initial image states “Bella before her first 12WBT Round, left, and, a year later and 41 kilos [forty-one kilograms] lighter, right”. Jeff's caption for his initial image states “Jeff and his wife Megan
celebrate their new lifestyle” and Barbara’s caption is “Barbara was a happy, healthy 35 year old”. Each success story then begins with a short paragraph of bold text, which serves as an introduction to the individual and the circumstances around why they have chosen to join the 12WBT program. The image below is one example of the large image with a short description and the short paragraph in bold that begins the 12 WBT weight loss centre success story:

**Image eight: Sandra (12WBT)**

Sandra’s 12WBT Story

Sandra in February 2015 with her 5 year old son Cooper. A year ago she was almost 40kg heavier.

Sandra Sio pathways to be an active, healthy mother to her two children, she needed to change her habits. Enter: 12WBT.

Sandra is good at maths – she’s a financial controller. It’s her job – but there’s one equation she only recently mastered.

“I studied advanced maths but if it takes me 40 years to understand calories in versus calories out – how to nourish my body rather than just eat,” she says.

A Common Story

Like many people, Sandra first started gaining weight when her routines changed. “I used to play netball and softball and indoor cricket when I was younger and at school. Once I started work, I stopped all my sport because I didn’t have time.” The weight crept on. A familiar story: a baby in 2007, baby weight not lost; another baby in 2010 and before she knew it, she was almost 130kg.


The 12WBT success stories are accompanied by various images (and a caption for each image) throughout the success story. Each success story tends to have around three to five images of varying theme and content. For example, Jeff’s success story has four images:
1. An ‘after’ image of Jeff (and his wife)
2. An active ‘before’ image that saw him join the 12WBT program
3. A ‘before’ image of Jeff and his daughter
4. An ‘after’ image of Jeff

**Image nine: Jeff (12WBT)**

![Image #1](Image #1)
![Image #2](Image #2)
![Image #3](Image #3)
![Image #4](Image #4)


Interestingly, the images that accompany Jacqueline’s 12 WBT success story are quite different to that of Jeff’s images:

1. A ‘before’ and ‘after’ image (the ‘before’ image is a top-half cropped image and the ‘after’ image is of Jacqueline running).
2. An ‘after’ image of Jacqueline and a group of individuals having completed the 12WBT program.
3. An active ‘after’ image of Jacqueline sky-diving.
Both the Weight Watchers and the Lite n’ Easy success stories appeared to reinforce the familial aspect in the female success stories and the physiological changes of weight loss (such as now being able to exercise) in the male success stories. Among the 12 WBT success stories however, it appears that there is a stronger focus on depicting the physical challenges and sporting achievements the females have been able to achieve since losing weight and focusing more on the familial and relationship aspect in the male success stories. For example, as seen above in images nine and ten, the images accompanying Jeff’s success story focuses on Jeff and his relationship with his wife, as well as depicting how his role as a father was the catalyst for wanting to join 12 WBT and lose weight. Alternatively, the images accompanying Jacqueline’s success story tend to focus more on the physical activities she can now experience due to losing weight. This is also the case in Nick’s 12WBT success story; there is a ‘before’ image of Nick with his wife and another image with his child, whereas in Sandra’s 12 WBT success story, the majority of her images show her exercising, such as running and paddle-boarding. Therefore, what can be witnessed is that, whilst the Weight Watchers and Lite n’ Easy success stories tend to focus
more on the familial aspect in the female stories and the physiological health aspect in the male stories, the 12 WBT success stories tend to oppose this discursive construct; the female 12 WBT success stories focus more on the physiological achievements the females can now experience since losing weight, whilst the male 12 WBT success stories focus more on highlighting a familial context to their weight loss.

This opposing discursive construct is significant because it encourages the consideration of why these weight loss centres are representing and depicting gender, masculinity and femininity in these specific ways. What this again implies is that weight, dieting and weight loss is a gendered process, a process heavily laden with discourses of what is appropriate gendered behaviour for males and females. Yet, what is interesting is that the 12 WBT success stories present an alternative way that males and females can ‘do’ or experience weight loss and dieting. Alternative to Weight Watchers and Lite n’ Easy, the 12 WBT success stories construct a different discourse, one that sees females are able to recognise the physiological changes that have occurred because of weight loss, and therefore an emphasis is placed on the physical challenges they can now achieve. For males, this discourse sees they can recognise (and perhaps are allowed to admit) that weight loss is understood in a familial context in terms of the ‘triggers’ behind wanting to lose weight, as well as the positive familial benefits the males have experienced since losing weight. Such a discourse is important because the 12 WBT success stories are successful in pushing against these normative typecasts of what is acceptable behaviour for males and females (Boero 2012). This is what needs to be done on a larger scale; to push and disrupt these hegemonic discourses that construct masculinity and femininity in specific ways, and construct behaviour as appropriate or inappropriate based on one's outward display of gender (Kay, 2004). Therefore, these weight loss centres and their success stories are
powerful in producing and circulating certain discourses of gender (and weight) within society. It is important to consider which discourses are being socially produced from these centres and stories, because these discourses can have a significant impact on how individuals come to understand themselves as gendered beings, as well as how they come to construct meaning and knowledge about weight and bodies within society (Garrett, 2004).

Similar to Jarvis’ (2009) study centering around ‘the plot’ found within the ‘Slimming World’ magazine weight loss success stories, the images that accompany the weight loss centre success stories of the current study also contain traces of ‘the plot’ and other elements. For example, the majority of all the weight loss centre success stories provide an image of ‘the bad place’, which is most often portrayed in the form of a ‘before’ image prior joining the weight loss centre program. More specifically, and as already stated in the results section, the images of ‘the bad place’ in the Weight Watchers success stories tend to consist of a cropped top-half image. For example, below you will see Tara’s half-cropped ‘before’ shot that visually represents ‘the bad place’:
Here, the ‘before’ image is cropped and showing her top half. In addition, some of these ‘before’ images are in black and white, a photographic technique that is sometimes used to symbolise the past (Shaden, 2014) and therefore to convey to the reader what they are now not (i.e., obese) or what they used to be. Interestingly, only the Weight Watchers success stories portray the ‘before’ image in a black and white format and only six of the forty-eight collected Weight Watchers success stories are in this black and white format, of which all six of these are in the female success stories. The black and white ‘before’ image follows the same format as the other Weight Watchers ‘before’ images (i.e., being a half-cropped image showing the individual's top half of their body), the only difference
being these six before ‘images’ are in black and white. Three examples of these black and white, ‘before’ images in the Weight Watchers success stories include:

**Image twelve: Brooke (Weight Watchers)**


**Image thirteen: Alison (Weight Watchers)**

In addition to each success story having a ‘before’ image, each success story also has an ‘after’ image of them, taken after they have joined the weight loss centre and lost weight. Relating back again to Jarvis’ (2009) study, the elements of ‘the plot’ are also evident in the images that accompany these weight loss centre success stories. For example, the ‘after’ images are visual representations of the element known as ‘the transformation’ of ‘the plot’ series (Jarvis, 2009). For the ‘transformation’ images from all three weight loss centres, the individuals are dressed in varying levels of formal clothes, for example:

**Image fifteen: Elizabeth (Weight Watchers)**
Running head: A Feminist analysis of discursive practices in 'success stories' in Australian weight loss centres


Image sixteen: Jodie G (Lite n’ Easy)

There appears to be a strong focus on visually displaying ‘the transformation’ throughout these success stories, since the majority of the images are ‘after’ images. There is a trend within these success stories that focus more the transformative aspect and process of the individuals, and of the extent to which their lives have changed since joining the weight loss centre program. Along with dramatic language and the wording in these success stories, the images function as a means to motivate and encourage individuals to join the weight loss centre. In addition, the use of dramatic and exclamatory language is achieved and emphasised through the use of exclamation marks (e.g., “I have so much more energy...”) in these success stories.
and my health has never been better!” (Tanya, Lite n’ Easy), making certain information a larger size (e.g., “Life’s too short to feel frumpy and miserable - and that's enough motivation to keep me on track” (Leonie, Weight Watchers, [coloured font and size in original]), in bold and italics (e.g., “Jacqueline a working single mum of four - is proof that losing 45kg [forty-five kilograms] CAN be done! She also now has daily ‘me time’, literally out-runs her kids and has time for her friends. Oh, and she’s just gone skydiving” [Jacqueline, 12WBT, bold and italic font in original] or in a different colour (e.g., “I fell in love with exercise” [Lauren, Weight Watchers, coloured font in original]).

Whilst each success story begins with ‘the bad place’ (Jarvis, 2009), which details the negative repercussions the individual is experiencing as a result of their excess weight or poor health, all the success stories then tend to diverge from this 'bad place' and enter a discourse of positivity. By entering this discourse, the success stories move the focus away from ‘the bad place’ to focus more on the extent to which their lives have improved and changed for the better since joining the weight loss centre. This discourse of positivity is reinforced by the images that accompany the success stories. For example, Jeff’s 12WBT story begins with ‘the bad place’:

“When Jeff wasn’t able to complete the treetop adventure course his wife had given him as a birthday gift, he decided it was time to turn his life around”

Upon providing detail about ‘the bad place’ and detailing how his excess weight was affecting his health and his family, Jeff then enters a discourse of positivity, where he provides detail about how much his life has changed for the better since losing weight:
“Now, breakfast is a big part of my day,” he says. “And I take a bag full of food to work every day. Everyone’s amazed at how much I eat throughout the day!”

“He got right into the exercise as well. “I bought a road bike and got out on it at least twice a week,” he says. “I also have free weights in my garage, and then I started smashing out Michelle Bridges’ online cardio videos”

“All Jeff’s hard work paid off - he lost 16kg [sixteen kilograms] in his first Round [of the 12WBT program]. He was even able to fit into skinny jeans for the first time in years”

This discourse of positivity is strongly reinforced by the images throughout the success stories. With only one ‘before’ image included, the other three images are ‘after’ images that depict Jeff's new and healthy lifestyle. One image is of Jeff and his wife dressed formally at the 12WBT party, the second image is again of him and his wife being active and the third ‘after’ image is of just Jeff himself. There is a trend for the 12WBT success stories to use images to visually present and reinforce this discourse of positivity (i.e., the ‘after’ images) rather than using images to reinforce the discourse of ‘the bad place’ (i.e., the ‘before’ images). In having the large majority of the images in each 12WBT success story include ‘after’ images, this reinforces the discourse of positivity because it focuses on the positive effects and benefits the individual is experiencing as a result of weight loss, rather than the images being ‘before’ images which places the focus on ‘the bad place’ and on how these individual’s lives have been negatively impacted by excess weight. This discourse of positivity is reinforced by the use of ‘after’ images that show the individual being active in order to depict the extent to which their lives have changed, and visually
providing images that show the activities they are now able to achieve such as sky diving (e.g., Jacqueline, 12WBT), running races (e.g., Angela, 12WBT; Sandra, 12WBT), walking (e.g., Kathy, Lite n’ Easy; Robby, Lite n’ Easy), obstacle courses (e.g., Kelly, 12WBT), bike riding (e.g., Nav, Lite n’ Easy; Shannon, Lite n’ Easy), gym classes (e.g., Tracy, 12WBT), boxing (e.g., Sarah W, Lite n’ Easy) and paddle-boarding (e.g., Sandra, 12WBT).

Similarly, the Lite n’ Easy success stories rotate between three to seven images per success story and tend to only have none or one ‘before’ images. Instead, the majority (or all) of the images in the Lite n’ Easy success stories show the individuals smiling and happy, within different contexts (e.g., with family, with friends, exercising or eating Lite n’ Easy food) which can infer that these individuals and the different areas of their life have improved for the better, though losing weight and following the Lite n’ Easy program. Alternatively, the discourse of positivity through the use of images is not as strong in the Weight Watchers success stories compared to the Lite n’ Easy and 12WBT success stories. Each Weight Watchers success story only has one ‘before’ and one ‘after’ image. Thus, although Weight Watchers still manages to portray and depict a strong discourse of positivity through its language use and with the focus beyond ‘the bad place’ to emphasise ‘the transformation’, the discourse of positivity is not as strong as in the Lite n’ Easy and Weight Watchers success stories.

This discourse of positivity is also reinforced through the trend of some of the individual’s ‘thanking’ the weight loss centre for losing weight and becoming healthier. This thanking discourse is most prevalent in the Lite n’ Easy stories, whereas only one 12WBT success story and four Weight Watchers success stories involve the individual thanking the weight loss centre. Within this ‘thanking’ discourse, there are traces of both
an indirect thanking and a direct thanking. For example, the thanking in the Weight Watchers success stories tend to be more indirect, whereby the individual thanks or shows appreciation for some aspect or characteristic of the weight loss centre program. For example:

“Thanks to the Weight Watchers cookbooks, I’ve introduced us to Middle Eastern cuisine and lots of other interesting new flavours” (Zoe, Weight Watchers)

“Thanks to the flexibility of the program, I never feel deprived” (Melissa W, Weight Watchers)

“All thanks to the jogging club and all the supportive people I met there” (Melissa K, Weight Watchers)

Alternatively, the Lite n’ Easy success stories tend to include a much more direct thanking. The individuals directly thank Lite n’ Easy, rather than thanking or showing appreciation for a certain aspect of the weight loss centre program. Some of these more direct examples of thanking from the Lite n’ Easy success stories include:

“Thank you Lite n’ Easy for sticking with me!” (Robyn, Lite n’ Easy)

“Thank you to everyone at Lite n’ Easy!” (Kate, Lite n’ Easy)

“Thank you Lite n’ Easy” (Jo B, Lite n’ Easy)

“I can’t thank Lite n’ Easy enough - you have absolutely saved my life!” (Kym, Lite n’ Easy)

“I’m now a comfortable 88 kilos [eighty-eight kilograms] thanks to Lite n’ Easy and I keep using it just to maintain my weight” (Luke, Lite n’ Easy)
“My self-confidence is back and I really cannot thank Lite n’ Easy enough” (Zoe, Lite n’ Easy)

This discourse of thanking is significant because it highlights and reinforces the discursive ‘positivity’ lens that these weight loss centres are attempting to achieve, emphasise and promote to the general public. By thanking the weight loss centre, the individuals are attributing their success (i.e., their weight loss or health improvements) to the weight loss centre, rather than attributing this success to their own efforts or changes they have made. The act and process of thanking has focus within the literature; thanking is often used as an indicator of politeness (Whittaker, 2000; Jautz, 2013). Why an individual takes part in this thanking process may differ and it will often be dependent on the type of context that it is used in (Archer, Aijmer & Wichmann, 2012). However, there is consensus that thanking is undertaken to express gratitude towards an individual or gratitude for a service that has been provided (Zappavigna, 2013). The consideration of the act of thanking within these weight loss centre success stories is important for two main reasons. Firstly, FCDA involves the analysis of language on a minute level. Exploring what words or phrases are included or not included within a discursive text allows us to exhume what meanings may reside within this text, and therefore what these meanings unearth about wider societal and political discourses (Machin et al, 2012). FCDA opens up a suitable arena whereby language can be critically examined in terms of the messages or linguistic strategies contained within a text and what meanings individuals can derive about a particular concept or social issue within this text (Kramer, 2007). Secondly, exploring the process of thanking is useful because it can allow for a reflection on the reasons or details that the individual is expressing gratitude or appreciation.

As stated above, the weight loss centre success stories construct the discourse of thanking in a way whereby the individual thanks the weight loss centres for helping them
lose weight or improve their health, rather than the individual attributing this success to their own actions or changes they undertook. As such, the weight loss centres come to be constructed as the reason for why these individuals have successfully been able to lose weight or become healthier. Hence, the reasons for an individual's weight loss success resides within the weight loss centres rather than it residing within the individual and the choices they have made throughout the weight loss process. This is reflected in the thanking process, since the large majority of the thanking examples show the individual thanking the weight loss centre for allowing them to lose weight, rather than the individual more indirectly thanking these centres for their assistance or support during this process of losing weight.

Thus, it is this discourse of positivity (which includes the process of thanking) that effectively sells and advertises the success of these weight loss centres to the public. This discourse of positivity is used as the ‘selling point’ to the public. Whereas most health campaigns, such as the ‘Live Lighter campaign’ (Australia) the ‘Measure up’ campaign (Australia) and other representations of obesity in the media (e.g., The Biggest Loser) take on and adopt a negative view of obesity, these success stories are coming in from the other angle. Instead of fat shaming or victim shaming, emphasising that rates of overweight and obesity are increasing in both children and adults or repeating the negative health effects that excess weight may cause, these weight loss centres (and their success stories) move beyond reinforcing ‘the bad place’ to focus more on emphasising the complete transformation that can be achieved through losing weight and ensuring that individuals can actually be successful at losing weight.
Aligning under the discourse of positivity, there is a sense of community and camaraderie, the idea that if ‘I can do it, then you can too’. This is identified in the success stories:

“Yes, some of us will get there earlier than others, but, as long as we push through, we can all be successful in the end” (Gabrielle, Weight Watchers)

“I know everyone says it, but if I can do it, then anyone can!” (Lucy, Weight Watchers)

“Everyone says it, but if I can do it, then so can anyone” (Kaye, Weight Watchers)

“I saw a Lite n’ Easy ad on TV and one of the success stories said she had lost 20 kilos [twenty kilograms] in 30 [thirty] weeks. I thought if she could do it then so could I” (Amanda, Lite n’ Easy)

“If I can do it, anyone can do it” (Tracy, 12WBT)

Additionally, various success stories also refer to this community and camaraderie by emphasising the importance of connecting with other individuals who are also following the program for support and accountability. The following examples are from both Weight Watchers and 12WBT. The Lite n’ Easy success stories do not make mention of this sense of community and camaraderie, probably mainly due to the Lite n’ Easy program not having meetings or a social aspect as part of their approach (as identified by Suzanne [Lite n’ Easy]: ”What I enjoy most about Lite n’ Easy is that I can eat it at home or take it to work and I don’t have to attend meetings at all like my friends who are on other weight loss programs”. Examples of community from the Weight Watchers and 12WBT success stories include:
“I think my success stems from never missing a meeting. Everyone was so supportive and taught me to think about what I was putting in my mouth before I put it in, rather than leaving myself to feel guilty after overindulging” (Zoe G, Weight Watchers)

“Combat and Pump are my favourite workouts and I try to do two classes of each every week. They’re fun and I enjoy the group camaraderie” (Lauren, Weight Watchers)

“I go to meetings every week. They’re a regular part of my routine and great for staying on track” (Penelope, Weight Watchers)

“The meetings were a great help, as I learnt so much from everyone else’s experiences” (Victoria, Weight Watchers)

“I get great support from my meetings, my family and my friends, and feel great happiness from within now, too” (Barbara, Weight Watchers)

“Not only has Weight Watchers made me feel fantastic, but it’s also introduced me to some amazing people” (Natasha, Weight Watchers)

“I know that even if I have had a less than perfect week my Weight Watchers family both in meeting and online will give me the everyday strength to carry on” (Kaitlyn, Weight Watchers)

“Jacqueline adds that it was encouraging to be involved with an online community of like-minded 12WBTERs” (Jacqueline, 12WBT)
“Use the community and connections with other 12WBT members to inspire you when the going gets tough” (Tracey, 12WBT)

“Stay connected in the Forums! One reason why 12WBT is successful is because you can find and connect with people in the same boat as you. The sharing of stories is important, if everyone was quiet and no one told their story it wouldn’t work. That community makes a huge difference” (Sandra, 12WBT)

Nick “also cites the encouragement of fellow 12WBTers as a major source of inspiration to stick with the program. “I found that being on the Facebook page and Forums added so much more support” says Nick. “There were people supporting me and I was able to support other people as well, and that really helped me stay focused on my goals” (Nick, 12WBT)

This strong discourse of social support and the sense of community and camaraderie seen throughout these success stories is an interesting discursive arena to explore.

What can be seen in the collected weight loss centre success stories is the positivity and enthusiasm that surrounds the use of online support for individuals during their time of joining the weight loss centre. These individuals are able to share their experiences with other individuals who are undergoing similar experiences (e.g., “one reason why 12WBT is successful is because you can find and connect with people in the same boat as you” [Sandra 12WBT]), are able to ask health or weight related questions (e.g., “I’d never run in my life so I had a lot of questions, like how’s my foot supposed to hit the ground, and should I wear shoes when running on the beach” [Jacqueline, 12WBT]), encourage and
motivate each other (e.g., “women are great at supporting other women, so if you can find the right people to come along the journey with you, then they’ll provide fantastic encouragement” [Tara, Weight Watchers]), and be encouraged to stick to and be accountable to their weight loss or health goals (e.g., “there were people supporting me and I was able to support other people as well, and that really helped me stay focused on my goals” [Nick, 12WBT]).

Therefore, the language that is used or not used in these success stories can highlight what discourses of understanding that the weight loss centre participants draw on during their weight loss journey. The strong social support and community in the stories serves to encourage readers of the text to consider joining the weight loss centre so they too can experience an overall very positive and supportive process during their weight loss journey.
Chapter six: Conclusion

This study set out to apply a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to explore the discourses of weight and gender that emerged through the success stories from three Australian weight loss centres. This FCDA was conducted on one hundred and eight (n=108) success stories that were made available to the public via the weight loss centre websites on Thursday 20\textsuperscript{th} August, 2015. FCDA allowed the researcher to explore how discourses of gender and weight can contribute to how individuals understand and conceptualise weight and gendered bodies within society.

This study was guided by the following key research question:

1. What discourses of weight and gender are produced in the success stories of three Australia weight loss centres and, with what effect, for how participants and populations more widely are to understand their bodies?

Three secondary research questions were also asked:

a) How do the success stories of Australian weight loss centres construct weight discourses for adults?

b) What types of bodies are produced in the success stories of Australian weight loss centres?

c) How are these bodies gendered?
6.1 What discourses of weight and gender are produced in the success stories of three Australian weight loss centres?

Through the process of conducting an FCDA on the success stories, several key discourses of both weight and gender emerged. For example, the first key discourse of gender that emerged was the discourse of ‘doing gender’. Femininity was ‘done’ or performed by both males and females, as was masculinity ‘done’ by both males and females. What this suggests is that the performances of masculinity and femininity are not entirely prescribed based on the gender of the individual. How individuals ‘do’ gender is highly contingent on the social and political norms of a society and are not fixed (Butler, 1990). They are continuously shifting and are based on the normative and regulatory discourse of a society at one point in time (Robinson, 2013).

By exploring the simultaneous and multiple ‘doings’ of femininity and masculinity that are constructed within the success stories, it can perhaps allow society to move beyond the understanding of masculinity and femininity as primarily binary terms which have been constructed and come to be understood as oppositional discursive constructs. This can help to rupture the stereotypical beliefs or constructs that come to be placed on the gendered body, and encourage individuals, as gendered beings, to be less bound to pre-established gendered stereotypes and labels. The exploration of these gendered, discursive ‘doings’ through an FCDA framework has proven to be useful because it provides insight into the language that is used (or not used) when talking about such discursive constructs. It enables a deeper and more thorough examination into the social, cultural and political processes that can influence how individuals come to understand, talk about and use language around constructs of gender, masculinity and femininity (Milestone & Meyer, 2012). In this context, the weight loss centres produce a specific framing of that gendered process.
The second key discourse of gender to emerge from the weight loss centres was the various roles or instances of self-presentation during the process of losing weight. Throughout the success stories, there were four main roles that the individuals seemed to fill: a parent, a partner, an employee in the workforce and an individual joining the weight loss centre, with the majority of individuals fulfilling most of these roles. Exploring the roles adopted by individuals during the process of weight loss can provide insight into how roles shape the dieting process and how they appear to be related to gender. The female success stories had a strong focus on the parenting and partner roles they adopted during the weight loss process. For the male success stories, they also had a focus on the parenting and partner roles during weight loss, as well as on the work related roles adopted whilst losing weight.

The discourse of the ‘good mother’ was the third key discourse of gender to emerge through conducting an FCDA on the success stories. This discourse reflected the females putting other individuals (i.e., family) needs before their own, often resulting in the females experiencing a range of physical health problems and gaining weight. There was also the process by which the mothers realised that they needed to put their health and wellbeing first. Here, the females engaged in a process of justification around the idea that putting themselves first was not actually a selfish move because doing so will benefit the family in the long run. This process of putting themselves first (even though they only did so for the sake of their family) constructed an oppositional discourse known as the ‘bad mother’. The ‘bad mother’ was constructed as being selfish for putting her own needs before the needs of her husband or children.
The ‘good father’; the ‘good husband’ discourse was also discovered during the process of FCDA, with this discourse being the fourth gender-related discourse found in the success stories. The ‘good father’; ‘good husband’ discourse focused specifically on the roles that males may adopt whilst following the weight loss centre program. There is a greater social gender acceptance of males and females undertaking ‘different’ roles within society (Cleaver, 2002). This was played out within the success stories. Females entered the stereotypically masculine domain of strength training to build muscle and tone their bodies. Males entered the stereotypically feminine domain of dieting, weight loss and concern for one’s health. Such a discursive shift can influence how individuals come to decide which roles they want or need to adopt at any one point in their lives. These gendered roles are largely based on the societal and discursive influences and constructions around what is acceptable behaviour for males and females. Discourses of gender can be explored in terms of how individuals come to construct and understand not only masculinity and femininity, but also how they construct suitable roles for mothers and fathers within the family and the meanings and social values they place on these roles. The knowledge that individuals have of both themselves and of others as gendered subjects is important because it can influence how they come to interact with each other. This knowledge can work to reinforce or challenge the gendered and often hierarchical differences between males and females and masculinity and femininity (Weatherall, 2002). Here, the weight loss centres are producing various discourses of gender that in part, function to contribute to how we come to understand males and females, masculinity and femininity. Perhaps the weight loss centres are attempting to dismiss stereotypes around gender and encourage individuals to adopt different roles or subject positions in the family, in the work force and in the arena of weight loss and dieting.
Like the discourses of gender found within the success stories, discourses of weight also featured prominently. For example, both the biomedical discourse and the psychological/emotional discourse of weight were the two main weight-related discourses to emerge from the weight loss centres. The biomedical model constructs weight in a way that grounds the cause, effects and treatments of excess weight within biomedical and scientific pedagogy. This process can influence how individuals understand their own and others weight, as well as how both males and females come to understand, conceptualise and practice weight, dieting and weight loss. Alternatively, many individuals also referred to a psychologically and emotionally based discourse of weight. This discourse was produced by the individual, before they decided to access help for their excess weight, as well as during the process of losing weight and after having completed the weight loss program. Therefore, the weight loss centres strongly construct both a biomedical and a psychological discourse of weight throughout their success stories. The multiplicity of discourses of weight that exist within these success stories is a key focus of importance for this current study. Opening up and exploring this discursive field (and the multiple discourse within it) can allow individuals to not only come to a better understanding of the physiological and biomedical origins of weight, but it can also assist individuals to better understand the emotional, mental and psychological processes that may be taking place when an individual is overweight or how these processes may shift when the individual makes the decision to lose weight or become healthier.

Another weight-related discourse to emerge from the FCDA of the weight loss centre success stories explored the discursive construction of the abject body within discourses of weight. Like the gender and weight discourses mentioned above that addresses the main research question of this study, discourse seven (the abject body) not only constructs a
discourse of weight based around the abject body, this discourse also addresses the secondary research questions of this current study (which will be addressed later in this section). The success stories construct excess weight in a negative light, sometimes using negative and derogatory language to construct this negative discourse of weight. As a result, the ‘fat’ body comes to be constructed and viewed as disgusting, repulsive and vile. These weight loss centres produce the abject body throughout their success stories, by negatively promoting how ‘bad’ and ‘wrong’ excess body weight is and by emphasising the extent to which an individual's life can change for the better, just by losing weight. The abject body is also produced using ‘before’ and ‘after’ images showing the shift from abject to acceptable bodies. Such discourses of weight are powerful and can strongly influence not only how individuals come to conceptualise excess weight and fatness, but also how they come to understand, view and talk about weight and bodies and the abject existence of fat on individuals who exist in these bodies.

Exploring discourses of weight and fatness within the success stories has proven useful in permitting a deeper, more intricate construction of weight and fatness in some areas. This allows a means to better understand how bodies are socially constructed both before and after entering the dieting discourse. Before they enter this discourse, the existence of fat on these bodies may influence how they are ‘read’ by society and what meanings are placed on their bodies. Upon existing in the dieting discourse and losing weight, these bodies are appropriated as being successful at losing weight and the meanings placed on their ‘now-not-fat’ body are likely to have changed.

The success stories contribute to dominant discourses related to gender, weight and weight loss. In terms of gender, the weight loss centres and their programs instruct us on how to be legitimated and accepted as an appropriate male and female. They provide
instruction on how to be a feminine female or a masculine male and provide guidelines for those individuals who fall outside the realm of acceptability. They also instruct us on what are valued or idealised expressions of masculinity and femininity (and therefore what is not) and encourage us to strive towards becoming an acceptable male or female. In terms of weight related discourses, the weight loss centres provide instruction on how to lose weight, how to eat and how to exist in the world as a ‘now not obese’ body. There is a sense of achievement when these bodies function and exist in the world in an appropriate manner. The weight loss centres function as the means to achieve this appropriation. They encourage individuals who are not happy with their weight to join their weight loss centre, so they too can transform themselves into disciplined, appropriate gendered bodies. Thus, the weight loss centres function prominently in the development, discussion and circulation of dominant discourses around weight, bodies and gender. These dominant discourses are powerful in shaping our beliefs, understandings, ideas, practices and the knowledge we have around gender, weight and around gendered bodies. Such processes are valuable to explore from a critical, feminist perspective because it provides insight into what discourses are dominant in a society at any one time. As such, unearthing these dominant discourses provide critical researchers the opportunity to delve into the social attitudes and ideals that exist around a particular idea or construct. For critical feminists, it permits an exploration into how males and females, masculinity and femininity are understood and constructed within the success stories, and how males and females practice, discuss and ‘do’ dieting and weight loss. This insight can provide researchers a means to better understand how dieting and weight loss are gendered processes and the intersecting relationship between gender and broader concepts of health, illness and disease.
6.2 How do the success stories of Australian weight loss centres construct weight discourses for adults?

Research question 1(a) asks how the success stories of Australian weight loss centres construct weight discourses for adults. The discourse of simplicity (discourse number eight) is one way these success stories construct weight discourses. Words such as ‘just’, ‘easy’, ‘simple’ or ‘simply’ were heavily employed in the success stories to construct and produce a discourse of weight that functions on the assumption that losing weight is an easy and simple process, and that individuals should be held at fault for their excess weight. Simultaneously, a discourse of difficulty was also discovered (but not as extensively as the discourse of simplicity) within some of the success stories. What this can imply is that discourses of simplicity and difficulty are simultaneously produced throughout the weight loss centre success stories and are used for different purposes at different times, perhaps to entice different types of dieters into their programs. Shaping the level of ease or effort required could certainly tap into different dieting and gendered mindsets about the process of weight loss.

What these discourses of weight highlight is that the weight loss centres are conscious of the fact that different individuals join these weight loss centres for different reasons, as well as wanting to achieve their health or weight goals through different means. Perhaps this can explain why there is a multitude of discourses of gender and weight that are contained in these weight loss centre success stories; that certain individuals may access certain discourses, and by placing both discourses of say simplicity and difficulty, the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ mother or the biomedical and psychological discourse of weight within these success stories, it can allow individuals to have more of a choice in what discourses or discursive approaches to weight loss they want to adopt, rather than there being one
hegemonic discourse (e.g. weight just as a biomedical health issue) that all individuals are forced to adopt or draw on.

Another way that the weight loss centres construct discourses of weight through their success stories is through the use of images. As explored in discourse nine (‘the plot’), every collected success story has multiple images, in the form of ‘before’ and ‘after’ images of the individual. These images are used to visually show the transformative effect of losing weight; of the physiological, social, emotional and psychological benefits the individual has experienced since joining the weight loss centre. In addition to these visual images, the use of dramatic and emotive language and a high use of exclamation marks were also emphasised throughout the success stories. This positive and transformative discourse within these weight loss centres may function to motivate and encourage individuals to begin their own process of losing weight or process of becoming healthier. This discourse of positivity is powerful because it functions as the medium through which discourses of health and weight are transmitted to society. Such a process can influence the meanings individuals prescribe to their own and other's bodies, as well as potentially influencing how they come to practice, ‘do’ and experience weight loss and dieting. ‘The plot’ functions as a powerful narrative to construct weight discourses of adults in Australian weight loss centres. As Jarvis (2009) also found in her study of applying a textual analysis to examine the weight loss magazine success stories from the ‘Slimming World’ magazine, this study also found traces of ‘the plot’ to describe the various steps taken by individuals through their weight loss experience with these centres. The seven elements identified in Jarvis' (2009) study were also present in this current study: ‘the bad place’, the trigger, ‘the meeting’, early success’, ‘what I ate’, ‘the problem’ and ‘the transformation’, although
some (‘early success’ and ‘the problem’) to a lesser extent. These elements benefited from a greater focus on Foucault's work around discourse and the body in the analysis.

This thesis drew heavily on Jarvis’ (2009) study. What became evident throughout this current study was that the findings indicate clear similarities, as well as clear divergences to Jarvis’ (2009) study. For example, the ‘bad place’, ‘the trigger’ and ‘the meeting’ processes were quite similar between this study and Jarvis’ (2009) study. For the ‘bad place’, there was a focus on the negative side effects of the participant’s excess weight and how this was affecting their lives. For ‘the trigger’, both this current study and Jarvis’ (2009) study witnessed the reasons or events that encouraged the individual to join the weight loss centre. Common triggers to join the weight loss centre from this current study included being told they were medically obese by a doctor or realising their ability as a parent was compromised due to their excess weight. The third stage of ‘the plot’, what Jarvis (2009) refers to as ‘the meeting’, details the process of joining the weight loss centre and attending support meetings as part of the program. For this current study, ‘the meeting’ had a particular focus on the positive and motivating nature of meetings as part of the journey of weight loss, specifically for the Weight Watchers program. Alternatively, for Jarvis (2009), she highlighted this stage involved the participants experiencing embarrassment and fear when attending weight loss support groups or meetings. The ‘early success’ stage of ‘the plot’ also differed between this current study and Jarvis’ (2009) study. For Jarvis (2009), she discovered a strong focus on the dramatic, early and initial weight loss that was experienced in the success stories. However, for this current study, this particular stage was clearly absent. Whilst there was of course a focus on weight loss in each of the success stories, there was not a specific focus on the initial dramatic weight loss experienced by participants.
Stage five of the plot from Jarvis’ (2009) study is ‘what I ate’. For Jarvis (2009) this stage provided details about what the participants are eating now that they have joined the weight loss centre and are following its prescribed program. This current study also found similar processes, however, for this current study, there appeared a stronger focus on ‘what I used to eat’. Here, extensive detail was provided about the foods (and the quantities) they were eating prior to joining the weight loss centre. ‘The problem’ for Jarvis (2009) focused on the common experience of a weight loss plateau for participants after initially losing weight on the program. For this current study however, this aspect of ‘the problem’ was quite absent and instead focused on ‘the problem’ of excess weight prior to joining the weight loss centre. The last aspect of ‘the plot’ is called ‘the transformation’, and this detailed the dramatic physical, psychological and emotional transformation the individual has undergone since joining the weight loss centre, for both Jarvis’ (2009) study and this current study.

What can be therefore witnessed between Jarvis’ (2009) study and this current study is that although there are similarities in the development and exploration of ‘the plot’ throughout these success stories, there are also significant differences. Compared to Jarvis’ (2009) study, the weight loss centre success stories for this current study seemed to avoid providing detail about anything negative about the weight loss process such as a plateau in weight loss or the fear associated with attending weight loss meetings, both of which Jarvis’ (2009) study focused on. The only negative aspect explored in the weight loss centre success stories was the negative health effect of excess weight prior to joining the weight loss centre, which served as the catalyst to join the program. Therefore, perhaps the weight loss centres avoid talking about anything negative during the participant’s time following the program, in case it deters individuals from wanting to join the weight loss centre. The use of over the
top and dramatic language reinforces the sense that these weight loss centres are working hard to separate from any negativity or hardship that may be experienced during the process of losing weight.

6.3 What types of bodies are produced in the success stories of Australian weight loss centres?

The two main types of bodies that are produced in the success stories are gendered bodies and dieting bodies. In terms of gender, these bodies are gendered in the way of being a mother, a father or simultaneously being embroiled in a mother and father discourse of gender. The gendered body can also include adopting other subject positions, such as an individual losing weight, an individual in the workforce or a partner. In terms of weight, the success stories produce a dieting body; a body that used to reside within a ‘fat’ body discourse. Upon entering this discourse of weight loss, the body is transformed; losing weight and becoming a socially acceptable, dieting body that is now allowed to be identified as not fat. This process allows insight into understanding how individual bodies come to be socially constructed and read. The different discourses that exist on a body highlight the different ways that these bodies can be understood (Phillips et al., 2002). Exploring these understandings that exist on bodies is helpful in exploring what meanings become attached to bodies at any one time, and how these meanings function to discipline and regulate these bodies (Wright, 2009).

6.4 How are these gendered?

The male and female bodies are gendered throughout the process of joining the weight loss centre and losing weight. We can see these bodies become gendered in terms of how the males or females not only talk about excess weight, dieting or weight loss but also how they approach these discourses and experience them. The male participants
become gendered in terms of their occupation within the biomedical discourse, which functioned as the most appropriate way for males to exist within the dieting discourse and to lose weight. For the females, they became gendered in terms of a more psychological and emotional-based focus on weight loss and dieting, seeing their bodies become gendered in terms of the roles they adopted during the process of weight loss.

6.5 Theoretical, methodological and practical implications of the study

Exploring the discourses of weight and gender that have emerged from the weight loss centre success stories has theoretical, methodological and practical real-life implications. Each of these implications will be explored below.

Theoretically, the application of a feminist discursive analytical approach to weight can be useful. It can provide researchers with a sound and comprehensive framework to understand and explore the complex discursive meanings that become attached to weight (and gendered) bodies within social and cultural contexts. It may encourage health promoters to consider what messages or discourses are being circulated throughout society within health promotion campaigns, and how these discursive ideals can affect or influence how individuals, as consumers, come to view and understand excess fat and bodies (Cinelli & O’Dea, 2009). Perhaps society may realise that the reinforcement of weight as a biomedical, individualised problem can highlight that different and alternative theoretical frameworks may in fact allow us to come to a greater understanding of the processes that may contribute to excess weight.

In applying an FCDA methodological approach to explore the complex issue of weight, individuals can come to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the meanings that become attached to discourses such as weight and gender. In addition, with the consideration
of Foucault within an FCDA framework, it may offer an effective means to explore how individuals come to exist within social discourse. Individuals can also consider how they use language as a means to manage their subject positions within these discourses, as well as to explore the different ways of being or existing in the social world. Therefore, FCDA encourages researchers to place the individual subject at the forefront of analysis and to explore how these subjects come to understand and construct themselves as objects of knowledge within the institutions they operate. These approaches also allow the researcher to consider how discourses of power, surveillance, discipline and governance become enacted both on and by the individual and to consider how institutional practices shape individual bodies. Such a lens towards weight permits and encourages the researcher to critically question and deconstruct the discourses of weight that come to be accepted as dominant. It also allows for an exploration of the spaces where subservient and conflicting discourses also reside in, to uncover the complex terrain of how these different discourses interact to produce discursive subject positions, as well as the understanding and knowledge individuals have around weight, health and gender.

In terms of practical, real-life implications, this study can perhaps encourage further research into future policy development or health reform. The findings from this study may be of interest and importance to health researchers, GPs and other health professionals. Additionally, the findings from this study may influence governmental or administrative health drivers in the provision of services they provide, as well as the theoretical understandings that underpin these programs, the monetary funding and support provided to these centres, the relative success these services can achieve and the role these services play in society.
Another practical implication that may arise from this current study is the consideration of what messages are being portrayed and socially circulated from weight health promotion campaigns and weight loss services, products and programs in order to help consumers to become more critical viewers. The discursive meanings that individuals may derive from weight loss centre success stories can influence not only how they come to understand weight, but also how they come to understand themselves as a gendered body within the social world. Therefore, perhaps there needs to be tighter regulatory control on weight related health campaigns and programs that come to circulate throughout social media. Perhaps there needs to be more consideration about what meanings or ideals can be derived from campaigns or programs and what this can mean in terms of how bodies, weight and dieting are viewed. If these campaigns or programs construct and talk about such concepts in negative ways, this is likely to circulate throughout society and continue to contribute to the negative and derogatory connotations around fatness and excess weight. These negative discourses and ideals that exist around fatness and excess weight play a major role in how we come to view bodies with excess weight, and the reasons individuals and society attribute for this excess weight. These messages and attitudes are circulated in society, and are significant in how fatness, excess weight and fat bodies are talked about, represented in social media and social culture and the language that is used or not used around these constructs.

6.6 Limitations

As already identified in the methodology section of this thesis, the researcher acknowledges that one limitation for the current study is that only the successful weight loss centre success stories are available for the public to access and read. The success stories of participants who relapse, do not complete the program, do not lose weight (over
the short-term or long-term) or those who regain some or all of the weight they had lost are not made publicly available. Likewise, the process and experience of weight cycling is also not shown within these success stories. The researcher recognises that since many of the individuals in the success stories may have regained some or all of the weight they had lost, the discursive ideals or concepts that are drawn from these success stories are highly transient and may only exist in that specific time that their weight loss was successful and the context that the success story was written. If the individuals who failed at losing weight or failed at maintaining this weight loss (either over both the short and long-term) had stories written about their experiences and practices of dieting, weight loss and regaining some or all of the weight back, perhaps the researcher would be able to discover alternative discourses about the weight loss process as a whole rather than a narrow part of just exploring an individual’s weight loss success during the time of following the weight loss centre program. Due to this, the exploration of discourses from the weight loss centre success stories is context and situation specific. What this means is that these meanings and discourse that emerged may not be able to be replicated to different situations or contexts or at a different point in time because meaning and knowledge is often individualised and particular to one situation or setting (Wheelahan, 2010; Cox, 2014).

Likewise, conducting an FCDA on weight loss centre success stories found in health magazines (as Jarvis [2009] did in her study) or on weight loss centre success stories in video form from the three weight loss centres selected for this current study may also produce different or conflicting discourses that were unearthed in this current study. Rather than labelling the discourses that one may extract at any one point in time as ‘wrong’, the researcher is aware and wants to emphasise that the definition of something or the meaning derived from a discourse is dependent on the context (Cohen, Perales & Steadman, 2005).
Thus, the discursive meanings that can be derived around a topic or idea is always interpretive, constantly changing and dependent on the context it is being explored in (Wetherell, 2001). Subjects create and produce knowledge and understanding of themselves, others and the social world through the various interactions, associations and transmissions of language within the social world.

Focus should be on what these discourses construct in terms of what subject positions are produced, and how these subject positions may produce and regulate certain types of bodies (Lupton, 1997). This is why FCDA was such a fitting methodology to underline this thesis. Rather than simply accept the hegemonic discourses around gender and weight as the truth, FCDA encouraged the researcher to rupture and explore the multifarious interpretations and truths surrounding gender and weight within these weight loss centre success stories (Draper et al, 2007; Gavey; 2011). FCDA aims to interrupt or challenge any firm, solid or concrete conclusion or understanding, based on the notion that a truth exists internal to any one discourse (Eagleton, 2008). FCDA allows for a justification that there never has been or never will be one single definition of an idea, understanding or discourse.

Another limitation of this thesis centres on the researcher’s reflexivity. The researcher was aware of her role and position throughout the research process and the influence this can have on how the data was interpreted and how the researcher approaches and understands the wider area of topic. With personal experience relating to weight loss due to personal health issues, the researcher is aware of the stigma that weight-related conditions can often carry throughout society. There is a tendency for individuals (both health professionals and general society) to give advice grounded on the premise to ‘just don’t eat as much’ or to ‘just exercise’ (or in the researcher’s case to ‘just eat’). Therefore, the researcher has extensive insight into knowing that such weight related health conditions
are more than just a physiological process of weight gain (or loss), that there is often a psychological aspect to this process. As such, throughout the research process, the researcher was vigilant of her own experiences and health-related discourses and how these may have influenced how the success stories were interpreted and the discursive meanings extracted from the stories. The researcher is also accepting that different individuals with different life experiences may have different, or even conflicting discursive viewpoints around weight, health and disease. Rather than shying away from such matters, the researcher believes that by exploring these inconsistencies, differences or paradoxes between individuals’ experiences, knowledge, insight and understanding, individuals can work towards endorsing and encouraging a more holistic view of health, that more broadly encompasses the various facets of human life.

6.7 Future research

Other areas of research that would contribute to wider understandings of dieting or weight loss practices would be to explore the discourses that may be found in both the stories of individuals who were successful at losing weight or maintaining this weight loss over the short and long-term and in the stories of individuals that: a) failed or were unsuccessful at losing any weight; and b) managed to lose weight over the short-term, but then re-gained some or all of the weight they had lost back over the long-term. To complement the knowledge and understanding produced from this study, the researcher suggests that this future study could involve conducting semi-structured interviews with individuals who have joined a weight loss centre program. Through these interviews, the researcher could explore the discourses that may arise from the experiences and practices of dieting and weight loss among individuals who were successful at losing weight over both the short-term and long-term. The researcher could also explore the experiences and
practices of dieting and weight loss among individuals who may have lost weight in the short-term but may have gained some or all of the weight back over the long-term. Semi-structured interviews allow for and encourage a deeper and richer understanding of the phenomenon in question (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). They allow the interviewer to hear from the individuals themselves, and in their own words how they experience, practice and talk about weight.

As an addition to this study, perhaps the researcher could explore how these individuals also talk about and discuss these constructs. This study could involve conducting these semi-structured interviews on individuals, both before joining the weight loss centre and after completing the program set out by the weight loss centre. What this could reveal is how the individual’s dieting language, discourse or their psychological approach to food and dieting may have changed throughout the process of losing weight. Perhaps individuals that diet or lose weight talk about or approach such concepts differently once they have undergone a process of joining the weight loss centre and losing weight. What this can allow is an opportunity to delve deeper into their discussion, conversation and dialogue around weight. Rather than the researcher reading through, analysing and extracting discourses within the success stories, conducting semi-structured interviews with these individuals of the success stories can allow the researcher to place the autonomy on the interviewee. This process can allow the interviewees to generate language around and discussion in their own words of their experiences of dieting and weight loss. The interaction between researcher and interviewee is also important; the dynamic that is constructed throughout the interview process can be powerful in the generation and discussion of ideas, knowledge, principles, discourse and experience around the topic in question (Edwards & Holland, 2013). As such, fostering a positive relationship between
the researcher and interviewee can encourage individuals to open up throughout the interview process and be more willing to express their true feelings, opinions or experiences about the subject matter (Hewitt, 2007).

Lastly, what this future research can also uncover or allow is the consideration of the influence that these weight loss centres (and the health and medical experts within these centres) have in the framing, constructing and promoting dieting and weight loss discourse to consumers and the general public. The wider production and circulation of these success stories and their effects is significant. Health and medical experts often share similar negative stereotypes and judgements around individuals and their excess weight to the general public (Hill, 2009). As such, the authors or creators of the success stories may also share these attitudes or feelings. This may influence how these success stories are written and the language that is used or not used when talking about these individuals and their excess weight, weight loss and following the weight loss centre program. For example, one of the main discourses the researcher uncovered throughout this study on the three Australia weight loss centres was the extensive focus and reinforcement that dieting and weight loss is a simple and easy process. By ‘just’ following the meal and exercise plan set out by the weight loss centres, all these individuals were easily able to lose a large amount of weight. Thus, perhaps the authors of the success stories or the health professionals within these centres may also share a similar discursive understanding that weight loss and dieting are (or should be) a simple and easy process. Therefore, perhaps the general public may be more likely to adopt similar attitudes or judgements towards these individuals when reading the success stories due to the weight and influence these ‘experts’ have in shaping and contributing to social ideals and social attitudes about weight and health. These stories are
commercial marking strategies and the messages they portray to society plays an important role in how weight and dieting are socially constructed and understood.

Uncovering and exploring how individuals both successfully and unsuccessfully experience, and practice weight loss and weight regain is an extremely helpful arena to explore, one that can allow both academics and health professionals to come to a greater understanding of how individuals discuss, practice and experience weight related processes. In addition, the researcher could also consider the role that weight loss centres have in contributing to the circulation of social and cultural messages around weight, dieting, weight loss and health in general. This may allow and encourage health professionals to expand their definitions of weight as a multi-factorial health issue with a range of powerful social, cultural, personal and political factors and processes at play that affect and influence how weight comes to be constructed in social media and health policy, as well as how these processes come to be experienced and practiced by individuals and groups.

Applying an FCDA methodology to weight encourages individuals to move beyond the reinforcement of dominant discursive understandings of weight as a biomedical issue, to instead explore weight within and related to discursive concepts such as risk, surveillance, discipline, objectification and power. Researchers need to continue to push the boundaries of health and weight research to include an understanding that weight and excess fat is far more than just a biomedical health condition and health issue. Encouraging researchers and health professionals to explore and deconstruct these various discursive and ideological constructs existing around weight, health and illness can perhaps allow us to continue working towards better understanding weight and the discourses that exist around weight.
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APPENDIX
Appendix A

Full scope of Weight Watchers success stories from

www.weightwatchers.com.au
1. Gabrielle Bell (Weight Watchers)

“Losing six kilos changed my life”

Name: Gabrielle Bell  
Age: 47  
Height: 1.7m  
Was: 76.1 kg  
Lost: 6.8 kg  
Weight: 69.4 kg

“My view of weight loss has changed dramatically since I slimmed down. It’s not just about the way you look, it’s about your health, too.”

Despite undergoing four back surgeries in four years, Gabrielle Bell managed to hit Goal and embrace a healthy new future.
How long it took: 51 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Donna Cater at Mudgeeraba, Queensland

I became addicted to exercising endorphins

My slim-down story is a little different to some others. I’ve always been an active, healthy person, and was lucky to have never really struggled with my weight in my younger years. When a few extra kilos started to creep on around my 40th birthday, I became more disciplined. I started doing boot camp and took up running, boxercise and circuit classes at the gym. I also joined a swimming squad and did deep-water running, as well as walking for an hour most days. It’s fair to say I became addicted to the endorphins and loved exercising.

My weight soared once I left hospital

However, things changed in early 2010, when I underwent three back surgeries. I went from exercising every day to not being able to exercise at all. My post-operative body endured so many prescription medications, morphine and steroids, and I suffered from deep-vein thrombosis, which required daily injections for three months. As a result of surgery and after-care, my weight soared once I left hospital.

I would have died within 6 months

Things took a positive turn after my fourth back surgery in March 2011. After I recovered, and was finally mobile enough to attend a Weight Watchers meeting, I managed to lose one kilo in my first week! I tracked my food intake
vigilantly and memorised the ProPoints values of every type of food I usually eat, so much so that I don’t need to look them up anymore.

**I challenged myself to walk three kilometres**

The day I was given the all-clear to start walking again, I challenged myself to walk the three kilometres to my local Weight Watchers meeting. It took far more time and effort than I would have before I had my operation but I was determined to do it and receive the support I needed from the meetings.

Despite the physical difficulty and discomfort, I continued pushing through on the exercise front and I’m now walking between 45 and 60 minutes every day.

**I became more honest with myself**

The amount of exercise I’m doing is slowly increasing, but I’ve had to accept that my fitness may never return to its former level. I also have to admit that it’s sometimes hard to see my 15-year-old daughter, Mairead, heading off to Zumba or dragon boat racing; both of which I would love to do again. Any really strenuous activity will put me straight back on the couch, so I know I have to give myself a mental shake whenever I’m feeling a bit sorry for myself. I am so grateful that I’m up and walking again after having to lie on the couch for months. It’s a great achievement, considering where I was two years ago.

**It’s not just about weight**

My view of weight loss has changed dramatically since I slimmed down. It’s not just about the way you look, it’s about your health, too. My back has benefited so much from my weight loss and has been a major motivating
factor. I know it would be easy to throw up my hands and say, “I can’t exercise anymore as I have a dodgy back,” but that’s just not me. I’ve always tried to be strong in the face of life’s challenges and hope I’ve taught my children the importance of being determined.

It’s really about determination

Giving up isn’t any sort of answer to life’s problems, so I know I never will. I still struggle daily with my back problems and a fifth surgery may eventually be needed. Although I’m working hard to avoid this, I know that if I do have this operation, there are strategies I can put in place to stay on track, from being supported by my wonderful husband, Bruce, and the rest of my family, to receiving advice and encouragement from my meeting members and knowing how to cook healthy, nutritious food. I hope my story encourages others who’ve experienced a setback of any description. The secret is to just pick up where you left off and start again, no matter how long it takes. Yes, some of us will get there earlier than others, but, as long as we push through, we can all be successful in the end.

Elizabeth’s top weight-loss tips

- Learn how to cook healthy and nutritious foods
- Memorize ProPoints values if you don’t want to look them up anymore
- If you fail, pick up where you left off
2. **Alison Wills (Weight Watchers)**

"Weight Watchers helped me lose the baby weight"

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“After having two babies, I felt big and unhealthy and knew I needed help to slim down, as exercise alone wasn’t working. ”

For busy flight attendant and mum-of-two Alison Wills, being organised and reducing portion sizes helped her shed the post-baby kilos.

**How long it took:** 21wks

**How she did it:** Weight Watchers meetings with various Leaders in Warwick, Western Australia
Exercise alone wasn’t working

After having two babies, I felt big and unhealthy and knew I needed help to slim down, as exercise alone wasn’t working. I decided on Weight Watchers because their guidelines were easy and the program fitted around my family life. I wanted to cook healthy meals the whole family could enjoy and benefit from. It also suited me because I could still eat everything; it just required a little organisation.

These days, regular exercise is still part of my lifestyle

I squeeze it in wherever possible, be it walking the kids to school, family bike rides, jogging in the park or doing a few spin classes. Due to my work as a flight attendant, I had to be organised and plan snacks like fruit and yoghurt to take on the plane, increase the amount of exercise I did before and after trips to earn extra ProPoints values and save enough in my budget for eating out at restaurants. Tempting foods are everywhere! Watching portion sizes also helped.

I realized that tracking is very important

When I cooked at home, I weighed food to stop serving sizes creeping up. I even wrote down a list of foods I ate regularly and their ProPoints values. That way, I could quickly reference them, which made tracking so much easier, saving time in the long run. I found that tracking is really important. If you don’t do it, it’s easy to forget what goes in your mouth. I also stopped picking at the kids' leftovers and nibbling dinner while cooking it! These days, if I’m peckish, I’ll eat a carrot instead.
I picked up some great tips at the meetings

I picked up some great tips such as freezing grapes and dates for snacks. As a treat, my family enjoys takeaway fish and chips every fortnight. To make it healthier, I’ve switched to grilled fish and a smaller serve of chips. That way, I never miss out or feel deprived. It’s fantastic!
3. Therese Ulvesund (Weight Watchers)

"I lost 7kgs in 7 weeks with Weight Watchers Online"

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“I respect my body, so want to make sure I’m being kind to myself and feeding myself foods that make me feel good. ”

For Therese Ulvesund, 28, losing those final few kilos has helped her tone up and feel fitter than ever.

How long it took: 7wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers Online
I felt soft around the edges and wanted to feel fitter, stronger and happier with my body

I didn’t have a lot of weight to lose but, due to the large amount of exercise I was doing every week, my appetite had increased and I was eating too much. I mostly ate organic, healthy food but my portion sizes had become out of hand. Most of all, I felt soft around the edges and wanted to feel fitter, stronger and happier with my body. I’ve always been active, but really ramped it up after falling in love with Scott, my personal trainer boyfriend of three years. In an average week, I do some kind of exercise every morning, mixing it up between intervals of running and sprinting, circuit, boxing and kettle bells. I also train most lunchtimes at the gym. One or two days a week are set aside for longer runs, which help me stay in shape for events such as a 10km race or a half marathon. Scott and I work out together – we love it! It’s a great way to communicate, have fun and laugh together. We live in Bondi, Sydney, and we always finish a session with a swim or sauna. Our lives here are really active – some of our other favourite pastimes include soft-sand running, swimming, boxing or hiking in the Blue Mountains.

Running is my meditation

When I first started Pump classes and lifting kettle bells, I didn’t take on a lot of weight. But once I built up my confidence, I added more weights and realised it wasn’t that much harder. I quickly became stronger and saw my body shape change, especially in my arms and legs. I never wanted to become skinny, just more toned. Since doing Weight Watchers and losing the extra weight, my muscles have become even more defined and I’ve noticed a major difference in
my body shape. People saw the change in me too and asked me what I was doing. Exercise is such an important part of my life and, if I’m sick or can’t train, I feel a bit blue. I can’t get enough of the endorphins! Running is my favourite workout because I love getting ‘in the zone’. It’s my form of meditation and a great way to use up extra energy.

**The food I ate stayed the same – it was just the portion sizes that changed**

Even after joining Weight Watchers, the food I ate stayed the same – it was just the portion sizes that changed. The iPhone app helped me keep track of what I was eating, and the kilos soon dropped off. One of the main things I worked on doing was to eat – especially snack – consciously. These days, I always ask myself if I’m hungry before taking a bite. The truth is, if I have to ask myself then I’m probably not. Plus, if I’ve just eaten a meal, I’ll wait 10 minutes to see if I’m still hungry before helping myself to seconds. It sounds silly, but it works. When eating out, I try to pick healthier options, like a stir-fry instead of curry, but luckily I’m not a big fan of creamy sauces. After a few weeks, the program becomes second nature so eating out becomes easier to track. I’m now in an eating routine that works for me and my workouts. My breakfast is bigger than before and keeps me feeling satisfied for longer. I respect my body, so want to make sure I’m being kind to myself and feeding myself foods that make me feel good. Everyone has the right to feel great about themselves. I think the most important thing is to be nice to yourself, aim for small changes and love the exercise you’re doing. If I ever find myself getting bored, then I’ll shake up my routine and sign up to do something new, such as a two-week Bikram yoga course. Variety is important – it keeps me motivated.
4. **Leonie Francis (Weight Watchers)**

"No one calls me the 'big girl' anymore"

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“Life's too short to feel frumpy and miserable – and that's enough motivation to keep me on track.”

Sick of being asked if she was pregnant, Leonie Francois joined Weight Watchers to get in shape, once and for all.

**I sat on the sidelines of life**

Growing up I was referred to as a "big girl" and I always felt awkward and
uncomfortable in my own skin. My weight kept creeping up, and suddenly I was struggling to fit into a size 18. Socialising stopped being so fun when the pretty clothes I liked weren't available in my size and I never felt in the mood to dance. I became a spectator rather than living life to the full. Several times I was asked when my baby was due, but I wasn't pregnant. I started to feel really down.

**Patience is rewarded**

I had lost weight in the past and always put it back on, plus more. I was so fed up with being overweight and unhappy so when I noticed a friend looking fabulous, I asked her for her secret and she told me she'd done Weight Watchers. The first time I attended a Weight Watchers meeting I was petrified about getting out of the car, but knew I was at rock bottom and had to try something. I set my goal weight at the top of my recommended BMI because I wanted to be realistic. I remember thinking how awesome it would be to achieve it and started writing everything I ate in my tracking diary. Within the first week I had lost a kilo, then another and another – I knew I was heading towards my goal and for the first time in a long time, actually believed I would be a healthy, happy person again.

**Inspiration for motivation**

My mum bought me a Weight Watchers magazine subscription for Christmas and I lapped up every inspirational story. Knowing so many other wonderful women had had such great success helped keep me focused. One day my husband cut out a picture of my face and stuck it on the cover of one of the magazines, to show me he believed I could achieve my goal – that meant a lot to me. My leader Debbie was also a huge help. Every week she had us in stitches,
giggling about the funny side of life. I knew a couple of other women there and they became an extra support group that ensured the journey stayed social and fun.

**Portion distortion**

It became obvious really quickly that it was my portion sizes that were my biggest downfall. I started filling myself up on fresh fruit and vegies and instead of having a few glasses of wine as a reward after a hard day's work, I enjoyed a nice hot tea or a spritzer before dinner.

**Look after #1**

As a mother, it's easy to get caught up in everybody else's lives and never make time for yourself. Now I've learnt that by giving myself time to do things I enjoy, I'm actually a lot more fun for my family. I make time each week to walk our dog and attend Weight Watchers meetings and as a result, I have more energy to play with my kids. In the past few months, we've been ice-skating, played laser skirmish and gone rock-climbing. I never would have participated in these activities in the past because I had lost my mojo and didn't feel playful.

**A flood of compliments**

I have had so many lovely compliments since starting Weight Watchers. People often think I'm younger than I am and my husband tells me I look younger every day. In fact, he's started calling me Miss Glow-er because he thinks my face is always glowing. When you're fit and healthy and happy to be who you are, you get to live in the present rather than waste energy feel self-conscious and flat.
Feeling fabulous is the world's greatest reward

Life's too short to feel frumpy and miserable – and that's enough motivation to keep me on track. I'm only human, and do get tempted by chocolate, but feeling fantastic is more important than any craving, so I just have a small amount and load up on fresh, healthy foods.
5. **Zoe Gebbie (Weight Watchers)**

"I'm no longer a 'shorts and T-shirt mum'"

Name: Zoe Gebbie  
Age: 23  
Height: 1.69 m  
Was: 83.3 kg  
Lost: 14.3 kg  
Weight: 69 kg

"Since losing weight, I've become a totally new person. My friends tell me I walk differently, have more confidence and am more comfortable within myself. I'm no longer a "shorts and T-shirt mum!" ”

When Zoe Gebbie was still wearing her size 18 maternity pants 10 months after her daughter's birth, she knew something had to change.
I ignored everything I'd been taught

My mum is a Weight Watchers lifetime member and had always set a good example when I was growing up. But as soon as I could afford it, I started buying lollies and junk food because it had never been in our home. Over the years I developed really bad habits and went from being a skinny teenager to being a size 18 when I was 22. I'd eat a Magnum Ego every day, and also ate a lot of fast food. I never drank water and refused to touch fruit or vegetables.

It was time for change

I lost weight before I fell pregnant with my first daughter, who is now 2½. But that soon fell by the wayside and I put on a lot of weight. I had my second daughter 13 months after my first and was so busy raising two babies that I didn't think about my health. But when my youngest was 10 months old and I was still wearing a size 18 pair of maternity jeans, I knew my unhealthy habits had gone on for too long.

I joined Weight Watchers and had to make some huge changes to my diet. But as time progressed, healthier food became easier to eat. I'd always been a sweet tooth, but now I find I'm more savory and love vegetables!

I had to educate my friends

My friends and I went to Max Brenner’s for a chocolate fix most weeks. In the past I'd order a chocolate sundae, but when I realised the amount of ProPoints in one, I started ordering a skim hot chocolate or some strawberries with a tiny bit of chocolate dipping sauce. At the start my friends were confused about why I was doing that, but after a while they realised I was set on losing weight and if
they saw me reach for something that wasn't healthy, they'd remind me why I was overhauling my life.

**My whole family benefits**

I've gone from living on KFC and McDonald's to cooking low-fat, low-salt meals for the family. I'm slowly converting us to organic food and I've even been inspired to grow my own fresh produce. Imagine the ProPoints I can earn digging my garden up!

I'm so glad that my girls are being raised in a healthy household – they don't even know what McDonald's is. My 18-month-old gets so excited when we see sushi train and will point at it saying "sushi" (one of the few words she can say) – it's really cute.

My healthy living has also had an impact on my partner – he's started working out and eating the healthy foods I prepare. Thanks to the Weight Watchers cookbooks, I've introduced us to Middle Eastern cuisine and lots of other interesting new flavours. My partner is amazed at how great healthy eating can taste.

**I locked Weight Watchers into my schedule**

I think my success stems from never missing a meeting. Everyone was so supportive and taught me to think about what I was putting in my mouth before I put it in, rather than leaving myself to feel guilty after overindulging. In the past, 5m of jogging would make me puff, but now I jog with the pram for about 4km around the lake near our home. I time myself when I do it and try to do it quicker each time. All this gives me more energy to play with my kids, and makes me a better mum.
I love the new me

Since losing weight, I've become a totally new person. My friends tell me I walk differently, have more confidence and am more comfortable within myself. I'm no longer a "shorts and T-shirt mum" – I actually have style and I'm celebrating!
6. **Rheanan Callaghan (Weight Watchers)**

“I beat emotional eating.”

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“"Food is now simply an energy source, rather than something to fill a void. I’m so happy and never want to stop feeling this good." ”

For PA Rheanan Callaghan, seeing food as fuel rather than comfort, changed her body forever.
How long it took: 25 wks
How she did it: Meetings with Wendy Buntel at Myer Lifestyle Centre, Sydney, NSW.

I struggled with food control
Half a tub of ice-cream. An entire bag of lollies. A large packet of chips.
Looking back, it’s fair to say I struggled to control the amount of food I ate.
Over the years,
I developed a relationship with food whereby every time I was stressed or upset by something, I turned to the fridge or pantry for comfort. I used food to ‘fill the gap’, but it never helped in the long run. If I’m honest, I always knew I was bigger than I should’ve been, but never made an effort to do anything about it.

I had the lowest self-esteem
But then something wonderful happened. Cutting ties with a few toxic relationships and becoming happier in myself made a huge difference. I also found someone who appreciated and loved me for me. I valued myself more and decided it was finally time to make some healthy changes to my life.

Overhauling my mindset was essential
One of the biggest changes I made was learning to manage my feelings towards food. In those moments when I’d usually reach for chocolate out of habit, I trained myself to stop and actually ask, “Am I really hungry?” Often I wasn’t, so I’d go for a walk or do something else to make me feel good.

I’ve learnt self-reflection
Another helpful technique has been self-reflection. I keep my ‘before’ photo on
the fridge, which reaffirms on a daily basis that I never want to go back to that unhealthy lifestyle. Watching old video tapes of myself has also been a good influence. It’s surreal – I barely recognise myself!

**I still enjoy partying with friends**

Learning about healthy portion sizes was really useful and helped me stay in control of my food intake. For example, I’ve always loved spaghetti, but now I savour one cup of pasta instead of overdoing it with two and half cups. Going out and partying with friends is still on the cards, too. But, instead of having pre-mixed Vodka Cruisers, I’ll opt for vodka with soda water and fresh lime. Making little changes like that don’t bother me at all, but can have a big impact on my weight loss and maintenance.

**I never feel like I am missing out**

I still go out for a meal once or twice a week and enjoy what I feel like. I look for healthier options where possible, but never feel like I’m missing out. I still track every day and now that I know the ProPoints values off by heart, can tally it up in my head! And, if I ever notice that weight is creeping on, I just reread my Weight Watchers books, which gets me straight back on track.

**Overcoming gym fears**

Like everyone who has tried to lose weight, I faced a few obstacles in the beginning, including how to work exercise into my lifestyle. I was unsure and scared of working out because of my size. I was too nervous to go to a gym because I didn’t know how to use the equipment and I didn’t have the confidence to ask anyone. Luckily, my older sister Lisa, 28, helped me
overcome this fear. When she heard I wanted to lose weight and get fit, she was really supportive and we joined a gym together. We spoke with the trainers, started with a simple program, then made it a regular part of our week.

**Now I love being active**

I found myself enjoying exercise for the first time in my life. To take things up a notch, I even began working out with a personal trainer! These days, in an average week, I work out six times and have one rest day. I do weight training and cardio, alternating with interval training, cross training and the bike. If I want to mix things up, I do a Zumba or spin class. Exercise is such a normal part of my life now – I even get a bit grumpy if I skip it for a few days.

**I have a bright future**

My relationship with Lisa has improved, too. We no longer go to the same gym, but meet up regularly for a power walk or Harbour Bridge run. She’s my number one support and I couldn’t have done this without her. I feel fantastic for making these changes at a young age. My future is going to be so different now and, when I’m ready to have children, theirs will be too. Food is now simply an energy source, rather than something to fill a void. I’m so happy and never want to stop feeling this good.
7. **Lauren Rankin (Weight Watchers)**

Name: Lauren Rankin  
Age: 37  
Height: 1.78 m  
Was: 101.9 kg  
Lost: 25 kg  
Weight: 77 kg

“You have to be prepared to make changes to your life. I was surprised at how easy it was to form new habits. My big tip is to enjoy the journey – it can be great fun!”

Once a slave to her food cravings, 37-year old Lauren Rankin adopted a healthier diet and shed nearly 25 kilos in the process.
How long it took: 40wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Corretta Robson, Woodvale, Western Australia

A kilo a month

I’d never really struggled with my size until I was pregnant with my first child. The weight gain associated with pregnancy became an excuse for me to indulge in sugary, fatty foods. The weight crept on gradually at first, but by the time I had my second child, it was significant – about a kilo a month.

“I’m going to eat this anyway”

At the time, my attitude to food was defiant. It was like, “I don’t actually care, I’m going to eat this anyway,” even though I knew the consequences. It got so bad I was making regular trips to the shops just to buy treats. Like any addiction, it was so entrenched I found it hard to change. I became introverted and shut off the people around me; I just felt it wasn’t possible for anyone to love me.

I hit rock bottom

Then, one day when I was at rock bottom, I made a desperate, sincere prayer. I said, “Lord, just make it happen!” At that moment, I felt a shift. I don’t know What it was, but from that point, I felt ready to make changes. “I overhauled my entire LIFESTYLE ” I used to skip breakfast and just have a big mocha drink mid-morning, but one of the first things my Weight Watchers Leader taught me was that not having breakfast doesn’t do you any favours.
Make time for breakfast

She explained how preparing a nutritious breakfast, such as porridge or Baked beans or egg on toast, sets you up for the day and kickstarts the weight-loss process. She also encouraged me to try out new recipes and, even though I didn’t have much spare time during the day, I started making more of an effort with my meals. I’d prepare a really nice sandwich or cook something healthy, rather than just scoffing down food.

I eat more than ever

The funny thing is, I eat more now than I ever did before. Previously, I wouldn’t eat until lunchtime, when I’d have a slice of cake or biscuits, then a few chocolates in the afternoon. Now, a normal breakfast is oats with honey and milk. Lunch is a sandwich with leftover meats from the night before and loads of salad, then I’ll have something like low-fat chicken enchiladas, spaghetti bolognaise or steak or fish with vegies and baked or mashed potato for dinner.

Substitute sweet treats

I do sometimes have dessert, like a Weight Watchers sundae or canned peaches with custard, but when this starts to become a habit, I make a conscious decision to stop it for a week. Finding a substitute for sweet treats really helped. For me, it was canned beetroot, which has a sweet taste and really fills me up. I think about what I put into my mouth these days. I never used to before – eating was more of a reflex – but now I consider how many ProPoints values a food has and whether it’s worth eating or not.
I fell in love with exercise

Falling in love with exercise has been another change. I was never a fit person, but I started fitness classes soon after joining Weight Watchers and haven’t looked back. Combat and Pump are my favourite workouts and I try to do two classes of each every week. They’re fun and I enjoy the group camaraderie. I love the way exercise makes me feel – stronger and more energised. Combine it with eating well and I really feel as though I can conquer the world!

Positive about life

My initial motivation for losing weight was to do it for myself – it still is, actually. Of course, setting a healthy example for my children was important, but the main reason was to feel happier in myself, because when Mum’s happy, everybody’s happy. Losing weight has made me bubbly and full of love. Overall, I feel very positive about life. My sense of self-worth is no longer dependant on how I think people perceive me, like it used to be.

Better in the bedroom?

I’m much more energised, too. My knees don’t hurt like they used to when I exercised, and it’s lovely to walk into a clothes shop and know that the size 10 or 12s will fit me, just like the old days. Things are also a lot better in the bedroom, so my husband’s very happy as you can imagine!

Enjoy the journey!!

A good way to sum up my journey is that my life has become abundant. I’m completely content. I’ve learnt that you really have to be in the right state of mind before you can start losing weight. You have to be prepared to make
changes to your life and, while they may seem like a lot to ask in the beginning, they’re really not that major. I was surprised at how easy it was to form new habits. My other big tip is to enjoy the journey – it can be great fun!
8. **Penelope Strachan (Weight Watchers)**

"I am stronger after losing 20 kilos"

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“I’m committed to keeping the weight off for good because I feel fantastic and never want to stop feeling this way. ”

Having lost 20 kilos, Northern Territory teacher Penelope Strachan, 24, shares her secrets to happiness and successful maintenance.
**How long it took: 42 wks**

**How she did it** Weight Watchers meetings with Lorraine Barnes, Darwin, Northern Territory

**Life is great since I hit Goal**

Life is really great at the moment. Since losing weight and hitting Goal in June last year, so much has changed. Regular exercise has become a normal part of my everyday life – in fact, I do it for enjoyment now! Once I started maintaining, I realised I needed to change things to build up my fitness. I still enjoy running, but have also joined a boot camp because it motivates me to push myself. I exercise in the morning so it’s done and dusted for the day. The old me would have put it off until the afternoon, then probably not done it at all. My aim is to get as fit as possible, which has been wonderful for my relationship with my husband, James, too. He’s always been active and now, instead of sitting on the sidelines, I’m confident and fit enough to do active things with him, such as climbing the 65 metre-tall Gloucester Tree lookout in Perth recently. It was amazing – talk about an adrenaline rush!

**Problem solving is much easier**

My career confidence has blossomed, too. A work colleague even told me the other day I “have a sparkle” in my eye! My outward appearance, happiness and the way I interact with the kids at school must be evident to everyone these days, not only my closest family and friends. After losing just over 20 kilos and maintaining it for a year, I have a stronger mindset to overcome challenges. Instead of giving up, I can find solutions to push past obstacles. Once you’ve achieved something like this, everything else feels a little bit easier. A few
months ago, I found myself nearly crying while I was reading one of my old Weight Watchers’ journals. One entry was about how nervous I felt trying Zumba for the first time; I was worried I’d be the biggest person in the room. Luckily, I convinced myself to do it anyway because it would be good for my weight loss. It’s so sad that I thought about things in that way and felt so low like that. However, the upshot to it all is how incredibly far my self-confidence, happiness and love of exercise has progressed over the past few years.

**I can be more flexible with portions now I’m maintaining**

Since I’ve been maintaining, it’s not as though I’ve been eating McDonald’s all the time. My tastebuds have actually changed, so I tend to eat similar food to what I did when I was losing weight; I can just be more flexible with portion sizes now. The old me used to make poor food choices every day, but now I try to stay super-healthy during the week so I can relax when I go out on weekends. Listening to my body’s hunger signals stops me from overeating or feeling sick. Switching from losing weight to maintenance isn’t easy, but I’ve found ways to stay excited about it. One way I stay inspired is by setting small goals for myself, such as trying out a new recipe or a different type of exercise. Shopping for size eight to 10 clothes, looking over photos and hearing people’s compliments are all very motivating, too. They remind me of how far I’ve come. Keeping this in the back of my mind helps. I’m committed to keeping the weight off for good because I feel fantastic and never want to stop feeling this way.

**On the Town**
• If I feel myself getting slack, I’ll give myself a refresher course by tracking for a week. This helps me to focus again on healthy food choices.

• I weigh myself regularly. I like to keep on top of it, so I hop on the scales every four to five days.

• I go to meetings every week. They’re a regular part of my routine and great for staying on track.
9. **Brooke Humble (Weight Watchers)**

"I lost 25kgs with Weight Watchers Online"

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“Weight Watchers Online appealed to me as a busy mum of two young kids with caring duties for a disabled parent.”
After the birth of her second child and weighing in at 90kg, Brooke joined Weight Watchers Online to lose weight and find more energy to look after her family.

**How long it took:** 53wks

**How she did it:** Weight Watchers Online

**My wake up call**

My wake-up call came after the birth of my second child, when I realised I was 10 kilos off from weighing in at 100 kilos. It was a shock! I’d struggled with my weight since I was a teenager, but, at that moment, I thought, ‘I can’t live like this, I have to do something.’ One of my clients, who had lost quite a lot of weight with Weight Watchers, told me I could follow the program online, which appealed to me as a busy mum of two young kids who also had caring duties for a disabled parent.

**“Personal training helped me get in shape”**

I owe a lot to my girlfriend, Rachel, who is a personal trainer and helped me out for the year it took me to slim down. She trained me at least five or six days a week and, on our off day, would ring to check I was training that day. She pushed me all the way, encouraged me to get into jogging – even though I swore I’d never be a runner – and also encouraged me to tone up with weights.

Nowadays, I’m hooked on exercise! I arrange my work around it, so I always have an hour to duck out and exercise. If I’ve got the kids with me, I’ll put one
in a pram, the other on his bike and off we go! It’s just become part of my daily routine.

**Thinking small was the big change**

One of the biggest changes I’ve made to my diet has been with portion sizes. Even now, I’m still careful not to dish up too much because I’m the type to always clear my plate. I’ve also become much more organised with food planning. I used to get to that point in the day when I’d think about what to make for dinner, realise it was too late to go shopping and just throw some frozen chips in the oven. These days, I plan meals in advance, often using the recipes available on the Weight Watchers website. I’ve changed what I snack on, too, swapping my old biscuits and chips preference for fruit, yoghurt and muesli bars.

**Never give up!**

Since losing weight, I’ve become more confident and energetic – I feel like I can achieve anything. My advice to others? Believe in yourself and never give up!
10. **Erin Grant (Weight Watchers)**

"I lost 57kgs and feel fantastic!"

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“I’m proud of all my physical and emotional changes another highlight was shopping for my new shape. I’ll never forget buying my first pair of skinny jeans. ”

For mum-of-two Erin Grant, a dire medical warning was the ultimate motivation she needed to shed almost half her body weight.
How long it took: 87 wks
How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Liz Poole, Werribee, Victoria

Since the age of 10 I’d been teased
I’ve always been teased about my weight. It was pretty awful and made me reclusive; I didn’t want to go to school or see anyone. Time passed, I survived high school and finished a university degree, and then I fell pregnant with my first child. I gained 30 kilos during that pregnancy, so decided to lose weight. But then my mother was diagnosed with cancer. She became my biggest priority and all thoughts of losing any weight went out the window. Her health worsened and I became her carer until she passed away in 2005.

I would have died within 6 months
During this time, my weight ballooned, but I just didn’t realise it. I describe it as waking up one day and weighing 122 kilos. Then something happened that shocked me into action. I had a pre-existing heart condition, which became worse as my weight increased over the years. My doctor had been advising me to make healthier lifestyle changes, but I never did. When I experienced heart palpitations, dizzy spells and chest pain, he told me that if I didn’t lose weight, I would die within six months. I didn’t want to leave my kids early – they deserved better than that – and I wanted to be a positive example. I decided to put myself first, knowing it would benefit my family in the long run.

I became more honest with myself
I’d tried Weight Watchers a few times before finally succeeding, but I don’t see
that as a bad thing. Each time I learnt something about myself, until eventually I was ready to lose the excess weight and keep it off for good. This meant pinpointing the fact that I was using food for comfort. I was eating because I was stressed and sad. Over time, my Leader Liz Poole helped me overcome this habit. She taught me that instead of eating food to avoid my feelings, I should acknowledge them, then plough right through them! At the start of my weight-loss journey, I would have a good week, then think to myself “I’ve been good, so I’ll reward myself with KFC chips” But I soon realised I was sabotaging my efforts, so became more honest about my actions.

**Writing in a journal helped**

Writing in a journal helped me work through some of my major issues. I felt silly when I first started doing it, but jotting down bullet points regularly gave me insight into my headspace. There’s so much more to weight loss than just eating the right kinds of food and exercise – I had to reflect on why I became overweight in the first place. Food wasn’t going to fix my problems and, once I knew that, I really began to succeed.

**Look for physical challenges**

When I joined Weight Watchers, I was too embarrassed to join a gym, so I focused on walking to and from my meeting and tracking my food carefully. But, once I got below 100 kilos, a friend invited me along to a dance class. I was so uncoordinated and knew it wasn’t for me, but that didn’t stop me from trying other classes like Pump and Body Combat. It was clear that walking wasn’t a challenge anymore, so I hired a personal trainer and haven’t looked back.
Nowadays, I fit in a session with my trainer, a run, a training session with a girlfriend, yoga for my spinal arthritis and another session of cardio every week.

**Strength training is important**

Strength training is so important, too. At first I was worried I wouldn’t look feminine anymore, but my trainer explained to me that an overly muscly look requires extremely hard and deliberate training. After losing so much weight, I had saggy skin but the weight training has really toned me up. I wouldn’t stop it if you paid me now!

**I’m proud of all my physical challenges**

I love challenging myself and being able to lift heavy weights to rival some of the guys in the gym. I’m proud of all my physical and emotional changes. Another highlight was shopping for my new shape. I’ll never forget buying my first pair of skinny jeans. I looked good – and felt great! I have a big interest in health nowadays, and hope to explore that in the future. Anything’s possible.

**I can’t go a day without breakfast**

I never used to be a breakfast person, but since I joined Weight Watchers, I can’t Begin the day without it. To ease into it, I started with breakfast bars, then built up to pikelets and toast. Now, I’ll have porridge with banana and cinnamon during the week and a cooked breakfast on the weekends.

**Elizabeth’s top weight-loss tips**

- Make friends with breakfast
- Use strength training to build muscle and tone
• Write in a journal daily
11. **Rebecca Ryan (Weight Watchers)**

“I’ve gone from a size 22 to a size 12”

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“These days, I have more confidence and believe in myself. It’s great to put out a positive vibe!”

After years of struggling with unhealthy eating, Rebecca Ryan, 26, discovered a new love of running and lost more than 31 kilos
How long it took: 27 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Patsy Jordens, Rangiora, New Zealand

I swapped exercising for socializing

I was always bigger than other girls when I was younger, but, despite some bullying comments, didn’t let it hold me back. In fact, I was quite fit and swam up to six times a week. I loved the water and being in the pool as a child, but as I got older my priorities shifted and I swapped exercising for socialising. Needless to say, lack of exercise over the years caused my weight to balloon.

I’d lose 5 kilos then gain 10

When I fell pregnant with my son Dan, now six, things got even More out of control. I’d think to myself, “I’m pregnant and can eat whatever I want”. Somehow, I thought I’d be fine, so ate a ridiculous amount. At my peak of being overweight while pregnant, I tipped the scales at 135 kilos! After Dan was born, I felt overwhelmed by the task ahead. I just wanted to wake up and be a normal size. I tried fad dieting, soup diets, all kinds of unsustainable diets that would help me lose five kilos, but then I’d gain another 10.

Help arrived via a coupon

Back then, I truly believed if I could just lose the weight, I could go back to eating rubbish. I didn’t have the right mindset to stay healthy long term. I needed some help with making lifestyle changes that would stick. One day, I received a coupon for Weight Watchers in the mail. I cut it out, but didn’t end up using it. Luckily, another one arrived.
I didn’t look back

This time, despite being terrified, I cut it out and attended my first meeting. I’d been worried about feeling judged or out of place, but everyone at the meeting was so amazingly nice. I felt a bit silly afterwards. Why had I been so afraid? From that moment, I didn’t look back. Dan and I live with my family, so I wasn’t able to overhaul the household’s kitchen. It was good in a way because it helped me learn the art of self-control.

Takeaway 3 time a day?

After reading the program material, I set a goal to religiously track what I ate and stop drinking alcohol for three months. I also reduced my intake of takeaway, like KFC and McDonald’s, too. Before Weight Watchers, I used to have takeaway two or three times a day, especially over the weekend. I still have it occasionally, but these days I’m more likely to have Subway instead. I quickly realized it was up to me to make better choices and began to understand the value of food.

I lacked self confidence

Sure, I could have a Big Mac if I wanted, but it wouldn’t fill me up for the rest of the day. I started asking myself questions like, “What’s the better choice for me?” and “Do I really need this?” Weight Watchers has helped me appreciate food more – and I haven’t had to give up anything to ditch the extra kilos. In the past, I lacked self-confidence and used to hide behind my size. People described me as “angry-looking,” too, which shocked me at the time. I discovered that I was projecting more about myself than I really knew.
I have more confidence

These days, I have more confidence and believe in myself. It’s great to put out a positive vibe! Now that I’ve lost weight, getting fitter is my new priority. Plus, I’m enjoying spending time with motivated, outgoing and active people because they have the same priorities and passions as me.

My relationship improved

There have been so many positives from losing weight, including my relationship with Dan. He knows all about making healthy choices, now, like eating fruit and staying active. We spend more time playing together, too. I used to be so tired all the time and, because it was hard work lugging myself around, we’d often just watch TV. Now, we go to the park and I rollerskate while he uses his scooter. He also rides his bike while I run, which is a lot of fun. It’s great to have the energy to be able to do these things together.

I don’t watch from the sidelines

I didn’t want to watch from the sidelines any longer – and now I don’t have to! I used to worry about getting bigger again, but I now know that it won’t be a problem. Weight Watchers has taught me the life skills I need to stay fit, healthy and happy for good.
12. **Jan Lorimer (Weight Watchers)**

I ditched the fad diets and lost 42.5kgs!

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“In the past, I used the excuse that I didn’t have time to look after myself because I have four kids. I realised that if I don’t look after me, then who’s going to look after them?”

When Jan Lorimer, 39, ditched the fad diets and changed her mindset, she lost much more than just 42.5 extra kilos.
How long it took: 37 weeks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Sandra Carvell, Berwick, Victoria

Losing weight hasn’t always been easy

I’ve battled with excess kilos all throughout adulthood, trying every diet you can think of – low carbs, no carbs, prepacked meals and shakes – but nothing ever stuck. I joined Weight Watchers years ago, but kept relapsing. I knew it worked, but hadn’t learnt how to maintain. Nine Weight Watchers attempts on, I was fairly disheartened but ready for a fresh start. I woke up one day, looked in the mirror and felt unhappy within myself. Something needed to change. Deep down, I knew I was going to join Weight Watchers for a 10th – and final – go, and this time it was going to work.

Initially, I was embarrassed

Going back to the meetings, I felt like I’d failed. When I got on the scales I was horrified to discover I was the biggest I’d ever been. However, that turned out to be a life-changing moment. There was no way I was going to let myself get any bigger. After the meeting finished, I felt empowered. Needless to say, I lost weight week after week and reached Goal. Joining with the right attitude was the key to my success.

My eating habits have transformed

Before, I’d skip breakfast, and then indulge with cake or muffins for morning tea. At work, I pretended I was healthy, opting for salads, but was never satisfied, so would stuff my face with more cake, muffins or biscuits in the
afternoon. I’d also drink a 2L bottle of Coke throughout the day. When I got home after a long day, I’d polish off a 200g packet of chips. Dinners varied, but we often had fast food like fried chicken or McDonald’s. If we did have meat and vegies, the portions were enormous. If I was bored afterwards, I’d also have a Milo or ice-cream.

**Now, my diet couldn’t be more different**

I have yoghurt and fruit with toast or cereal every morning and a sandwich and fruit for lunch. I still occasionally have a muffin for morning tea, but I’ll work it into my day. If I need snacks, I eat fruit or muesli bars, and dinner is usually portion controlled meat and vegetables. At first, I struggled with eating breakfast every day, but now I don’t function properly if I don’t have it! It sounds strange, but Weight Watchers taught me I have to eat to lose weight – it’s just matter of eating healthier options.

**I did it for me, not for anyone else**

Before, I was trying for my husband, Ian, or the kids, but I finally realised it had to come from within. My husband loves me whether I’m big or slim, but I had to do it because I’d stopped loving me. In the past, I used the excuse that I didn’t have time to look after myself because I have four kids, but I realised that if I don’t look after me, then who’s going to look after them? When I’m fit and healthy, everyone else’s life improves.

**Healthy eating doesn’t have to be hard**

My food choices are setting a good example for my children, too. Josh, 14, is a diabetic so I’m showing him that healthy eating doesn’t have to be hard. To
encourage my daughter Hannah, 10, to get more involved in the kitchen, I’ve bought her a *MasterChef* apron and we cook together. Sometimes I even videotape us doing it, which makes the process more fun.

**Exercise was something new**

I started with a 10-minute walk on the family treadmill three times a day. As the weight fell off, I built up my fitness levels to a 30-minute walk five days a week. Now, I walk wherever I can and have joined a gym, so I can focus on toning up. This time, staying on track was easy because I was fuelled by inner determination to lose weight and keep it off. Over time, I’ve learnt to be more positive. I accept there are bad days, but don’t give up on myself anymore. I just stick to my *ProPoints* budget for the next day. There’s no point in beating myself up.

**It was such an emotional experience**

My kids have been so supportive. I loved coming home from meetings and hearing them say, “Are you a loser, Mum?” in the hope that I’d lost weight that week. I love that memory because they were excited and proud of me. They’d run to the fridge or pantry to get something that weighed the same as my results, like a bag of sugar or tub of margarine. It was a great way to visualise how much weight I was losing. I donated my bigger clothes to charity. It felt as if I was throwing away the old me. Losing weight has been a great journey and I’ve discovered so much, but mostly I’ve learnt about myself. I’m learning to love the happier, healthier new me.

**Jan’s Tips**

• If you fail, focus on the next day
• Set a positive example for your family
• Give away your old clothes!
13. **Kelly Rogerson (Weight Watchers)**

“I’m so healthy now – nothing can stop me!”

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“I’ve tried every diet ever written, but Weight Watchers helped me make the lifestyle changes I needed to keep weight off forever!”
Kelly Rogerson was born overweight, and as she grew older, she made excuses to withdraw from everyday activities. Fed up with being sidelined, she joined Weight Watchers, stopped making excuses and lost nearly 60kg.

I was born overweight at 11lb 9 oz (5.4 kg) and just kept going up from there. I was overweight throughout my childhood and into my twenties. By the time I had delivered my second child I was 145 kgs. I felt disempowered, unattractive, depressed, unmotivated and lazy. I started to retreat from life and made excuses not to be involved with activities and enjoying life. I would mind the kids while everyone kicked the footy or sit and watch while everyone played.

The more weight I held onto, the harder it was to do things. I had an idea that I hated exercise and it was not for me. I love food and love to cook and bake but didn't realise I could do this without the burden of always adding extra calories. My portion sizes were way too large and I made excuses for everything I couldn't do. I was busy, had two young children, worked, we were building a house; I had an excuse for everything and used them all the time.

My light bulb moment came when I was going thought the electric glass doors at the supermarket one day, I moved out of the way for a lady I saw coming the other way, and it passed through my thoughts that she was a big girl. As the doors parted, there was no-one there and I realized it was my reflection. I could not believe it. We had only one small mirror at home that allowed me to see only my face, and I hadn’t realised just how big I had become. I went home and cried. The next morning, I joined Weight Watchers.
I started reducing my portion sizes, tracking every bite that passed my lips, and putting a lot more thought and planning into our family meals. I learned that I could still cook my favourite dishes; I just had to make a few small modifications to them. I also took all the junk food out of the house – if it wasn’t there, I couldn’t eat it!

I also started thinking about ways that I could become more active. I focused on how I could increase my incidental exercise – I vacuumed more, mopped more, hung more washing on the line! I began walking the kids to school each day, and later on I incorporated some regular yoga sessions into my routine.

In the beginning, getting to goal seemed so far away it was almost impossible to imagine, so each and every week I set myself a small, tangible goal – to drink more water, try a new exercise. Each week that I saw a loss on the scales, I bought myself fresh flowers. They were a great reminder of how much I had achieved, and motivated me to keep going on the tough days.

Achieving my goal was the most fantastic feeling, but even more fantastic are the benefits I see in my life every day. I can now sit in a chair without worrying it will break, or having to squeeze into it, or fitting into spaces or plane seats or anything like that. My body moves and responds in such a fantastic way, I can chase the kids and laugh and run and I now have more fun. I can touch my toes and water ski and have a go at anything. I participate in life now where I used to stay on the sidelines and watch life pass me by. I have more opportunities
because I'm not scared to have a go at things.

Don’t just hope for things to change, be the change. Stop making excuses. Own your own journey, many friends have come and gone along my journey, but you need to focus on what you're doing. Watch your portions, be honest with yourself and you'll see the success you long for.

**What is the Weight Watchers Healthy Life Awards?**

The Weight Watchers Healthy Life Awards is an annual celebration that recognises people who have taken personal responsibility for their health and won the weight battle. Through this campaign we want to encourage more people to embark on their journey to better health, and also reward or loyal members for their commitment and the changes they have made to create a better lifestyle for themselves and those around them. For more information, visit [www.healthylifeawards.com.au](http://www.healthylifeawards.com.au)
"I lost 20kg after gaining weight on maternity leave"

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“When I see photos of myself these days I think, ‘Wow, I look slim!’ I realise what dramatic improvements I’ve made. I exceeded my own expectations and I’m so proud of what I’ve achieved.”

For busy working mum Amber Bremner, 33, prioritising fitness was the key to losing 20 kilos.
How long it took: 48 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Jennie Poole in Hamilton, New Zealand.

Looking at the photos of myself from a work trip, I was shocked

I didn’t realise how much weight I’d gained – it was a lot worse than I had thought. Over the course of a year, since returning to work full-time from maternity leave, the weight had piled on. I was busy, wasn’t doing any exercise and, while my diet was relatively healthy, I was using food as a reward. My mentality was, ‘I’ve had such a hard day, I deserve this bar of chocolate or glass of wine before dinner.’ I’d done Weight Watchers before and had success with it, so I signed up and haven’t looked back.

Exercise has become a priority

One of the biggest changes I made that helped me shift those 20 kilos was starting regular exercise. I used to feel as though I didn’t have time for it, but I’ve changed my thinking so that it’s now a priority. Four to five times a week, I’ll get up early so I can go swimming at 6am. I’m not a morning person, but it’s the only time I have to exercise. If I don’t do it then, it won’t happen. I also try to fit in two to three runs a week after work or on weekends. Making time to exercise is a reward in itself; it’s ‘me time’. I don’t have a lot of it as a working mother, and I love how energetic it makes me feel.

I still enjoy treats; I’m just more selective about them

I haven’t changed my diet that much, it was more about being conscious of the extra bits between meals; cake for morning tea, cheese and crackers before
dinner and extra glasses of wine really stack up! These days, I snack on fruit and have stopped grazing before dinner. I still enjoy treats; I’m just more selective about them, so they’re truly treats. When I see photos of myself these days I think, ‘Wow, I look slim!’ I realise what dramatic improvements I’ve made. I exceeded my own expectations and I’m so proud of what I’ve achieved.
“I’m so happy with my life now!”

Postnatal depression led Victoria Pinder to emotional eating. After losing 15kg, she’s reclaimed her health – and her life.


Cheese toasted sandwiches. McDonald’s drive-through. Chocolate. More toast
and biscuits. Welcome to my former food diary – and that was all before afternoon tea. The rest of the day would be crammed with whatever I could find until my husband Mark came home and we’d have a healthy dinner. Little did he know what I was eating when he wasn’t around. No-one knew, not even my family or close friends. Girlfriends and I would meet for coffee where it would be socially acceptable to eat cake together, but they’d have no idea I’d scoffed a king-size block of chocolate or a McDonald’s meal beforehand. My eating habits weren’t always like this. After marrying Mark in 2004, I quickly fell pregnant the next year with our daughter, Elise, who arrived 11 weeks premature. We went into survival mode, just trying to make it through each day, ensuring she was healthy. It was an extremely stressful time. About six months after her birth, I started having panic attacks, which stopped me from leaving the house from time to time. I also experienced dreadful insomnia and couldn’t stop re-living her birth in my mind. Mark knew I was unhappy, he just didn’t realize how unhappy. I was depressed and often had dark days that impacted on my self-worth and marriage. I didn’t tell anyone how I felt, just used food as a comfort and pretended I was happy to the outside world.

Finally, after a very frank chat with my GP, followed by some helpful counseling sessions, I admitted that my weight had spiraled out of control. I needed to save my marriage and – above all – save myself.

I’m a competitive person, so once I made the decision to get my life back on track, I faced the fear head-on and just went for it. I told everybody I knew and kept a running tally of my weight loss on the fridge to make it public. So much
of my trouble had come from doing everything secretly, and it was time to be honest with myself and everyone else.

I confessed to my loved ones about my former secret eating habits. This helped me face my demons and move forward. Surprisingly, I regained control quickly. I started talking to people about how I felt – both good and bad – instead of eating to hide my emotions. People often ask what kept me motivated. The truth is, seeing the numbers tick down on the scales was enough to inspire me. I didn’t want to ever feel or look that way again. I used to suffer shortness of breath, asthma and back pain. Now my breathing and asthma is far more stable and the discomfort with my back is considerably reduced. Before, when it came to eating, everything was in excess. In fact, I was eating about three times the amount I should’ve been. These days, I measure my food before I eat it, cook in bulk and freeze portions, or have leftovers for lunch the next day. Drive-through fast food no longer exists. If I want pizza, I make it and love the Weight Watchers prosciutto and goat’s cheese mini pizza recipe – divine!

The meetings were a great help, as I learnt so much from everyone else’s experiences. People also tell me they’re motivated by my personal journey, which is amazing. Even though I reached Goal in February last year, I still try to get to meetings every week. I know I can maintain this for the rest of my life – and I’d love to become a Leader one day, too! Inspiring people makes me happy.

The past few years have been a roller-coaster, so it’s fantastic to have such a positive outlook again. I don’t see things as big problems anymore. Life is
generally easier. I’ve cut out so many toxic elements – even gossiping! I can’t be bothered with negatives anymore. I see the good in everybody, whereas before I would search for the negative to make myself feel better. Mark is proud of my mental and physical transformation. It’s awesome to hear how proud he is of me. I feel like we fit and look like a real partnership. I’ve been given a second chance at life, so want to make the absolute most of every second.
16. **Bridgette Irving (Weight Watchers)**

"I’m finally enjoying my 20s"

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“I was a size 18, had bought a new dress and splurged on getting my hair done and a spray tan. I felt great on the day, but I was so upset seeing the photos. ”

She once considered lap band surgery, but a few simple changes saw Brigitte Irving shrink from a size 18 to size 12.
How long it took: 44 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Angela Nicola, Croydon, Victoria

I’d been dieting for as long as I remember

I tried everything from shakes to skipping meals, but nothing worked. I contemplated lap band surgery. Looking back, it seems silly but it was a sad time in my life and I’d convinced myself there was no alternative. My lowest moment came after my cousin’s wedding in late 2009. I was a size 18, had bought a new dress for the occasion and splurged on getting my hair done and a spray tan. I felt great on the day, but was shocked to see the photos afterwards because they didn’t even look like me. I was so upset that I didn’t want to keep any of the photos. I’d had a vision of what I thought I looked like, but couldn’t ignore the reality any longer – my weight was out of control and I needed to do something about it.

I had never considered it possible

Back then, I thought I was bigger because of my genes. Although mum is supportive of all my decisions, she did encourage me to try Weight Watchers first, since it was a lifestyle change rather than an extreme measure. I had never considered it was possible for me to be healthier and a smaller size. During my first meeting weigh-in, I decided to give the program a chance. After all, I’d spent too long worrying about my weight. I was in my 20s and wanted to feel happier, to be more active and confident in my appearance.
In the past, I skipped meals

I’d get to the point where I was shaking from hunger, then would end up eating everything in sight. I didn’t realize that not eating regularly was actually contributing to my weight gain. After the meeting, Mum and I went to the supermarket so I could stock up on healthy foods. My Weight Watchers journey was off to a great start and I made lifestyle changes straightaway. After I joined Weight Watchers, I was eating more during the day than I ever had before!

Having regular meals is so important

I have a small bowl of cereal with half a banana and a cup of tea for breakfast, followed by fruit and rice crackers for morning tea. Lunches are usually a tuna salad and yoghurt, and, if I need afternoon tea, I’ll have fruit, air-popped popcorn or carrot sticks. To help me stay on track, I always keep a snack in my handbag so I’m never caught out. Staying healthy while studying at university was challenging so that I took tubs of carrot sticks to snack on and packed a healthy lunch so I didn’t cave in and buy something from the cafe. For dinner, my partner and I love cooking lean meat with plenty of vegetables. Despite losing so much weight, I definitely still enjoy my food. We have hamburger night and spaghetti bolognaise night; I just make sure my portions are under control.

I feel like I have the old me back

While I no longer need to attend meetings to keep myself on track, I have a wardrobe of beautiful size-12 clothes to keep me motivated to stay at Goal. On top of that, I weigh in regularly at home, love feeling this fantastic and have plenty of energy. I don’t want to feel how I used to, so that’s motivation
enough! When I was overweight, I felt down all the time. It was a horrible feeling for me and everyone in my life. Everyone tells me it’s great to have the old me back and I have to agree.

**I love participating in life again**

Now, when my outdoorsy sister Hayley suggests a weekend away to go hiking, I’m up for it. In an average week, I don’t have a set exercise routine, but I try to fit in a walk or jog where I can. When I first started out, I’d walk for 20 steps then jog for 20, building up to non-stop running over time. Now, whenever I’m feeling sluggish, I know that it’s time to get outside for a run. I’m so excited to see what the next few years hold. I can wear nicer clothes, feel great when I go out with friends and take pride in my appearance. Choosing Weight Watchers instead of lap band surgery was the best decision I could have made for my future. I’m so ridiculously happy and know for certain this is a long-term change

**Brigitte’s weight-loss tips**

- Try to fit in a walk wherever you can
- Drink plenty of water
- Eat healthier foods including fruits and vegetables – more often
17. **Lauren Lappin (Weight Watchers)**

"I lost 27kgs and became a fitness instructor"

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"I’m now a teaching a body step class a few days per week and am about to take on a body pump class as well!"

Lauren’s weight loss journey saw her take back control of her life and make the transformation into a healthy and enthusiastic fitness class instructor!

**I have struggled with my weight since I was a teenager**

I was never really into exercising or sports and I definitely didn’t have any
portion control, I loved food just a little too much! I think in those early years if you don’t get into good habits, it makes it harder to get it under control later in life.

**I gained a lot of weight during my tough pregnancy**

I stopped exercising completely, I ate junk, and not surprisingly, I gained 32kg. I felt horrible and I was so disappointed in myself but felt too low to do anything about it. I thought that once I had my baby and started breastfeeding the weight would just fall off me. That’s what the magazines lead you to believe, anyway! When my daughter was 12 weeks old and I still hadn't lost the weight, I knew drastic measures had to be taken!

**I don’t have any family photos from when my daughter was a newborn**

There were so many special occasions during my pregnancy that I didn't enjoy, because I was so caught up in how badly I felt about myself. I hardly have any photos of myself while I was pregnant, and after my daughter was born I wouldn't let anyone take any photos of us together. Looking back this is really disappointing, but I’m definitely making amends for that now!

**Weight Watchers was a great choice for me**

Because you never feel like you’re being deprived of anything at all. You are equipped with all the know-how and tips and tricks to be successful. After only a few weeks of using the Weight Watchers recipes and counting ProPoints I had made great progress and my husband had even shed 5kg, simply from being more aware of what we were putting in our bodies!
To my amazement, the owner of my gym asked me to become a fitness instructor!

That was a really big moment for me, because it really hit home what an awesome change I’d made to my life. Opportunities were presenting themselves that I never, ever thought would! I was undecided about taking up the offer, because being a fitness instructor was a far cry from who I was just a short time ago and was totally out of my comfort zone.

Losing weight with Weight Watchers has given me the confidence to just go for it!

I accepted the job and I’m now teaching a body step class a few days per week and am about to take on a body pump class as well! I absolutely love it and have met some really great people through the gym. It’s so awesome to be able to help people in the class who are on the same path to reclaiming their health that I was on not so long ago – although it feels like a lifetime!

Juggling a young daughter and two jobs is a challenge

But you need to make sure you are making time for yourself and your health goals as well. I always remind myself that the reason I’m doing it is so that I can be a happy, healthy mother and a good role model for my daughter. Once I got into the routine and refused to negotiate on ‘me time’, it became a part of our morning ritual. The gym I go to has a great crèche which is such a help for mothers. My daughter has made little friends who are there every morning and she loves going now!
Three other mums in my mothers’ group joined Weight Watchers too!

After seeing how much weight I was losing and all the positive changes that were happening in my life as a result of Weight Watchers, the ladies thought they’d give it a shot as well. It was fantastic being able to encourage them and offer advice to help their weight loss journey! It’s great to see how a positive change that you make for your own life can have such a positive impact on others as well.
18. **Lucy Jackson (Weight Watchers)**

"I lost 35kgs without giving up my favourite foods"

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“I know everyone says it, but if I can do it, then anyone can! ”

Bartender, Lucy Jackson, lost 35 kilos in one year suprising both herself and her loved ones with her determination
How long it took: 52 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Alison Greig,
Mullumbimby, NSW

I gained 20 kilos in seven months!
I’d been overweight for as long as I can remember. People would say I’d be “so pretty” if I lost a few kilos. Yep, I was that person. I’d been hovering around 80 kilos since Year 10, but everything changed when I started a new relationship. My boyfriend at the time and I had poor eating habits and it was normal for us to order takeaway like pizza or fish and chips regularly, or just eat a whole box of cookies when we were together. I never used to eat takeaway – I always cooked for myself – and this led me to gain 20 kilos in seven months! My wake-up call happened when I noticed large, red marks on my stomach. Thinking I had a strange rash, I went to the doctor, who told me they were stretch marks from gaining weight so quickly. Until that point, I’d been in denial about my size. With my mum’s support, I decided it was time to do something about my weight. I figured I’d give Weight Watchers a try, and my boyfriend at the time joined up, too

I’ve transformed my eating habits
From the day I joined the program, I stuck to my ProPoints allowance and made sure I exercised every day. I changed my eating habits completely, starting with portion sizes. My now ex-boyfriend and I both lost around nine kilos each. After we broke up, I moved home for a while, but didn’t give up on my new lifestyle; I was committed to losing even more weight. Another change for me was sticking to smaller serving sizes – I even weighed my cereal. Before joining
Weight Watchers, I thought I’d have to give up takeaway, chocolate, ice-creams and cookies to lose weight. How wrong I was! I soon learnt that I could have everything, just occasionally and in moderation. These days, I’ll have a bowl of cereal or porridge for breakfast. I snack on grapes for morning tea and have a healthy salad sandwich for lunch. My afternoon snack is another piece of fresh fruit, then I love having chicken, rice and salad for dinner. If I’m out and about, my favourite options are Subway, Nandos or a pad Thai. As a bartender, my work hours can be crazy, so I have to juggle my meals a bit, but since I haven’t regained any of the weight, I must be doing alright!

**Power walking helps me maintain**

Friends and family were blown away by my transformation. I’d tried and failed for years to lose weight. I’d never really dieted, but I’d go through phases of trying to be healthy or exercise, saying things like, “I’ll go to the gym on Monday,” but never would. Weight Watchers was the one thing that made it stick.

**If I can do it, anyone can**

My mum generously paid for my Weight Watchers membership and my best friend Hayley, who is a personal trainer, worked out with me for five months, free of charge. It was amazing to witness my fitness progress throughout all the training, running, cycling and Zumba classes I did. These days, I have a bad back, so I stick with eight-kilometre power walks five times a week, which is still beneficial for my maintenance. I plan on joining the gym again, too, because I miss Zumba. Losing 35 kilos is truly the biggest achievement of my life. I know everyone says it, but if I can do it, then anyone can.
My Top Weight Loss Tips

• If you want to drink while doing Weight Watchers, use your 49 bonus ProPoints allowance. I drank low-kilojoule wines or vodka, lime and sodas to help me stay on track. I also didn’t drink just for the sake of it; I made sure to save it for special nights out with friends.
19. **Melissa Webster (Weight Watchers)**

"I’m back to a size 10 again"

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“I hated the way I looked and was worried about developing serious health issues, such as diabetes, in the future. I needed to be there for my kids – and I wanted them to be proud of me. ”

After losing touch with real hunger, Melissa Webster broke the emotional eating cycle to reclaim her life and body.
How long it took: 37 wks How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Brian Grainger, Carindale, Queensland

I used to be a closet eater

When no one else was home, I’d devour a large family block of chocolate. Nobody knew what I was up to because I’d always throw away the wrapper. At the time, I couldn’t leave the supermarket without buying junk food and I would often just sit in the kitchen, eating. My eating habits were so far out of control that I’d lost touch with my true appetite. I hated being a bigger size because it kept me on the sidelines. I’d only ever watch my three boys swimming, instead of joining in. I hated the way I looked and was worried about developing serious health issues, such as diabetes, in the future. I needed to be there for my kids – and I wanted them to be proud of me.

My Weight Watchers journey wasn’t smooth-sailing

In the second week, I didn’t want to return to my meeting because it all felt too hard. During that time, my youngest son came home from school and told my then-husband that his friend had called me fat and overweight. I was mortified, but it ignited something in me: it drove me to finally lose the weight for good. At that moment, I knew I’d found the determination to succeed.

I’m finally living life to the full

Before my weight-loss journey began, I didn’t exercise much and found running impossible. In fact, when I tried to run, it hurt because my boobs were so big! But then I got a Weight Watchers pedometer, which showed me how many steps I was already taking on a daily basis. I was so happy to see that I was
moving more than I realized. This knowledge gave me the confidence to start walking and jogging between lampposts, until eventually I could run for longer distances. These days, I’m always itching to go for a run. I absolutely love it! I run most days, anywhere from 30 to 50 minutes at a time. It makes me feel so much better and allows me to eat more, without worrying about gaining weight.

**I’m now involved in everything**

Instead of just watching other people live their lives. I’m a first-aid volunteer for my son’s rugby league team, which is something I never would’ve done before. I’ve even tried paintball! It’s great to have the confidence to give things a go. Nowadays, if my girlfriend and I arrange to catch up, we’ll do it over a hot drink, Subway roll or chicken sandwich instead. And she’s also lost weight since I joined Weight Watchers!

**I used to indulge in bacon-and-eggs most days**

Throughout the day, I’d have cheesy spinach rolls, chips, chocolate, doughnuts and fruit. A typical dinner would be anything from pizza to pasta. These days, I have toast and fruit or cereal for breakfast. Morning tea consists of fresh fruit, natural yoghurt or cheese. Lunch is a chicken and avocado salad or a wholegrain roll with salad and cold meat slices. I discovered that making a big tub of salad to use during the week really helped me stay organized with meals. In the afternoon, I love rice crackers, a small packet of Red Rock Deli chips or a portion-controlled sweet treat, like a Curly Wurly or Wizz Fizz. A friend asked me if I had to change my eating habits. I told her no. Thanks to the flexibility of the program, I never feel deprived.
Motivation was a big factor in my weight-loss success

My Leader, Brian, really is the most inspiring person! I walked out of every meeting full of great ideas and thoughts on what I could tackle that week. He really encouraged me to believe in myself. I’ve also been motivated to maintain by other people’s compliments, as it shows me my hard work has paid off. I love to know I’m motivating others, too. I’ve had to donate my wardrobe a few times, giving away my old size 16s and 14s. I still have a few pairs of size 12 jeans tucked away, but the rest of my wardrobe is size 10, which just blows me away. I actually surprised myself with this experience! My three boys are an inspiration. My eldest son now goes to the gym after school, so it’s fantastic to see him looking after his health and body, too. My boys are definitely proud of me.

Melissa’s weight-loss tips

- Write down everything you eat
- Plan and shop for meals and snacks
- Quit making excuses!
20. **Stacey Irving (Weight Watchers)**

"I dropped six dress sizes"

![Image of Stacey Irving before and after weight loss]

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“I began experiencing migraines twice a week as a result of my weight. I decided it was time to take back control of my life.”

Since shedding an incredible 48 kilos, New Zealand accountant Stacey Irving has said goodbye to her old, size 22 self.
How long it took: 104 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Brenda Drysdale, Rotorua, New Zealand

I started gaining weight

It started when I was a teenager. I didn’t stop. From being a pudgy teen, I gained more weight while doing my tertiary studies, then got even bigger after having my three kids. It got to the point where I thought I was just destined to be overweight – other people were capable of slimming down, but I wasn’t.

I couldn’t go on living like this

I hid behind my persona as the ‘friendly fat girl’ who always had a smile on her face, but was secretly unhappy inside. My size 22 clothes were getting tight. I began experiencing migraines twice a week as a result of my weight. I decided it was time to take back control of my life.

It all went out the window

After signing up for my third stint at Weight Watchers, my eating habits were the first things to get an overhaul. I’d grown up doing a lot of home cooking – and baking – Lunch and dinner were frequently bought at the local takeaway shop. I wasn’t eating huge amounts of food, but my nutritional choices were very unhealthy. These days, I enjoy a Weight Watchers Cereal Bar for breakfast, plenty of fruit snacks throughout the day, a healthy ham and salad whole meal roll most of the time for lunch and a chicken salad with lots of vegetables for dinner.
I started walking

I walked or 30 minutes every morning, and the weight began dropping off straight away, which was fantastic. As I slimmed down, I had to increase the intensity by adding hills into my route, and mix up the exercises I did to keep those scales moving downwards. By that point, I was enjoying exercise, so it wasn’t a hardship. My energy levels really improved due to my new exercise routine – I went from being constantly tired to wanting to challenge myself.

Kids mirror what their parents do

One of my biggest incentives to slim down was to be a role model for my children: Samantha, nine, Nicholas, seven, and Keeley, 16. I wanted to teach them healthy food and lifestyle habits. Now we exercise as a family, going for walks, bike rides and swimming together. We do so much more outdoor living as a family these days, which is a huge change from how we were living before.

It was difficult to stay motivated during winter

To try and balance out my unwillingness to exercise during the colder months, I set myself a goal of doing a 10km run. Because I had that run to work towards, I found it easier to train – even when the temperature was hovering around zero degrees! After I completed that event, I felt so empowered and was so excited about how healthy and great it made me feel.

I’ve done three half marathons and three triathlons

They have helped me stay on track. Since I’ve slimmed down, I’ve come to realise how much harder life is when you’re overweight. You can’t just walk
into a shop and buy a nice new dress. You can’t fit comfortably into an aeroplane seat. You can’t even walk up a flight of stairs with ease.

**I ditched the self esteem problems**

I used to only enjoy shopping for shoes, handbags and scarves. Now, I can include clothes shopping. Throwing out my old wardrobe and being able to replace it with beautiful size 10 clothing was a huge affirmation. Remembering what my life was like when I was bigger is another great motivator when I’m tempted to not exercise or to eat that chocolate biscuit. I’m so much more positive and confident, and know I can achieve my goals, whether they’re in exercise, weight loss or life in general. These days, I jump at the chance to try new things, whereas the old me would have made an excuse or just refused. Now I love living my life to the full and can’t ever imagine going backwards.

**Stacey’s weight-loss tips**

- Ditch the takeaway meals
- Set yourself new exercise goals.
- Try new recipes to keep things interesting.
21. **Hayley Hampson (Weight Watchers)**

“*There’s more to life than chocolate and tears*”

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“*It’s a fantastic feeling to smile and truly mean it. I love being able to walk into any venue, dressed beautifully and feeling great, and not have to leave 10 minutes later in tears.*”

Despite a busy social life, breast cancer nurse Hayley Hampson still managed to lose 30 kilos!
How long it took: 40 wks How she did it: Weight Watchers Online and meetings with Tracey Wiseman, Gatton, QLD.

I was never much of a cook

Everything I made was fatty, my portions were always over sized and I had the same old meals on regular rotation. I avoided trying new recipes because they always seemed too hard, with so many ingredients. But everything changed when one of my colleagues encouraged me to come along to a meeting. At first I was unsure, since I’d always thought the program was for older women. But I’d tried every other alternative and had hit rock bottom. I was in a downward spiral where the worse I felt, the more I ate, and I didn’t want to go any lower.

I knew I had to change my life now

That first meeting was great and I left feeling really motivated. All my preconceptions were wrong! The best bit was buying three Weight Watchers cookbooks; the recipes looked delicious and were so easy to cook. After that, I used my new cookbooks to meal plan. I was constantly surprised and amazed by the foods on offer. Swapping my fatty meals for healthier, low-fat options made such a difference and left me feeling in control of my weight loss. From there, I taught myself to cook from scratch and the rest is history.

Gone are the days of living off takeaway

Gone are the days of living off takeaway pizza, Chinese and McDonald’s or using bottled cooking sauces or pre-packaged meat and fish. I love cooking now and enjoy eating everything in moderation. That way, I never feel deprived and
can stay satisfied. My partner, Aaryn, has also gotten into cooking – he’s Italian, so loves making beautiful pizza and pastas.

You can still enjoy a social life!

It’s so important for people to know you can lose weight and still have a social life. At the beginning of my weight-loss journey, I had doubts the two would go together. I was nervous and didn’t know whether I could trust myself. I thought I might binge or blow out. But, since losing weight and maintaining, I know it’s more than possible. In fact, it’s just part of my life! Now, I try to eat as healthily as possible during the week, so I can relax a little more on the weekends when I’m socialising with Aaryn and my friends.

Exercise is a compulsory part of my routine

I go to the gym three times a week and also squeeze in some walks. Exercise is my de-stressor and makes me feel great. My work is really busy and I chat with people all day, often dealing with quite sad and emotional cases, so exercising at the end of a shift is essential for helping me wind down. To stay on track, I sometimes pack a gym bag so I can head there straight from work. At other times, I’ll pop home first, fix myself a quick, filling snack, then go from there. The more I did it, the more I enjoyed it and I soon became more open to trialing new classes like step and Zumba.

Cooking and fitness aren’t the only habits that have changed

Another major transformation has been my outlook on life. In the past, I struggled to smile and laugh regularly because I felt so down about my weight and looks. Now, I’ve learnt to laugh at myself! I’m a clumsy person and, when I
do something silly or wrong, I can have a giggle with everyone else, instead of feeling self-conscious. The old me would have been worried that people were laughing at me, thinking, “Oh, there’s that fat girl”. I used to cringe every time I saw photos of myself and, if I was alone, I would cry.

**My happiness is genuine**

Now, it’s a fantastic feeling to smile and truly mean it. I’m no longer down about my appearance. I love being able to walk into any venue, dressed beautifully and feeling great, and not have to leave 10 minutes later in tears because I feel uncomfortable and so out of place. Like everyone else, I deserve to get dressed up in beautiful, stylish clothes and go out and have a good time.

**I can reveal the real me**

Wearing a swimsuit isn’t the end of the world either these days – now I can wear one without wanting to disappear! I deserve to be loved by myself and by others and reveal the real me. There’s so much more to life than chocolate and tears!

**Hayley’s weight loss ips**

- Take a struggling friend to a meeting
- Pack a bag of gym clothes so you can exercise after work
- Use exercise to release stress
22. **Tara Martin (Weight Watchers)**

“I wore a bikini on my 40th birthday”

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“My 40th birthday was a motivator for staying slim. I wanted to wear a bikini and feel fantastic on the big day. I’m happy to say I did and felt proud!”
At her heaviest, it wasn’t unusual for Tara Martin to eat two litres of ice-cream in one sitting. Now, she’s broken the cycle of emotional eating.

-How long it took: 28 wks
How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Angela Nicola, Glen Waverley, VIC

My weight-loss journey began 10 years ago
After putting on weight during my engagement and honeymoon, I was shocked to see how big I appeared in the photos. I knew I had to do something, so I joined Weight Watchers, hit goal weight almost a decade ago and haven’t looked back. My weight fluctuated a little over the years, but I’ve managed to keep it stable. The flexibility of the program really helped and, since learning about nutrition, exercise and portion control, I’ve been able to maintain fairly easily – and lose a few extra kilos, too.

I faved my fears
About three years ago, a girlfriend decided to sign up for a mini triathlon and invited a few of us to join her. None of us had done anything like that before, so it was definitely a challenge. Due to a traumatic incident as a child where I almost drowned, I held a lifelong fear of the water, so had to learn to swim before the big event. The swimming lessons took place in September and the mini triathlon was in November. I’m proud to say I crossed the finish line, having completed the 200m swim. I felt a sense of achievement ticking the experience off my list.
Exercise gives me mental strength

Nowadays, I’m more focused on running. I train three times a week, varying my workout between hill, middle-distance (about 8km) and sand running, which has helped me shift a few extra kilos. When there’s time, I love to do a boxing class, too. Regular exercise gives me strength and determination to get through long, stressful days in my job as a partner at an accounting firm. It’s been such a life-changing experience.

Food can affect our emotions

Women need to look at their diet and exercise as important parts of their lives. Many women are so busy looking after everyone else that they forget to look after themselves. Before I joined Weight Watchers, I would often turn to food when I was feeling down or stressed. There’s a cycle: food affects our emotions and our emotions affect the food we choose to eat. At my heaviest, it wasn’t unusual for me to come home from work and have six slices of white bread as a snack. In my 20s, I once polished off an entire two-litre tub of ice-cream, and when I was at parties, barbecues or other social gatherings, I’d always go back for seconds.

My eating habits transformed

Now porridge is my favourite breakfast, topped with chopped pistachios, cranberries, dates, cinnamon and blueberry yoghurt. For my morning and afternoon snacks, I’ll usually have muesli bars, fruit or a small portion of chocolate. Opting for tomato or vegetable-based dishes are the best choices for staying on track during work lunches, especially as I eat out at least five times a week. Dinner with the family is varied to keep things interesting.
I say yes to the piece of cake

Now, if I have ice-cream cravings, I'll enjoy a few low-fat scoops and leave it at that. It’s so important to keep living life, even when you’re trying to lose or maintain your weight. Sure, you’re trying to be healthy, but you can’t give up socialising. I say yes to the piece of cake, yes to the glass of wine, yes to whatever is going, but I’ll exercise self-control. It’s slowly become a habit, which stops me from feeling deprived.

Plan for the road ahead

Staying organised keeps things under control when I’m racking up long and stressful hours at work. I store soups in my cupboard at work, buy frozen vegetables to microwave for a quick and filling snack and always have fresh fruit on hand, too. My 40th birthday was a huge motivator for staying slim. More than anything, I wanted a flat stomach. I wanted to wear a bikini and feel fantastic on the big day. I’m happy to say I did and felt proud!

Weight affects everything

The thing about weight loss is that it affects so many areas of your life. Women need to go on the journey for themselves, not for anyone else. We are likely to be critical towards ourselves, so learning to love ourselves is essential. I still see a bigger person when I look in the mirror, despite losing 25 kilos. It’s a work in progress, but I know I can do it. Women are great at supporting other women, so if you can find the right people to come along the journey with you, then they’ll provide fantastic encouragement.

Tara’s weight-loss tips
• Don’t feel guilt- just get back on track
• Store healthy foods in the places you spend most of your time.
• Choose to be around people that support you
23. **Ally Redding (Weight Watchers)**

“I lost weight and found a passion for stand-up comedy”

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“Losing weight and living a healthier life encouraged me to challenge myself and push myself to places where I never thought I’d go.”

Having overcome postnatal depression, Ally Redding lost an Impressive 30 kilos and developed a passion for stand-up comedy!
How long it took: 31wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Alison Greig, Ballina, New South Wales

I used to swing upside down from trees

I’m the type of person who loves giving things a go. In the last two years, I’ve tried everything from boxing and beach running to writing and stand-up comedy. I went roller-skating with my daughter for her birthday and, with my husband’s help, have even swung upside down from a tree! I’m happy and have a lot of fun, but it wasn’t always like this. I suffered postnatal depression after the births of my sons Max, now 12, and Charlie, now 8, who was diagnosed with cancer at the age of two.

2010 was going to be the year for me

I was miserable, stressed and, by the end of 2009, frightened by how low my mood had become. I tried to eat my way out of these difficult situations, but it only pushed me further down. I knew I couldn’t live like that anymore, so, despite feeling guilty, decided that 2010 was going to be the year for me.

Build up your exercise levels

A key factor for achieving my weight-loss goals was having time in the mornings to myself. I wanted to get up early before the household needed me so I could go for a walk to clear my head and squeeze in exercise. Two of my children have autism, so I need all the energy I can muster. As my fitness improved, I built up to doing Zumba and boxing and running with my husband, Poss, which are all great stress relievers. Now that I’m maintaining, my exercise
routine isn’t as intense, but I still love boxing, stretching and walking and running with my dog.

**Use the meetings**

Having a good support network also helped. I love talking about and sharing my experiences, so attending meetings suited me. Since I was new to the city, it was also a wonderful way to meet people. These days, I still go every week to weigh in and work as a meeting Team Member. Finally, because I wanted to eat well, I stocked up on cookbooks and vowed to try a healthy new recipe every week.

**My food habits have changed**

since I started doing the program. Before, my breakfast used to consist of coffee and up to six pieces of thick white toast with peanut butter and honey. I’d snack on a muffin for morning tea, then have a hot, stodgy takeaway for lunch. Dinner was frequently a large serving of pasta, and I’d finish off with creamed rice and ice-cream with topping and nuts for dessert.

**These days, my diet couldn’t be more different.**

I have quinoa porridge and berries for breakfast, followed by a skim milk cappuccino for morning tea. Instead of heavy lunches, I’ll have a large pumpkin and feta salad full of texture, colours and flavour. Dinner is always different, since I love experimenting with Weight Watchers recipes. I always bulk meals out with an extra serve of vegetables, too. The whole family is involved with meal planning, and Poss has even lost 17 kilos from all our positive changes.

**I knew I had something special to share**

In 2011, I was ready to shake up my life even further. By then, people were
used to my new size and lifestyle, so the compliments weren’t flowing as frequently and I needed to get that buzz from elsewhere. That’s when I decided to try stand-up comedy. I’d never done anything like it before, but due to my range of life experiences – both good and bad – I knew I had something special to share.

**I performed in front of 200 people**

I signed up for a course and by the end of it, had performed in front of 200 people! It was an unbelievable experience and, since then, I’ve attended open mic nights and taken advantage of more writing opportunities. It’s been a real confidence booster. Losing weight and living a healthier life encouraged me to challenge myself and push myself to places where I never thought I’d go.

**I’m even thinking about trapeze lessons**

My self-confidence has come from being successful, and now it’s filtered into so many areas of my life. For my upcoming birthday, I’m even thinking about taking trapeze lessons! I’d love to try surfing one day, too. I feel as though I’ve become a whole new person and have found my true self. I’m not 20 or 30 – I’m 43 and really like who I’m becoming.

**Lou’s Tips**

- Plan meals with the family
- Try using colourful veggies and salads to bulk up lunches
- Experiment with the weight watchers recipes
24. **Kaye Brooker (Weight Watchers)**

"After having 5 kids, it was time to focus on me"

Name | Kaye Brooker
--- | ---
Age | 45
Height | 1.63 m
Was | 75.9 kg
Lost | 17.7 kg
Weight | 58.2 kg

“My size 14 clothes weren’t fitting properly and I didn’t want to buy size 16! I decided to join Weight Watchers and use the meetings as my ‘me time’. ”

After having 5 kids and finding her size 14 clothes too snug, Kaye joined Weight Watchers and beat her emotional eating habits.
How long it took: 50 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Natasha Canning,
Bairnsdale, Victoria

No more excuses

My husband and I have five children ranging in age from 10 to 22, so it’s fair to say we’re kept pretty busy! Over the years, my weight crept on, and I could never manage to shed the excess kilos and keep them off for good. In fact, I’d often lose a few kilos, and then gain even more. I felt lethargic, was eating when stressed and not caring about myself. My mother-in-law had invited me to a Weight Watchers meeting, but I never took her up on the offer. By 2010, though, enough was enough. I realised that in order to be there for everyone in my family, I had to put myself first. Plus, my size-14 clothes weren’t fitting properly and I didn’t want to buy a size 16! I decided to join Weight Watchers and use the meetings as my ‘me time’. I was determined not to make any more excuses.

Small but frequent meals cut out that bloated feeling

I began my weight-loss journey by eating healthy, portion-controlled meals or snacks every few hours, and this helped me to no longer suffer that awful bloated feeling. Nowadays, I eat until I’m feeling satisfied, but not overly full. Emotional eating doesn’t factor into my life anymore either. These days when I get stressed, I know that food doesn’t have to be a part of my reaction. I just deal with whatever is bothering me. Once I chose to eat healthily, everything else fell into place. I felt more comfortable with my body, had more energy and enjoyed the feeling of success.
I still enjoy a treat

Before I joined Weight Watchers, I used to hop into bed every night to watch television with a bowl of chocolates and some Twisties. These days, I’ve switched that habit for eating a bowl of chopped fresh fruit and homemade muesli topped with yoghurt, and I love knowing that I still have something delicious to eat after dinner every night.

It works. Just stick with it

Losing weight has been such an enjoyable experience. Everyone says it, but if I can do it, then so can anyone. My advice? The program works, so you just have to stick to it. Lose weight and get healthy for yourself and make sure you really want it – if you do, then you’ll find it easy.
25. **Elizabeth Smith (Weight Watchers)**

“I hit goal weight for my son’s wedding”

Name  | Elizabeth Smith  
---|---
Age  | 57  
Height  | 1.52 m  
Was  | 73.8 kg  
Lost  | 19.3 kg  
Weight  | 54.4 kg  
  | 1/01/2012

“When my son announced he was getting married, it gave me the kick-start I needed to lose weight. I ended up hitting Goal a week before the wedding!”

She had always put her family first, but when 57-year-old Elizabeth Smith finally prioritised herself, she lost almost 20 kilos.
How long it took: 54.5 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Lynn Roberts, Bucklands Beach, NZ

I knew I had been gaining weight

It happened slowly, yet surely, over the years, but it wasn’t until my son announced he was getting married that I finally decided to do something about it. He really gave me the Kick-start I needed when he told me I had a year to make myself look my best before their big day. This once in-a-lifetime event was a big incentive to get into shape. My husband Wayne and I started walking 3.5km six days a week – yes, even in the extremely cold New Zealand winters! But I still drank and – even worse – ate whatever I liked. I was always rummaging through the pantry and my sweet tooth was out of control.

I fed my sweet tooth every day

Not a day went by when I didn’t have a biscuit or a big slice of cake for dessert. I’ve always loved baking and that fed my sweet tooth even more. It’s no wonder, then, that I only ended up losing a few kilos on my own. By that point, it was only six months until my son’s wedding and I thought I would never get there. Luckily for me, my son’s fiancée told me about her mother going to Weight Watchers, and she encouraged me to join as well. And you know what? I ended up hitting Goal a week before the wedding.

The main reason I hit goal weight

I was really disciplined with myself – something I hadn’t really been in the past. I was always putting other people’s needs before my own and spending much of
my time buzzing around after them, then neglecting myself as a result. I really threw myself into the Weight Watchers program. I never missed a meeting because I really felt that it was time for me. I also decided I wasn’t going to spend money doing the program, only to be told I’d put on weight. Because of that determination, I never ended up gaining.

**My emotions went up and down**

That was common for everyone else too while we were losing weight. The weekly meetings became so important – I needed that interaction with other people. Sometimes, I didn’t feel as motivated as I should have, or would have a bad day, but there was always someone to pick me up and help me get back on track. While I may not have felt motivated when I walked into my meetings, I always left them feeling really inspired and as if I’d learnt so much from the other members and my awesome Leader, Lynn.

**You can’t lose weight through food alone**

Exercise has a big part to play. Discovering I could change the way I looked and felt by changing my eating was exciting. Cutting down portion sizes and switching to more filling foods was not only simple, it was enjoyable. Nowadays, I eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and feel so much healthier for. I also cut back on alcohol, which wasn’t hard but made such a difference. Before doing the program, I only walked because I had to, not because I enjoyed it. But, as the weight came off, I stopped seeing it as a chore and began seeing it as something that could be pleasurable, that gave me more energy.
I’m now my husband’s hot wife

Wayne and I enjoy taking time out to walk together each week. They became my biggest inspiration and support system and are so proud of me and what I’ve achieved. My daughter was working as a flight attendant while I was losing weight, and every time she came home, she’d be joking around and saying, “Somebody ate my mummy – where has she gone?” Wayne has been fantastic as well, and now calls me his ‘hot wife’! It’s not like he was ever ashamed of me before or unsupportive of my size – it’s just that when he looks at me now, he has this huge smile on his face. It’s pretty neat, especially since we’ve been married for 37 years!

I’ll never rise above my goal weight

Looking back to when I was overweight, I can see how life is so much easier now. Take shopping, for example. I never wanted to go shopping before, as all I could fit into were really daggy clothes for people older than me. But now I love browsing around the shops, knowing that I can buy trendy things that are actually flattering. I’m happy to say I’ve maintained my weight for two and a half years. I’ve been able to look the way I want by attending regular meetings to refresh my knowledge and help motivate me. In turn, I enjoy being an incentive and motivator to other people who are striving to meet their Goal. I know I’ll never rise above my Goal weight as I have so much to be thankful for!

Elizabeth’s top weight-loss tips

• Don’t stop tracking. Stay accountable for your food!
• Do not use food as a reward.
• Reward yourself with a new dress or hairdo instead.
26. **Barbara Lowrie (Weight Watchers)**

"I’m loving life again, at 74"

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“I was so determined to get out of my size 18 clothes and be around to watch my three grandchildren grow up. ”

After a wake-up call from her doctor, Barbara Lowrie completely transformed her health by losing 30 kilos.

**How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Julia Baker and Colby Crouch, Caboolture, Queensland**
I was often too exhausted to eat

I’m in great shape for a woman of 74, but it hasn’t always been this way. For 12 years, I worked at Brisbane domestic airport. I was the manager of two gift shops and was always extremely busy taking care of 25 staff. There was a space of about 300 metres between each shop, so I got a lot of exercise running between them, but what I didn’t think about was food. While I would usually eat a bowl of porridge for breakfast each morning, I’d get so wrapped up in what I was doing at work that I’d look up at 4pm, realise I hadn’t eaten any lunch and wind up grabbing a quick (and often unhealthy) snack in the late afternoon. The hours I worked were also really long, which didn’t help. At one point, I was waking up at 2:30am, leaving my house at 3:30am, opening the shops at 4:30am, then working constantly until 10pm.

Everything changed overnight

I received a telephone call from my doctor one afternoon. I was at work, but he told me to come in that very same day. Of course I was scared and, when I arrived, he told me I had a cholesterol reading of 8.7 and that I needed to get the extra weight off quick smart – or else I was going to have a stroke or heart attack. He advised me to join Weight Watchers (and quickly), as he and his wife had both done the program with great success. So I did and loved it from the start.

My eating patterns have completely changed

Skipping meals and reaching for easy options were what got me in the past – but not anymore. Tracking everything has made it really easy to get myself into a good, healthy routine. Every week after my meeting, I make a list of the
ingredients I need to buy for the week’s cooking and go pick them up. That way, I have no excuses. I’ve always been an energetic and active person, so my exercise habits haven’t changed too much since starting Weight Watchers. Now that I’m retired, I just go for a 40-minute walk instead of walking between my shops each day. I write down what I’m going to eat every morning and stick to it.

**You need variety to prevent boredom**

The kinds of foods I’m eating now are tasty and healthy. My husband and I have our own market garden, so all our vegetables are beautifully fresh. I have lettuce, tomatoes, leeks, silverbeet and cucumbers growing at the moment and, when I put them on my plate, I know I’m getting quality food. I also make sure I include a protein – like chicken, fish or beef – with my lunch and dinner, as well as four or five eggs each week and lots of fruit. I think you need variety in what you’re eating to prevent boredom. You also need food to look good, so you’ll want to eat it.

**I like a sweet treat occasionally**

My little granddaughter, Charlie, and I both love the Weight Watchers jellies. It’s funny, but my family has actually benefitted from my doing the program as well. Every time my kids come over for dinner, they get a Weight Watchers meal. They don’t always know they’re eating one, but they always love it. My daughter-in-law often jokes that she’s going to move in with me permanently, since she always gets such a good feed at my house!
Amazingly, I’m now a size 8

It took me a long time to reach Goal and, as you can imagine, I was ecstatic when I finally got there! I was so determined to get out of my size 18 clothes, get healthy for myself and my kids and be around to watch my three grandchildren grow up that it kept me going all through that time – and still keeps me going today. My cholesterol levels have fallen to 3.9. I would never go back to how I was before now.

Just get started

That’s my advice to people who want to lose weight. And don’t give up once you have. Walking through that door to your Weight Watchers meeting is the biggest thing you can do for yourself. I always encourage people to stay for the meetings as well. Some people just come and get weighed, then leave, but I think they’re missing the most important part. The meeting and everything that gets said there is why I still keep going – even though I’ve reached Goal. I go to help people who may be struggling, but I also go for myself, as there’s always something new to learn, even if it’s just a delicious new recipe. I get great support from my meetings, my family and my friends, and feel great happiness from within now, too. Life really is good.

Barbara’s weight-loss tips

- Write a meal plan ahead of time and stick to it
- Freeze healthy foods and sauces for busier times
- Just get started!
27. **Karen McCool (Weight Watchers)**

"My colleagues call me the amazing shrinking woman"

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“The only thing I had to give up was the voice inside telling me it was too difficult. ”

**My story**

Ever since I was 15, my weight has been up and down. Nothing really worked. I used to think,” I’ve got this event coming up. I must lose weight.” I just didn’t
consider a lifestyle change. I had to stop thinking I could diet and go back to eating the same way.

My turning point

Three years ago, my mum passed away and it just hit me. I’d got to 106kg and was so unhealthy. I thought, “I can’t do this to my body anymore.” I was going to have my stomach banded. I even booked in. Then I found out about all the problems people have and thought, “That’s not for me.” The next morning I joined Weight Watchers and I’ve never looked back.

How I lost it

Everything was right this time. My leader Josie Feltrin made me realise that losing weight isn’t about dieting; you have to change the way you think about food. I’d done programs where it was about eating their food. In the real world, that doesn’t work – you’ve got to work with normal, everyday food.

My whole life changed

My tastes have changed. I didn’t like fruit- I ate the occasional apple but now I love all fruit. I didn’t like fish but I have it three times a week. I don’t know if that’s a mental thing but my body now craves different foods. I obviously crave sugary things now and again- I’m human after all- but I mostly want to eat healthy food. My daughter watches what I eat and do you know what? She’s lost 3kg!

The new me

I’d sit and eat junk all day, but now i exercise all the time. I walk 2-3 times a
week and go to the gym five times a week. I wake up and feel my hips and think, “I’m thin!” I get a high from it every morning.

My secret

I have so much more confidence than ever before. You have to believe you can do it. You can’t start thinking “this is too hard. I can’t do it.” Because negative self-talk doesn’t help. I used to go on my walks every morning and visualise myself standing out the front of my meeting getting to goal weight. So visualise, visualise, visualise- it works!
28. **Natasha Guarino (Weight Watchers)**

"I lost 19kgs for my wedding"

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“I've got a video clip from my wedding of my husband saying, 'How beautiful does my wife look?'”

When Natasha Guarino got engaged to the love of her life, she decided to give herself the ultimate wedding gift – health. But she had no idea how many other great things would come her way.
A rude awakening

When Jess proposed to me, I was over the moon. I decided I'd get in shape for our wedding day and started exercising every day. After three weeks, I'd only lost 400gm and thought "It can't be this hard!" That day I happened to run into an old friend who mentioned she was a Weight Watchers leader and gave me some details. I went online and checked my BMI and discovered I was obese – I couldn't believe it. I joined Weight Watchers immediately.

Undoing the damage

My weight crept up on me over time. I had been working overseas and travelling a lot for work, where I'd eat at restaurants for six weeks straight. When I got home, I really got into Masterchef and my partner and I started cooking extravagant feasts. But once I started Weight Watchers in January 2011, I realised that my portions were way too big. We'd also enjoy one or two bottles of wine a night, as well as cheese – I had no concept of "sometimes foods".

Following the Weight Watchers philosophy clicked instantly

I bought all the Weight Watchers cookbooks and my husband, who's the chef in our house, happily agreed to use them. He would help me pick recipes that fit my ProPoints budget for the meal, or we would adjust the recipes slightly if I needed to drop my ProPoints a bit lower. I swapped my wines for small glasses of Jewel Yellow, because I knew it was only one ProPoint for a small glass.

A perfect day in every way

It took me eight months to achieve Goal, which was two months before my
wedding day – I was ecstatic. The only problem was that I had ordered a size 12 dress, when I actually needed a 10! When they opened the doors and I was standing there ready to walk down the aisle, I heard an audible gasp from everyone. The last time a lot of people saw me I was 80kg or 90kg and I was right on 70kg that night. I've got a video clip of Jess saying, 'How beautiful does my wife look?'

A bit of bridal advice
I felt fantastic on the night, but I must admit, I would have saved myself a lot of hassle if I'd just gotten in shape earlier. I would highly recommend to anyone not to leave weight loss until six months before your wedding! I had myself on a very strict exercise routine, which sometimes added to the stress of planning the wedding.

Taking to the Zumba stage
I started doing Zumba classes three times a week – I loved the fact it was dancing, but also got me in shape. When I first tried them, I had to stop halfway and use my asthma puffer, but the more I did it, the more I got hooked and when the instructor said she couldn't do it anymore, I put up my hand to take over. I love teaching – it's so different to participating in the class. You've got to keep your fitness levels high so you can go harder than the rest of the class and really exaggerate the moves, while talking non-stop. I've also signed up to do a Zumba Gold course, which will allow me to teach seniors and disabled people – I think that will be fantastic.
New friends along the way

Not only has Weight Watchers made me feel fantastic, but it's also introduced me to some amazing people. I go walking with one friend all the time, jogging every Saturday with another and there's a group of us who all go swimming together. Instead of sitting and drinking an afternoon away, I've found healthy, active ways to socialise. It's opened up a whole new way of life for me.
29.  Dane Squance (Weight Watchers)

“I dropped 60 kilos for my wedding”

Name: Dane Squance
Age: 33
Height: 1.86 m
Was: 149.2 kg
Lost: 61.1 kg
Weight: 88.1 kg

“Tipping the scales at 149 kilos became a turning point for Dane Squance, who lost half his body weight for the big day.”

“I dropped 60 kilos for my wedding”

I joined Weight Watchers with my now-wife Alyssa in July last year to lose weight for our wedding. I thought it would be a good way to kick start a healthy lifestyle – not just for the big day, but for the rest of our lives, too. I’m so proud
of what we’ve achieved: I lost more than 60 kilos and Alyssa lost about 40 kilos. I’ll never forget the day I hit my Goal weight; I felt as though I could achieve anything! So many parts of my life have changed since then. For one, I really enjoy working out. I was never a fitness fan before, but now I exercise up to six days a week. That’s in addition to my sessions with a personal trainer.

Our dog, Bella, gets to go for lots of walks, too!

My outlook on health has shifted massively – I have a can-do attitude and have stopped worrying about other people’s opinions. I’m happy in my own skin and my confidence levels have skyrocketed. I also love being able to buy clothes off the rack.

I don’t shy away from celebrations or social events anymore – there’s no deprivation with this program. I have the freedom to achieve anything I want – and that’s a great feeling.
30. Alicia White (Weight Watchers)

"I lost 10kgs for my wedding"

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“After all the hard work, I was thrilled to be in shape, confident and happy for our big day.”

Alicia White, 28, made exercise a priority and lost 9.4 kilos in the process.
How long it took: 26 wks

How she did it Weight Watchers meetings with Rosanna Mogg, Newington, NSW

I wanted to look and feel my absolute best on my wedding day

It was second time lucky for me and Weight Watchers. The first time around, I didn’t reach Goal and the kilos eventually crept back on. When I met the man of my dreams (and future husband), Adam, I became comfortable and content, and we dined out regularly. But when I saw the photos from our engagement party, I realised how much weight I’d gained. I wasn’t happy, especially because I wanted to look and feel my absolute best on our wedding day.

Planning helped me make better choices

Each week, I’d plan and shop for meals and snacks. This helped me make healthier choices, without blowing my ProPoints budget. Instead of having a mini packet of Shapes for a snack, I’d eat a banana and yoghurt. In the past, we used to have easy meals like pasta bakes and frozen lasagne. Nowadays, I prepare meat and salad or vegetables, or homemade vegetable pizza using Lebanese bread. My body doesn’t cry out for the same foods anymore, either. I no longer want fried, fatty fish and chips – I’d rather have fish and salad! I steer clear of heavy pasta dishes when eating out, too, and prefer choosing a lighter option with fresh ingredients.

I make exercise a priority

Walking and running outdoors are my favourite ways to exercise. They’re free, allow me to get fresh air and I can clock up my progress on the RunKeeper app
on my phone. When I make exercise a priority in my life, I feel so much happier.

I wore a size 10 dress to my hen’s party

Since doing Weight Watchers, one of my most vivid memories is buying a size 10 dress for my hen’s party. I had three great outfits to choose from, whereas in the past I would’ve tried on eight and only one would’ve suited my figure. My wedding dress fitting was also a brilliant experience because the dressmaker had to take it in so much! After all the hard work, I was thrilled to be in shape, confident and happy for our big day.
31. Mary Argese (Weight Watchers)

"At 51, I finally discovered my love of exercise"

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“I’m the healthiest, strongest and fittest I’ve ever been and I’m loving it!”

For single working mum of four Mary Argese, Meetings provided the support she needed to slim down.
How long it took: 62 wks

How she did it Weight Watchers meetings with Susan Connaughton,
Karrinyup, Western Australia

My ‘AHA!’ moment was at my niece’s 18th birthday party

My ‘Aha!’ moment, when I realised I had to get serious about losing weight, took place on my niece’s 18th birthday. I was getting dressed for her party, but nothing fit. I ended up wearing a big top and the zip of my pants was held together by a safety pin. I felt awful. Around this time, I was also getting photos taken for my business and didn’t like what I saw. The photos just didn’t fit with who I was – a business and life coach. I wanted my body to fit my headspace. Another motivation for slimming down was to be a healthy role model to my four teenage daughters. I wanted to influence them, not by what I said, but by what I did.

We all need support”

As a coach, my role is to support clients, and Weight Watchers meetings became invaluable support for me, especially as a single mum. My advice is to attend meetings, stay the full duration and ask for support from others in your group – you’ll get so much more out of it than if you just weigh in and leave.

I’ve learnt to tell the difference between actual hunger and emotional eating”

Before Weight Watchers my diet was all over the place. Now, I eat regular, nutritious meals and snacks, and have learnt to tell the difference between actual hunger and eating that is driven by emotions or tiredness. I’m also really
conscious of my portion sizes, eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and include lean and filling protein in every meal. Even my snacks contain protein, for example, I’ll pair some crackers with a dollop of ricotta or cottage cheese.

**Boxing helps tone me up**

I’ve also discovered a love of exercise. I started out doing dancing and boxing sessions twice a week, but now I just box. It’s an intense workout that helps tone me up and I love the social aspect. I’m the healthiest, strongest and fittest I’ve ever been and I’m loving it!
32. Michelle Shaw (Weight Watchers)

"I love playing footy with my kids!"

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“ I’m fit, happy and healthy. My kids love it because I’m always outdoors kicking the footy with them. I haven’t lost a large amount of weight, but it’s made a huge difference in my life. ”

A sporting injury may have contributed to Michelle Shaw’s weight gain, but it didn’t stop her from losing 11.5 kilos!
How long it took: 24 wks

How she did it Weight Watchers meetings with Kisane Appleby,
Springwood, QLD

My clothes didn’t fit!

It didn’t fit. The dress I’d worn to my friend’s 30th the previous year didn’t fit. I couldn’t even get it up over my hips. Maybe I’d shrunk it in the wash, I told myself. But then I tried on another dress and that didn’t fit either. It clearly wasn’t a shrinking clothes problem – I’d grown! My weight had crept on after having three kids in three years, coupled with a hamstring and knee injury that prevented me from being active. I relied on food for comfort and turned to chocolate to feel better about the situation. Once my clothes stopped fitting, I knew I had to do something about those extra kilos. Previously, my mum had done the Weight Watchers program with great results, so we decided to join up and attend meetings together. It was really nice because we could share food and exercise ideas and keep an eye on each other. Mum’s lost about 20 kilos so far and is on her way to Goal. To keep myself on track and to support her, I still attend meetings weekly. It also helps me stay in the loop with weight-loss tips.

I use my cookbooks every day

In the past, I was a pretty basic cook who stuck to classics like meat and three veg or spaghetti, although I used to eat way more than the recommended serving size. Once I bought the Weight Watchers cookbooks, I began experimenting with different ingredients and cooking styles. I started writing up a seven-day
menu plan and the grocery shopping was based around that, rather than just throwing together random ingredients at the last minute. This method works well because my husband and kids can eat everything I make, too. I’ve also discovered I enjoy so many more foods than I previously thought I did, such as lamb, seafood and cottage cheese. I used to gag at the sight of cottage cheese, but my Leader encouraged me to try it with avocado and tomato on toast and now I absolutely love it. In fact, it’s my weekly breakfast treat! Sometimes I even have cottage cheese on crisp bread to help fight my afternoon cravings. It’s amazing how much my tastes have changed over time. I also use the iPhone app to help me make healthy choices when I’m dining out. It’s the best! If I get a bit too relaxed with my food intake, then it’s also great for recipe ideas and food tips.

My fitness has really improved
Before Weight Watchers my diet was all over the place. Now, I eat regular, nutritious meals and snacks, and have learnt to tell the difference between actual hunger and eating that is driven by emotions or tiredness. I’m also really conscious of my portion sizes, eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and include lean and filling protein in every meal. Even my snacks contain protein, for example, I’ll pair some crackers with a dollop of ricotta or cottage cheese.

My kids love that I can kick the footy with them
These days, I’m fit, happy and healthy. My kids love it because I’m always outdoors kicking the footy with them. I haven’t lost a large amount of weight, but it’s made a huge difference in my life, especially with my fitness. Each week, I do a personal training session, run 12 kilometres in total and play
netball. I’m even fit enough to play two games in a row! I also have a gym membership, so attend classes whenever I can. Before Weight Watchers, I was happy to blend into the crowd; I didn’t want to stand out. Now, I make more of an effort with make-up and I love clothes shopping. Since dropping from a size 14 to an eight, I’ve been able to find clothes that look fantastic on me. What’s in my wardrobe has changed, too. I never used to wear jeans because I hated how they looked on me. Nowadays, I own a few pairs and cannot believe how well they fit. My advice is to stick with your journey, ask questions and get support. Don’t be scared of a little weight gain now and then. It’s not the end of the world and many factors can contribute to it. Just stay focused and trust that the program works – because it does.

On the Town

• “I celebrated my 30th birthday during my second week of doing the Weight Watchers program. I used the 49 bonus ProPoints allowance to enjoy cocktails and canapés with everyone at my party and I still lost 1.7 kilos that week! Now I dip into them all the time; they really come in handy.”
33. **Melissa Klinker (Weight Watchers)**

“I’m half the woman I used to be”

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“I was sick of being big, sick of being self-conscious, sick of my back and legs constantly aching and sick of feeling as if I was being judged. I went to my first meeting and never looked back.”
Having once weighed in at 126 kilos, an unexpected love of running helped change Melissa Klinker’s life forever.

**How long it took: 69 wks How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Jenny Baker, Campbelltown, NSW**

**I’d been gaining wait for years**

I started gaining weight after the birth of my now 19-year-old daughter. I went back to work fulltime when she was three months old, and the pressures of juggling a job and taking care of my baby meant that I had no spare time. Or, maybe more accurately, I didn’t make time for myself. It never occurred to me to do any kind of exercise and I ate whatever I felt like. My portion sizes were getting bigger and bigger, and the kind of foods I chose to put in my mouth were all wrong from a nutritional point of view.

**I knew I was overweight**

I had the attitude that others should accept me as I was, and if they didn’t, then bad luck to them. But it gradually became harder and harder to have that attitude because I kept finding myself sitting on the sidelines of life. Whenever we went to the beach as a family, my daughter and my husband would run into the waves, while I would stay behind on the sand, covered in head-to-toe clothing because I wasn’t game enough to strip down to a swimsuit, watching them having a great time. I felt ashamed of how I looked and was also afraid I was embarrassing them, which wasn’t a good feeling.

**My husband persuaded me to do something**

He’d been nagging me for years to get healthier, but I never listened. Finally, he
dragged me kicking and screaming down to the Western Districts Joggers and Harriers club. At the time, I was struggling to even move and the only jogging I had done had been in the pitch black of night so no-one else could see me. So, as you can imagine, running with the club was really hard at first. But what kept me motivated to push myself were the older club members – some were in their 70s and 80s – who were able to run rings around me, literally! They proved to be such an inspiration and most definitely didn’t let their age hold them back.

**I had to change my diet**

Although the jogging club was slowly helping improve my fitness, I knew I also had to change my diet. It was then that my husband encouraged me to join Weight Watchers. I’d actually done the program before, but it hadn’t worked as I never stuck with it, thinking I could do it on my own. This time, though, I’d had enough. I was sick of being big, sick of being self-conscious about my size, sick of my back and legs constantly aching and sick of feeling as if I was being judged. I went to my first meeting and never looked back.

**I’ve learned self control**

The most important thing I’ve learnt on the program is self-control – with eating, exercise and life in general. My meals weren’t always unhealthy, but the portion sizes were! I used to start the day with a good breakfast, but then my meals would get bigger as the day progressed. Plus, if someone offered cake or biscuits, I’d eat them without a second thought. It was only when I started tracking that I realised how bad my eating habits were.
I now eat for health and nutrition

These days, I read food labels and weigh everything before I start cooking. I eat a filling breakfast of porridge before work, then nibble on something hot, like an English breakfast muffin, for my morning snack. Lunch is usually a soup or sandwich, and I never forget to eat my yoghurt with plenty of fresh fruit. Dinner is often something simple, like meat and vegetables, which is tasty and easy to prepare after a long day at work. I never deprive myself, though, and always enjoy a takeaway on Saturday. Plus, if someone brings in cake or there are biscuits on offer at work, I’ll still enjoy a piece – I definitely don’t miss out.

My fitness has improved out of sight

All thanks to the jogging club and all the supportive people I met there. I started slowly at first, alternating between walking and jogging. I was so determined to work my way up to running, though, and when I finally did, everyone at the club was so proud of me. I continued to up the ante and set myself further fitness challenges, which has been a great incentive to stay in shape. I now run five kilometres six mornings a week, and would love to compete in a half marathon and run the six-foot track in Katoomba later this year. The sky’s the limit now!

My fitness has improved out of sight

It’s sometimes hard to believe that only three years ago, I wasn’t sure if I was going to live beyond 50. Now, I’m so full of energy and so much happier than the old Melissa ever was. Being able to join in the fun is fantastic. I’m pleased to say that I no longer sit back and watch everyone else enjoy life, since I’m living my own life to the full.
Her weight loss tips

- Join a sports or fitness club or group
- Eat a filling breakfast
- Track your food choices
34. **Anita Jurd (Weight Watchers)**

Anita Jurd - 2013 Slimmer of the Year

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“The most significant thing that I have achieved whilst losing 50kg, is that I have found myself. I know the person that stares back at me in the mirror and I like her!”

**How long it took:** 53 wks

**How she did it:** Weight Watchers Meetings Alison Redding and Mary Borg.
Success with Weight Watchers

The most significant thing that I have achieved whilst losing 50kg, is that I have found myself. I know the person that stares back at me in the mirror and I like her!

I love not getting tired on a normal day, as I used to. But nothing will compare to the knowledge that I am a good mother, a good person, a happy person. I worked my butt off mentally and physically to get here, and wish I had done so sooner as the program is so easy to live by!

Trigger moment

I wasn't being the mother I wanted, always tired and lethargic, struggling to play with my children. Now they try to keep up with me! Losing weight forced me to realise that I wasn't unhappy because I was obese; I was obese because I was unhappy. Carrying the weight was carrying a shield from facing the actual problems that I had in my life. I wake up every day and want to get up. I'm living, no longer surviving!

Being a Weight Watchers lifetime member, having lost 17kg in 2003, I knew that the program works for me, unlike the few others I had tried since my weight started fluctuating again in 2005. I gained a monstrous 40kg in my first pregnancy and at 6 months post partum from my second son I tipped the scales at 117kg. I had honestly tried to be healthier in my second pregnancy but after his birth I was so busy caring for my family that I didn't make my own health a priority. Each day I knew that I was obese. I felt stressed, lethargic, anxious,
unhappy and simply terrible about myself. My self esteem and confidence plummeted in all aspects of my life. This was what I imagined to be the happiest time of my life! Yet, it was anything but. Ultimately, I didn't recognise the person staring back at me in the mirror. I needed to change for good.

**Biggest regret**

My biggest regret is undoubtedly becoming a professional photo dodger! I truly wish I had more photographs with my beautiful babies and also at my step sister’s wedding. I was so scared of "ruining" photographs that I didn't want to be in them. I look back now and only see joy and love, I wish I had realised that my obesity wasn't a hindrance in that sense.

**Lifestyle changes**

My behaviour towards food and exercise has done a total 180! I was a couch potato that was reluctant to get off the lounge to make dinner! Now I walk with my boys in the double pram on a daily basis and make time for the gym 2-3 times a week.

Food awareness was most important. I knew I was doing no exercise, but was under the illusion that as I wasn't devouring a block of chocolate a day that I wasn't eating poorly! I was eating foods that were fine - my eating habits were poor. I'd eat nothing all day then consume 3 times my daily ProPoints budget in the evening.

**Affect on others lives**

I'm so very blessed to have had a fabulous support system of family and friends.
throughout my weight loss journey. I became a single parent three months into my weight loss journey and it took all of my willpower to continue. I made this decision after my loving Dad pointed out to me how well I had done in those three months and urged me to continue and reach my goals. I will always be grateful to him for giving me the encouraging words when I needed them most. Oddly, my biggest support was my ex-fiancé. I was scared to invest in myself, that I may fail, and it would be a waste of time and money. He pushed me to make myself and my health a priority. I realised shortly afterwards that looking after myself was looking after my family too.
35. **Kaitlyn Dunstone (Weight Watchers)**

Kaitlyn Dunstone - 2013 VIC Healthy Life Awards State Winner

Name: Kaitlyn Dunstone  
Age: 20  
Height: 1.69 m  
Was: 117 kg  
Lost: 39 kg  
Weight: 66 kg

“ At eighteen years old I had a list of health concerns that was nearly as big as I was. If I didn’t make the decision to take control of my life, I was facing a very uncertain future. ”
How long it took: 104 weeks

How she did it: Weight Watchers Meetings with Marilyn Freestone at Ballarat Weight Watchers Centre

Success with Weight Watchers

Before I lost weight the thought of being able to run seemed impossible. I would try but feel awkward and exhausted within seconds. After noticing that my fitness was improving through other exercise I decided to try a start to run program that had been discussed by others in my meeting. Within a couple of months I went from barely being able to run down my driveway to being able to run 2km. Now I am working towards participating in a fun run later this year, something I never would have considered two years ago!

Trigger moment

At eighteen years old I had a list of health concerns that was nearly as big as I was. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, fatty liver and rapid pulse meant that if I didn’t make the decision to take control of my life, I was facing a very uncertain future. Starting university made me realise that I was no longer a child and that I couldn’t continue to expect others to take the blame for my health. It was time for me to take charge and give myself the future that I knew I deserved.

Biggest regret

When I was eleven I weighed more than I do now, so I missed out being a healthy and confident teenager. I have been overweight for as long as I can remember. As a child I was tall and always stood a head and shoulder above my
peers, but I wasn’t just tall I was big! I can remember being weighed at primary school and seeing 79kg on the screen, that moment was devastating because I knew then that I was at least 20-30kg heavier than the rest of my friends. Unfortunately when I stopped growing taller my weight didn’t stop and throughout high school I battled my weight endlessly. My size prevented me from being comfortable to do the things my friends enjoyed doing like shopping trips, partying and team sports, I was constantly aware of others opinions of me when really I should have been enjoying the most carefree years of my life.

**Lifestyle changes**

I love eating but I’ve decided no food is good or bad it’s just food! I know I can eat anything; it’s just how much I eat and how often that matters. It’s easy to label food as good and bad but by doing this I found that rather than enjoying my treats I used to end up feeling guilty. Since joining Weight Watchers a week hasn’t gone by without me eating a bag of chips or a chocolate bar but instead of eating a big bag or a block I enjoy a portioned controlled size. My attitude to exercise has done a back flip, as a youngster I hated it with a vengeance, I found it difficult and I was embarrassed to be seen in sportswear so I avoided it like the plague. When I started Weight Watchers I drew inspiration from other members to try many different types of exercise, and surprisingly I have found that I now enjoy it! I love challenges and have given up worrying about what others think of me when I’m trying. I know that as long as I’m doing my best then it is good enough for me!

**Affect on others lives**

The day I joined Weight Watchers I had next to no confidence, my leader
previous HLA winner Ann told me “I know you will be able to do this”, that little comment has stuck with me for the entire length of my journey. Even though Ann is no longer my leader she continues to encourage me through my social networks. My current leader Marilyn has also been a major support on my way to success by providing a wealth of inspiration. I know that even if I have had a less than perfect week my weight watchers family both in meeting and online will give me the everyday strength to carry on.
36. **Amy Kaesler (Weight Watchers)**

Amy Kaesler - 2013 SA Healthy Life Awards Finalist

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“At age 26, I was overweight and suffered a major stroke. This gave me a major wakeup call to lose weight. I have since had 5 children and reached my goal weight after every child.”
How long it took: 13 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers Meetings with Melissa Leigh-Cox

Success with Weight Watchers
I always wanted a large family. My doctor advised me that I would never be able to have more children being overweight for the risk of having another stroke. Because of Weight Watchers, my dream became a reality!

Trigger moment
At age 26, I was overweight and suffered a major stroke. Luckily due to my age I made a full recovery. This gave me a major wake-up call and inspired me to lose weight. I have since had 5 children and have gone back to Weight Watchers every time and have got to goal after every child. My doctor advised me that my chances of having another stroke have dropped dramatically.

Biggest regret
I felt awful in my wedding dress. I now wish I had joined Weight Watchers earlier and looked slim on my wedding day. My own children don't even recognise me in my wedding photos.

Lifestyle changes
I now get excited to try new recipes to see how much I can change them to give myself more ProPoints to spend throughout the day. I have changed so many bad habits by using my Weight Watchers pedometer. I now challenge myself to see how many activity ProPoints I can earn.
Affect on others lives

I met another member who was in a very similar position as me. We both had children the same age. She is now a lifelong friend and encourages me every day. She messages me, as I do her to keep motivated and on track. Since joining Weight Watchers, my mother has now joined and is nearly at her goal. Watching her daughter have a stroke and then going on to have 5 children and get to goal every time, has inspired her to lose weight so she doesn't suffer the same fate.
37. **Laura Morris (Weight Watchers)**

Laura Morris - 2013 WA Healthy Life Awards Finalist

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“I lost 4 friends and family to illnesses including cancer and diabetes. It was a big wake-up call - these were illnesses I was at increased risk of at my weight.”
How long it took: 31 wks

How she did it: WW Meetings with Michelle Gaynor at Joondalup Family Centre

Success with Weight Watchers

I think my biggest achievement relates to my mental health. Since the start of my journey, I have been the most mentally well I have ever been since the London bombings. I am now able to predict my "bad" days and plan extra runs. And I now have a support network of Weight Watchers friends, all just around the corner, to call on if I need a cup of tea and a natter. Gone are the days when a doughnut served as a poor substitute for real-life solutions to problems. Now I tackle challenges head-on, knowing I am worth the effort and that there are people who love me in my corner.

Trigger moment

I was fat for the whole of my 20s. It started when I was at university and miserable - comfort eating was definitely my thing and it only got worse after I was involved in the London terrorist bombing in 2005. In 2010 my partner and I emigrated to Australia. Before leaving I lost a couple of stone with Weight Watchers in the UK and loved the results. However, it all fell apart when we arrived in Perth and the realities of being so very far from home hit me. Just weeks after we arrived my beloved grandfather. In the following four months I lost another four friends and family to illnesses including cancer and diabetes. It was a big wake-up call - these were illnesses I was at much increased risk of at my weight. I didn't want to be fat and 30, and Grandad certainly wouldn't have liked it.
**Biggest regret**

Your 20s is supposed to be the time you go out and party, not caring what anyone thinks of you. That's hard when you are a size 16 with F-cup boobs and post-traumatic stress disorder. My mental health, it turns out, was hugely affected by my lack of confidence, much of which stemmed from my weight issues - I felt like I didn't deserve to be alive. If I had known then how much proper exercise would improve my state of mind, I reckon I'd have pulled out of my illness much more quickly. I truly regret having wasted so much time feeling like I wasn't worth the effort to lose the weight. It was 10 years too many, a third of my life full of regrets and lost moments.

**Lifestyle changes**

My behaviours in relation to food and exercise have changed completely. I no longer see exercise as something to dread and be scared of. Exercise has now become my panacea for a bad day, it helps give me time to sort out what's going on in my head in a positive way, rather than sitting in front of the television munching, or cooping myself up in bed, hiding away from the world. As for food, well, I learnt to cook! I used to rely on packaged food entirely, but learning to cook on the plan has changed my life forever, giving me a wonderful new hobby I had never considered.

**Affect on others lives**

My biggest support has been my partner. He embraced my journey wholeheartedly and encouraged me every step of the way. He has helped me plan meals, pour over the fabulous Weight Watchers cookbooks and shop and cook. After seeing my success, my mother and step-father have become Weight
Watchers Online members too! Having arrived in Australia knowing only a handful of people, through my Weight Watchers meetings I've met a whole new set of friends who have become an integral part of my life, so much so 11 members attended my recent 30th birthday celebrations, where I wore a size 10 dress for the first time in my life! None of this would have been possible without my incredible leader. She is the embodiment of living Everyday Strong and her unstinting belief in my ability to reach my goal has helped give me my confidence back.
38. **Shellie Foster (Weight Watchers)**

Shellie Foster - 2013 QLD Healthy Life Awards State Winner

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“I feel comfortable in my skin and don’t feel like others are judging me on my weight anymore. Recently we went to a water park; I spent the day in a bikini! No more sitting on the sidelines for me.”

**How long it took:** 73 wks

**How she did it:** Weight Watchers Meetings with Kyla Thoms.
Success with Weight Watchers

The health benefits have been amazing. I have been able to drop my antidepressants, lowered my cholesterol and after having Gestational Diabetes and a family history I'm no longer at risk of developing this. I was obese and I'm now in the healthy weight range.

The most significant change that I see and that others have noticed is my love for life and the confidence that I now have. I feel comfortable in my skin and don’t feel like others are judging me on my weight anymore. Recently we went to a water park; I spent the day in a bikini! No more sitting on the sidelines for me.

I used to set goals on materialistic objects, now they are fitness goals. We are going to the States this year, top of my list, to hike Yosemite Park and ride a bike in Central Park. My life is so different now. Overall, I have become more adventurous and love trying new things.

Trigger moment

It was not long after my Son's birth. I was in a very dark place and my life was spiralling out of control. I was a new Mum; this should have been the happiest part of my life. Instead I felt a failure and too embarrassed to be honest with myself friends and family. I was suffering from Severe Postnatal Depression and had lost my zest for life and was at an all time low when I announced to my Husband that he could leave and take our Baby with him! In that week I also noticed I had shortness of breath from walking up stairs in our home. My epiphany was seeing a photo, was that really me? Tears streaming down my
face I realised I needed to get strong and healthy for myself, and I now had a family to live for.

**Biggest regret**

Whilst attending a Wedding in Fiji we were given the opportunity to go out on a snorkelling tour. Something I've always wanted to see, beautiful reefs, coral and exotic fish! My insecurities got the better of me. I was scared that I wouldn’t be able to breathe properly. I struggled with just walking round, how was I going to breathe thru a snorkel? I was also embarrassed to be seen in my swimmers, especially in front of a boatful of people that we knew and complete strangers. Surely they would be feeling sorry for my Husband for having such an overweight wife and judging me on my appearance. Not only did I miss out, but so did my Husband as he didn’t want to go without me. Guilt set in so we stayed behind and I consoled myself the only way I knew how, with wine and hot chips. I look back at this as a learning curve and try not to beat myself up for what I have missed out on, but what I can do now and experience due to my new love of life. It’s now me yelling, "Come on, let’s go to the beach!"

**Lifestyle changes**

I value my food, eat slower and savour the taste. I weigh up my options, "What’s going to keep me full and satisfied?" I could have that second helping or would some fruit and yoghurt curb my hunger and make me stronger for my choice. Don’t get me wrong sometimes I do have that dessert or splurge on a meal out, but that’s what I love about the program, its fail proof and you can have your cake and eat it too. I love how I feel from eating filling and healthy foods, I’m never hungry and I now eat to live, not live to eat.
I also enjoy running. I never thought these words would ever come out of my mouth. I have recently completed The Mothers Day Classic 4km run and I’m currently training for the Gold Coast 10km run. I now get excited about exercise. Every Sunday morning is "me time." I go for a 13km run/walk thru our beautiful Hinterland and beaches. I used to feel guilty about having this time but it’s made me a better mum, wife and so much happier.

Affect on others lives

My Husband has been such an amazing support—encouraging me and giving me a hug after each weigh in, some were for the good tears and some were to help wipe up the sad and looking after our son so I could exercise and attend meetings. I only have to look at my boy who inspires me to keep going. I love the fact that I can now fit down a slippery slide with him! Laughing as we run around a park together is music to me and the motivation I need to keep going. My leader Kyla kept me focused. I was fortunate enough to attend the 2012 HLA Workshop with her. I went home and made a contract with myself. Reach goal, be in the Weight Watchers magazine, and enter the Healthy Life Awards. I started this venture for myself and never imagined that I could actually inspire others.
Running head: A Feminist analysis of discursive practices in 'success stories' in Australian weight loss centres

39. **Raun Sutton (Weight Watchers)**

Raun Sutton - 2012 Slimmer of the Year

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“I found the me that I had hidden away under the weight. I love life again and feel fitter, stronger and healthier than ever before.”

Raun Sutton from WA is our first ever male Slimmer of the Year!

**Weighing in at 120kgs I knew I had to do something**

I had what I call a 'shatter moment' while walking to work. I was out of breath, perspiring, aching and feeling truly sad about my condition. I caught my
reflection in a window and I realised I had to change my lifestyle. I spoke to a work colleague who told me all about Weight Watchers and how it helped her reach her goal weight. That week my partner and I joined together and have not looked back.

**My biggest regret was not living life**

I was never able to do the things I wanted to do because I lacked the energy. I was obese and had no zest for life. Now I want to go everywhere, do everything, and enjoy being the me I was meant to be! Now I can walk in a store and find clothes that fit. I'm loving my new life!

**We have not had to give up anything**

We still eat out, go every Sunday for family dinner and enjoy our alcoholic beverages. In fact every night we have our sweet treats. It's just that we have learnt how to make healthier choices. I have learnt with tracking how to ensure I never miss out on a thing.

**How can I eat so much and lose weight**

At first when I started the Weight Watchers program I was in disbelief. How can I eat so much and lose weight? Fuelling my metabolism, walking and applying all the lessons learned in Weight Watchers meetings has given me the tools to lose weight and maintain my weight forever.

**We've lost weight together**

My life partner has lost over 15 kgs too. The other day he said 'We really have changed our lives,' and I agree the changes we have learned to incorporate have
changed our lives for the better. Friends, family and co-workers have been inspired by our success and are joining Weight Watchers too.

**Since losing the weight my health has benefitted**

I have suffered from hyper tension and an on-going back issue for many years. My Dr has told me that since reaching goal weight that he’ll look at ceasing my blood pressure meds completely. My back has never felt stronger.

**Weight Watchers has helped me rediscover living**

I found the me that I had hidden away under the weight. I love life again and I feel fitter, stronger and healthier than ever before. I am a better person because of it, I love what Weight Watchers has done for me. Weight Watchers is the best programme in educating you how to live life, enjoy life and get the most out of it!
40. The Cassidy’s (Weight Watchers)

2012 Healthy Life Awards Family of the Year.

Name: The Cassidys
Age: 35
Height: 1.76 m
Was: 96 kg
Lost: 22 kg
Weight: 74 kg
1/07/2012

“Once we learn to put ourselves and our health first, everything else falls into place.”

Meet Tanya from the Cassidy Family, the 2012 Weight Watchers Family of the Year winners.
**My baby weight started us off**

After my fourth baby, I knew I had to try and lose the baby weight. I had tried after my other children were born, but the weight always crept back on. My husband was overweight too, so he jumped on board and then the whole family ended up making healthier choices! It was like one, big team effort.

**We did it for the kids**

After baby number four I was exhausted. I thought to myself “I need to get every bit of energy I can” so I maximized my vitamin intake to get all the goodness out of my food. It was the same with exercise. I used the cross trainer when the baby was asleep and the kids were at school. Then, I’d take the pram to pick up the kids and we’d all walk home together. They loved it! I soon realised I was barely driving anywhere anymore because I was walking all the time.

**It was a surprise for my husband**

My husband didn’t mean to lose so much weight. He started eating what I was eating and the weight just fell off! I mean, I wasn’t going to make two meals so we all ate the healthy foods together. It’s a team effort, so we all got involved and started seeing the results. My husband also saw me exercising and thought, “I’ll have a go too,” so I provided the incentive he needed.

**The education from Weight Watchers was invaluable**

I’m really picky with what I put on the table now. Through the Weight Watchers program we learnt how much we should be eating and how much food should be on our plates. I used to cook white rice and mashed potatoes almost
every night for the kids because it was easy and I knew they would eat it. I then started experimenting with foods like basmati and brown rice and the kids discovered they love cous cous, so the foods we enjoyed were the foods that were good for us too!

**We all really needed the change**

I am hypoglycemic and my husband is at high risk of diabetes so we are far more conscious of choosing foods that are healthy and filling and sustain our blood sugar. We used to go out for morning tea and have a cappuccino and share a big piece of cheesecake. But once we started Weight Watchers we would share some raisin toast or I’d make a Weight Watchers slice, portion it and take it with us. We have learnt how to think ahead of time and that is so important.

**We are better parents now**

Mums and dads are used to thinking “the kids come first,” but if we fit in exercise then we feel better and the kids are going to get more out of us. After being with Weight Watchers, we noticed we weren’t yelling all the time, or feeling really stressed out. I would do my workout and then I’d spend the rest of the day feeling good and I would have more energy and patience to give to my family.

**We did it with each others help**

It’s so much easier to do it as a family. Sometimes when I was on the cross trainer my daughter would come in and yell “Yeah mum! Let’s go!” And when I’d do laps in the pool my ten-year-old son would scream “Go mum! Only five
laps to go!” The kids really got involved and thought it was so fun to run up and down the stairs with me.

My advice to other families

Once we learn to put our health and ourselves first, everything else falls into place. How we think, how we are with our kids, the quality of time we spend with our family – everything is better. Once you eat well and look after yourself you get more out of life and you can give more to your family.
41. **The City of Marion (Weight Watchers)**

2012 Australian Workplace of the Year - The City of Marion

“Once we all spoke to a consultant it just took off!”

**Our weight watchers consultant got us motivated to change**

We have a philosophy at our The City of Marion, which is all about living well and being healthy. A few of the senior staff were concerned about some overweight employees so we decided to find out more about Weight Watchers. Once we all spoke to a consultant it just took off! A lot of our staff had tried to lose weight in the past but hadn’t done too well so the education we got from our Weight Watchers consultant was priceless.

**Weight Watchers has an amazing flow-on effect**

Three of our staff were so inspired by their weight loss, they took the Weight Watchers program home to their families and all did it together. We had a lot of wonderful help from our consultant Jade and her advice really helped everyone. She also sent out a newsletter each week which kept everyone inspired and on track with the program.
We had fun with our weight loss!

Some of the guys egged each other on, saying things like “Oh you only lost half a kilo this week? Well I lost one!” There was a real camaraderie between everyone which made it a lot easier to stick to our Weight Watchers programs. We even had one staff member who taught everyone how to make delicious Vietnamese cold rolls. We all help each other and that showed in our results.

Some people were really surprised at their results

One of our biggest weight loss achievers went into the meeting with our Weight Watchers consultant with no expectations and she ended up being one of our biggest weight loss employees. We all learnt how to maintain our programs when we were away from work and on the weekends, so even when our families were eating poorly, our employees had the tools to feel satisfied without going off course.

We really had some big changes to make

In the past, when we had meetings, we would have cakes and scones in the boardrooms. When we were on the Weight Watchers program we swapped those foods for fruit platters and nuts. We are also really open and great at communicating in our office, so if someone was struggling we would all support them. Or if one of our workmates wanted to cave in and get a pie, we all encouraged them to get something a little healthier.

Once we started weight watchers we loved it

As the coordinator, the biggest challenge I found was getting everyone to start. Once they did start, however, they followed through because they started to feel
and see the benefits. The Weight Watchers program changed our workplace’s size and activity levels and that ultimately made everyone happy.
42. Phillip Kuoch (Weight Watchers)

"I dropped 17kg and became a personal trainer"

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“Since I've lost weight, I've had the confidence to follow my dreams!”

When student Phillip Kuoch learnt how to love healthy living, he dropped 17kg and had the confidence to follow his dreams.

**Slow realisation**

In my early teens I was unhappy with myself and would come home after school and eat three large meals. I turned down a lot of social events because of my
weight and I blamed it for everything that went wrong in my life. If I wasn't invited out with my friends or I didn't succeed in something I wanted to do, I would say "it's because I'm fat". I hated my body and myself so much that I had suicidal thoughts.

I remember going to the cinemas and hardly being able to fit in the seat, and also struggling to get an aeroplane seatbelt around my waist. But it wasn't until I went to the doctor that I really got a wake-up call. He asked me to weigh myself and the number read 130kg – it was a shock. My family has a history of heart disease so my mum sat me down and told me if I didn't do something about it, I would regret it.

**I needed a healthy eating plan I could stick with**

I signed up for a weight loss program and lost 50kg in 11 months, but after I reached my goal, I didn't know how to maintain it and re-gained 15kg in the next year. I joined Weight Watchers in February 2011 and started tracking ProPoints online and on my iPhone. I finally learnt what constitutes a balanced, healthy meal.

**A long-term commitment**

At the start I just wanted overnight success, but when I started to focus on enjoying healthy eating instead of thinking about the number on the scales, the whole process seemed quicker and easier. Suddenly eating healthily with friends and working out together was fun. In less than nine months I was at my goal weight of 80kg, and now, almost a year later, I'm 76kg.
**Being healthy makes life more comfortable**

These days I try to eat predominantly natural foods – they give me more energy, make me feel happier and help me sleep better. I used to wake up in the night with cramps and heartburn, plus my thighs used to get chafed from rubbing together, but as I lost weight, that all stopped happening. I love the fact I can shop for a size small instead of XXL – there are so many more styles to choose from.

**Paying it forward**

Now that I know how great it feels to be healthy, I'm trying to help the rest of my family avoid the mistakes I made. I've started doing our family grocery shopping — I make sure we have lots of fruit and vegies so my younger sister and brother learn to be healthier from a younger age.

Even my extended family in Cambodia have been inspired to lose weight and enjoy life more. Earlier this year I went to visit my aunties and uncles in Cambodia and my aunty didn't recognise me when she came to pick me up from the airport – that was a good feeling!

**A bucketload of confidence**

Since I've lost weight, I've had the confidence to follow my dreams. I've started a blog, [hellokpop.com](http://www.hellokpop.com), which has given me the chance to interview some amazing Asian pop stars. In the past I would have been too shy to talk to them. I've also done a personal training course. Originally I did it so I could learn how to train myself, but now I can see myself helping other people. None of this would have been possible if I hadn't lost weight.
Feeling fabulous is the world's greatest reward

Life's too short to feel frumpy and miserable – and that's enough motivation to keep me on track. I'm only human, and do get tempted by chocolate, but feeling fantastic is more important than any craving, so I just have a small amount and load up on fresh, healthy foods.
43. **Brian Grainger (Weight Watchers)**

“I’ve lost more than 50 kilos!”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Brian Grainger</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>1.72 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was</td>
<td>112.1 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost</td>
<td>50.9 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>61.2 kg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“In the past, I never wanted to chat with anyone because I was shy and so down about myself. These days, I’m leading 12 Weight Watchers meetings a week!”

For Brian Grainger, losing almost half his body weight is the best thing he’s ever done.
How long it took: 56 wks

How she did it: Weight Watchers meetings with Rachel Willemsen, Mount Gravatt, QLD

Everyone has a food they can’t live without

For me, it’s dessert. Before I started doing the Weight Watchers program, I weighed more than 100 kilos and would often indulge in a triple-scoop sundae topped with fudge, nuts and cream without a second thought. These days, the three scoops are gone from my daily intake, but people are shocked to hear I’ve enjoyed dessert every day since joining Weight Watchers – that’s every single day for five years – and have still lost 50 kilos.

Now I make smarter choices

Dessert is the first meal I plan into my day and, during the week, I allow myself to enjoy different sweets, including Skinny Cow ice-cream, mini choc-chip cookies, Jarrah Chocolatte, low-fat yoghurt and sugar-free jelly. If I have a few extra ProPoints, I have the Weight Watchers Double Choc Sundae or Belgian Eclairs. My number one tip is remembering this healthy new lifestyle is forever. You can’t give up the things you love completely because, if you do, you’ll never stick to it and keep the weight off.

A healthy lifestyle becomes a habit

If you’re doing Weight Watchers, ask yourself, “Am I living the way I intend to live for the rest of my life?” If the answer is yes, then you’re doing it right. Ideally, nothing should change when you hit Goal and the healthy food choices you’ve been making will eventually become habit.
I used to hide at parties

It still blows me away how every aspect of my life has changed since I lost weight. I used to hide at parties and decline invitations. At the time, my mindset was, “I don’t like me, so why would anyone else?” I tried to lose weight in the past with limited success. Usually, I’d lose a few kilos, think, “Yay, now I can go back to my real life,” then start regularly eating pizza and chips again. And, of course, the weight came back – it even brought some friends. I like to say it went recruiting!

Standing in spotlight

In the past, I never wanted to chat with anyone because I was shy and so down about myself. These days, I’m leading 12 Weight Watchers meetings a week! Talk about going from hiding in the shadows to standing in the spotlight.

Socially, things have changed, too. Before, whenever friends and I caught up, we’d eat chips and pizza and never feel fully satisfied. After joining Weight Watchers, I started bringing healthier snacks, like carrot sticks, beans, rice crackers and salsa, to our gatherings.

Setting an example

Even my mum lost weight with Weight Watchers and is working as a Leader in northern New South Wales. Each week, we swap advice and ideas and plan our meetings over the phone. I couldn’t be more proud of her achievement. She’s always been My main support and I’ve really enjoyed sharing this with her.

Now I love to run

I wear a pedometer every day to see how many bonus activity ProPoints I’ve
earned in a day. Between walking, jogging, swimming and the occasional game of squash, I rack them up quite easily. It’s so strange to think back to how much I dreaded the school athletics carnival as a child. I hated every minute and felt embarrassed, where as now I love going for a run.

I love my new body, life and confidence
I’ve never forgotten what my Leader Rachel said when I started all those years ago: you’ve got to move it to lose it! It’s taken me a long time to feel so self-assured, but these days I love my new body, life and confidence. I was determined to reach my Goal weight and didn’t let being the only guy in the room bother me – in fact, nothing was going to deter me from shedding those excess kilos.

My best decision
Second only to joining Weight Watchers, becoming a Leader is the best decision I’ve ever made. I love helping other members complete their own transformations.

Brian’s Top Weight-Loss Tips
• Mix your own alcoholic drinks
• Stop yourself and ask, am I really hungry now?
• Find someone to work out with
44.  Phill Houlton (Weight Watchers)

"I can achieve anything now."

Name          | Phill Houlton
Age           | 57
Height        | 1.84 m
Was           | 114.7
Lost          | 24.7 kg
Weight        | 90 kg

“Getting healthy has changed more than my weight – it’s changed the way I feel about myself.”
It was a case of third-time lucky for Phill Houlton who, after two previous attempts at Weight Watchers, has said a final goodbye to almost 25kg.

I felt daunted when my wife Carole and I went to our first Weight Watchers meeting last year. After two unsuccessful attempts at losing weight, I was the only male and was worried the conversations would be boring. I couldn’t have been more wrong.

I quickly became comfortable being the only guy and Leader Vanessa had a sparkly personality, which motivated us to overhaul our cooking, take up exercise and stay focused.

Almost two years on, Carole and I are Lifetime Members and more excited about life than ever. I’ve gone from skipping breakfast and loading up on takeaway to enjoying a balanced diet. I can’t get enough of Bircher muesli, but still enjoy bacon and eggs on the weekend after our weekly meeting.

I’m now running about 8km four or five times a week and take part in local fun runs and marathons. Carole and I are taking up surfing lessons this summer, which I’m excited about.

I used to feel angry, anti-social and intolerant when I carried extra weight, but now I feel positive. Getting healthy has changed more than my weight – it’s changed the way I feel about myself.
Appendix B

Full scope of Lite n' Easy success stories from

www.liteneasy.com.au
1. Amanda (Lite n' Easy)

| Start weight: 75 kilos (160cm) | Current weight: 60 kilos | Weight lost: 15 kilos | Time frame: 7 months |

I work in real estate so I am constantly on the go between the office, open houses and inspections. In my spare time I am an avid sailor and most weekends enjoy a great social life at our local yacht club.

Over the past few years though, I had fallen into some bad habits and was grabbing whatever foods I could prepare and eat quickly. I had slowly crept up to a size 14, which was too big for my height. I was feeling uncomfortable in my clothes and lacking in energy.

So I started eating Lite n’ Easy and it’s been the best thing I’ve done. The portions are right and it’s good healthy food. Most importantly, it’s real and it’s delicious. Everything is so easily prepared, it’s like having your own personal chef.

I’ve lost 15 kilos with Lite n’ Easy and I truly feel amazing. I’ve got a lot more energy and whilst I don’t need to lose anymore weight, I love the food so I will keep ordering as a regular part of our busy lives.

After seeing how easy it was for me, many of my friends from the yacht club have joined the Lite n’ Easy way of life and are loving it as much as I do.
Images accompanying Amanda's success story:
2. **Racheal and Liam (Lite n' Easy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>107 kilos</strong></td>
<td><strong>62 kilos</strong></td>
<td><strong>45 kilos</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 years</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(169 cm tall)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ago</td>
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**We still love our Lite n’ Easy!**

“Six years ago my life changed forever when I lost 45 kilos with Lite n’ Easy! At the time I was living in a share house with my then partner Liam and another couple. For several years we were all eating Lite n’ Easy for weight management and convenience.

I sent in my photos and success story mainly to say thank you to everyone at Lite n’ Easy for helping me to turn my life around. Then out of nowhere we were asked to appear in a Lite n’ Easy TV commercial! Filming was an absolute blast and we loved the idea that our story could inspire others to try Lite n’ Easy and change their lives.

Fast forward to today and I’ve married Liam, moved states, had a beautiful baby boy named Dempsey and have already gone back to full time work.

Life has changed you could say, but we still order our Lite n’ Easy. We know it works, we know it’s based on sound nutritional guidelines, not fads, and we absolutely love it!”
Images accompanying Racheal and Liam's success story:
3. Dave (Lite n' Easy)

<table>
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<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weight:</td>
<td>90 kilos</td>
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<td>8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(170cm tall)</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 kilos</td>
<td></td>
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Each year I give my wife a Buddha calendar at Christmas. Last December her two daughters suggested that I should dress up as Buddha! While the calendar was a hit with my wife, I hated the fact that I made such a great Buddha. This was the wake up call I needed.

Four years prior to this I had taken up cycling thinking that riding my bike 100-200 kilometres a week, the weight would just fall off. To my disappointment it did not because I had not changed the way I ate. The extra weight I was carrying was a real handicap climbing hills and I struggled to keep up with the rest of the group, even on the flat.

So I started Lite n’ Easy in February and by September I was 15 kilos lighter, just in time for the start of the cycling season. Now I am first up those hills, waiting for the rest of the group to catch-up.

The weight loss happened so gradually and consistently, I hardly noticed the day-to-day changes in my appearance. However, everyone around me certainly noticed, especially family, friends and clients who hadn’t seen me for longer periods. Some people did not even recognise me at first.
Having reached my weight loss goal, I now have Lite n’ Easy on weekdays to maintain my weight and enjoy weekends off. And that Buddha calendar! I used it to record the results of my weekly weigh-ins. So instead of mocking me, it motivated me.

Images accompanying Dave's success story:
4. Bree (Lite n' Easy)

| Start weight: 90 kilos (167cm tall) | Current weight: 60 kilos | Lost weight: 30 kilos | Time frame: 6 months |

Lite n’ Easy has been completely life changing for me.

I had my baby last April and stacked on so much weight. I had no time to cook healthy meals for myself so I was grabbing whatever quick and easy food I could find and would often skip meals or just grab a couple of biscuits on the run.

I was sick of feeling frumpy and lacking in energy and needed something to kick start my weight loss. Also my partner had just started working away again so I needed something that would take the pressure off me being a solo parent for long periods of time.

I thought I’d give Lite n’ Easy a try just to see if it worked. I started losing weight straight away so immediately I was sold!

Lite n’ Easy helped me not only reach my pre pregnancy weight but I also lost an extra 14 kilos on top of that! I’m very happy with the results I achieved in only 6 months. I feel fitter and healthier, I feel good about myself and very
proud of what I’ve achieved. My wedding is this November and I can’t wait to rock my dress!

Since seeing my results, my mum, sister and a few friends also got on board with Lite n’ Easy. I’m such an advocate! I tell everyone who asks that it’s the best thing I’ve ever done for myself.

Images accompanying Bree’s success story:
5. Kate (Lite n' Easy)

I have two small children and am studying psychology. Like a lot of mums, I was making healthy meals for the children but not for myself and over time I started to feel like rubbish. I was lacking in energy and finding it hard to stay on top of things.

So I started ordering Lite n’ Easy purely for the convenience of having healthy meals ready at hand. The food is delicious and already prepared for me, conveniently labelled with the day and the meal so all I have to do is grab and go.

I am very pleased that Lite n’ Easy now gives me great nutrition and is the simplest way for me to look after myself.

Now my energy is great and I’m back to my ‘before babies’ size too..

Thank you to everyone at Lite n’ Easy!

Images accompanying Kate's success story:
6. Carie and Mark (Lite n' Easy)

My husband and I work full time and we have a very active little toddler. We were spending our entire evening cooking and cleaning but now with Lite n’ Easy we have more time to just relax and spend it with each other. Plus I was able to lose those few extra stubborn kilos which had hung around after my pregnancy, so that was an added bonus!

Having our meals prepared is such a great convenience for us, especially for me as a teacher as I often have work to do at night. The meals are so tasty and we always look forward to dinner time together.

We are planning baby #2 in the not too distant future and will continue with Lite n’ Easy to keep us healthy, plus I know it will help me to lose the baby weight again.

We are both quite passionate about Lite n’ Easy. I have lots of staff at school asking me about the meals and I’m always happy to tell them all about it!

We love our Lite n’ Easy!
Images accompanying Carie and Mark's success story:
7. Nathalie (Lite n' Easy)

| Start weight: 70 kilos (175 cm tall) | Current weight: 58 kilos | Weight lost: 12 kilos | Time frame: 8 months |

I had been ordering Lite n’ Easy dinners on and off for several years as being a shift worker, I struggled to organise my own meals. The convenience of having healthy, pre prepared meals delivered to my front door was fantastic. But I wasn’t very good with my healthy eating at other times, so unfortunately I had gained a few unwanted kilos.

The turning point for me was a dancing holiday to the Gold Coast in April when I noticed that I was much bigger than some of my fellow dancers. I was struggling to fit into costumes and I wasn’t feeling very comfortable on stage. After seeing photos of myself performing and also photos of myself at my best friend’s engagement party, I knew it was time to lose the excess weight I was carrying.

I started to order the full 1200 Calorie Meal Plan from Lite n’ Easy and it was great to start losing weight straight away.

Having all my food set out in the fridge and ready to go really took the stress out of it all. I even started eating fruit again! I love that you can choose between two options for breakfast and lunch as well as all the different dinners. Having
all my food delivered, I also found that I didn’t stray towards the fast food options.

Along with the Lite n’ Easy meal plan I started attending a personal training session once a week. I continued with my usual dance classes and in 10 months I dropped 12 kilos!

I can’t believe how different I look in photos and I feel like I have my confidence back. Dancing doesn’t tire me out as much as it did and I’m also more than happy to get back to walking around the beach in a bikini.

Images accompanying Nathalie's success story:
8. Ross (Lite n’ Easy)

Start

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight:</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>119 kilos</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(170cm tall)</td>
<td>kilos</td>
<td>kilos</td>
<td>maintenance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In August 2008 I had a medical checkup at work and was advised I had very high blood pressure and needed medication immediately. My weight was 119 kilos. My doctor suggested I lose weight and begin some light exercise in order to bring my blood pressure down and prevent further weight related complications down the track. I was only 57 years old at the time.

My daughter had recently started Lite n’ Easy so she took me to her personal trainer who advised a diet of 1800 calories a day would be suitable for me. I could see Lite n’ Easy would be the easiest and best way to control my calorie intake and started on the 5 day 1800 calorie Meal Plan straight away. After only a couple of weeks I found this was too much food for me and changed to the 1500 calorie Meal Plan and have been on that to this day – six years later!

I lost 25 kilos in the first year and smaller but still significant amounts in the following years. The doctor said I should aim to lose the weight gradually over a long period which would assist in changing my eating habits and keeping it off for good.
I now weigh 68 kilos, a total loss of 51 kilos! My original goal was 70, so I have well surpassed that and maintained it easily with Lite n’ Easy and some exercise. I do a 5 km power walk a few days a week combined with some light hand weight exercises of a morning. I am fit and healthy. I can walk up hills and steps and play golf without getting puffed.

I firmly believe I would not have reached this weight if I had not found Lite n’ Easy. I am still ordering now for maintaining my weight and because I like the meals.

After about 6 months my blood pressure was almost back to normal and for the last 6 years has always been normal. I credit this all to Lite n’ Easy and the exercise and could not be happier with my new way of life.
Images accompanying Ross's success story:
9. Kylie D (Lite n' Easy)

| Start weight: 78 kilos (165cm) | Current weight: 62 kilos | Weight lost: 16 kilos | Time frame: 14 weeks |

“I had my two children very close together and was working from home so life was hectic. Once it was decided that no more children were on the agenda I decided it was time to lose some weight.

“Lite n’ Easy really appealed because everything was already done for me. Having meals pre-prepared meant I could spend more time with my children and on my job.

“The food is excellent. My favourite dinner is the Beef Stroganoff for sure! My favourite lunch would have to be the Nachos, they are absolutely delicious!

“Initially I set myself a 10 week challenge and I lost 14 kilos in that time! It was amazing. That was 12 months ago and I recently ordered again for another few weeks and lost another 2 kilos. I now weigh less than I did in my early 20s!

“My life has certainly changed for the better since I lost all that weight. I feel much better about my physical appearance. I used to feel disappointed when I would look in the mirror trying on clothes. Now I am very happy with the way I look and feel.
“Lite n’ Easy has changed my life and I cannot recommend it highly enough to anyone who is interested in losing weight and changing their lifestyle for the better.”

Images accompanying Kylie’s success story:
10. **Nav (Lite n' Easy)**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92 kilos</td>
<td>84 kilos</td>
<td>8 kilos</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
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</table>

**Lite n’ Easy works for me!**

“I first started ordering Lite n’ Easy six years ago after a friend of mine recommended it to me. I lost 8 kilos then and have kept it off ever since.

“I tried different things in the past and none of them have given me results like Lite n’ Easy. You know it’s healthy, you know the food tastes great and it’s prepared and delivered to your door. Those three factors are a winner for me.

“Six years on and I still eat Lite n’ Easy Monday to Friday because I love the food. I don’t feel like I am missing out on anything at all. I know I am getting a good variety of food in the right portions with all the right balance of nutrients I need.

“I lead quite a hectic lifestyle. Every day I start around 7:30 in the morning and most nights I work back. In the morning I’ll just take my Lite n’ Easy to work and I’m sorted. At night it doesn’t matter if I finish late, I’ve got a perfect meal waiting for me.

“It gives me the freedom and the flexibility so it’s perfect for my lifestyle.”
Images accompanying Nav’s success story:
11. Jo B (Lite n' Easy)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
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<td>100 kilos</td>
<td>80 kilos</td>
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<td>20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(176cm)</td>
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After having my two girls only 18 months apart my weight had crept up. When I returned to work I realised just how much extra weight I was carrying. I work as a flight attendant and trying to work in the tight spaces on the plane was uncomfortable. My energy levels were at an all time low and I was really struggling to cope both at work and at home, running after my girls.

The second factor prompting me to lose weight was booking our Hawaii holiday. I wanted to make the most of the swimming pools and beaches while I was there and not feel self conscious in my bikinis.

I chose Lite n’ Easy because it seemed like a no brainer, knowing that I didn’t have to count points or weigh and measure every ingredient. I really enjoyed the variety of meals and snacks. If I was to try and plan meals and snacks on my own, I’d end up eating the same thing over and over and quickly lose interest. I also loved how I could just grab my breakfast and lunch bags out of the fridge and pop them in my bag for work. At 3am it came in really handy!

My favourite meals are Apricot chicken, Rigatoni and Roast chicken with that delicious home made gravy.
I’ve never been one to go by numbers on the scales. For me it’s more about size and how you feel. My ultimate goal was fitting back in to my pre-baby jeans which I do now. I’ve got so much more energy both at work and playing with the kids. I lost more weight than my daughter now weighs. Every time I pick her up and realise how heavy she is, I get a feeling of pride and accomplishment.

We went on our family trip to Hawaii I felt very comfortable in my bikinis now that I have my confidence back.

Thank you Lite n’ Easy!

Images accompanying Jo's success story:
12. Ben (Lite n' Easy)

Start weight: 123 kilos
Current weight: 90 kilos

Working in hospitality, I’m always looking after others at all hours of the day and night. It sometimes leaves me so tired that I forget to look after myself properly.

I’m really tall so I can get away with a few extra kilos but when I reached 120 kilos I thought enough was enough. A friend of mine tried Lite n’Easy and that gave me the nudge I needed to do something about being so overweight and unhealthy. It just seemed like a no brainer. With Lite n’ Easy I was going to eat healthily and have my meals prepared for me while losing weight along the way.

From the first delivery, Lite n’ Easy was like my complete solution to weight loss and good health. I couldn’t believe how much more time I had to myself now that I didn’t have to go out grocery shopping, prepare meals or find take away options. I decided to dedicate this time to become more active. I started simply by walking to the supermarket to buy milk. And after the first couple of months I had lost 10 kilos and this gave me the confidence and energy I needed to join a gym!
I definitely enjoyed the program especially having worked in the food industry for so long, food was such a big part of my life. But not once did I ever feel like I was on a diet! Trying new things and menu selections from Lite n’ Easy felt like the restaurant was coming to my doorstep each week!

Now I am 33 kilos lighter. I used to be size 40 in jeans and am now a 32. My shirts are medium size now too! It is so amazing to be a confident young guy who no longer struggles with being overweight. Life is amazing!

Images accompanying Dan's success story:
13. Kent (Lite n' Easy)

Start

<table>
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<th>Weight Lost</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
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<td>78 kilos</td>
<td>4 kilos</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(178cm tall)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>convenience</td>
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I have been ordering Lite n’ Easy for over 3 years just for the convenience and to keep my weight in check.

As a single dad with a busy work, sporting and social life, Lite n’ Easy is fantastic. It provides me with convenient, healthy and time saving meals, plus I can order extra Mini Meals when the kids are with me. They love them!

We don’t want to spend our time shopping for food and cooking, so having Lite n’ Easy meals delivered means we can relax and have more fun together.

Images accompanying Kent's success story:
14. Ali (Lite n' Easy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start weight</th>
<th>Current weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70 kilos (160cm tall)</td>
<td>50 kilos</td>
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</table>

Weigh: 20 kilos

Time frame: I love Lite n’ Easy! It’s empowered me as a mum of two and helped get me back to my pre-baby weight. I’m a more energetic person and a better wife, mother and teacher because of it.

I love how balanced and delicious the meals are and how my body feels after eating them. The freshness of the ingredients is great and the convenience of having my lunches ready to take to work makes mornings much easier for me.

Lite n’ Easy has absolutely changed my life in so many ways. I just completed a marathon and would never have been able to do that without Lite n’ Easy. For that I am so grateful.

Thank you!
Images accompanying Ali’s success story:
15. Kym (Lite n' Easy)

Start weight: 173 kilos
Current weight: 83 kilos
Weight lost: 90 kilos
Time frame: 18 months

Lite n’ Easy saved my life!

At 173 kilos, my weight had reached a point where I was prescribed blood pressure medication and had to start using a CPAP machine for severe sleep apnoea. It was so bad I was falling asleep at the wheel and my weight was restricting me from doing the things I wanted to do.

I was only 43 years of age and at a point where I absolutely had to do something about it before it was too late. Lite n’ Easy was suggested by a work colleague. What appealed to me most about the meal plan was that it is real food, nutritionally balanced – not shakes or other diet supplements, so I never felt like I was on a diet.

Since starting 18 months ago I have lost 90 kilos! It’s still hard to believe, as I don’t see myself the way I look now. I have shrunk from a men’s size 56 down to a size 38. Now my weight doesn’t stop me from doing anything.

I can’t thank Lite n’ Easy enough – you have absolutely saved my life!
Images accompanying Kym's success story:
16. Tanya (Lite n' Easy)

Start

<table>
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<th>Time frame:</th>
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<th>Weight lost:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71 kilos</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Current height:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66 kilos</td>
<td>176cm tall</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I love Lite n’ Easy for the convenience whilst also being the most healthy and delicious option available.

I have always been an incredibly busy and active person. I work full time, play top grade AFL football and I’m heavily involved in the club as Vice President.

But before Lite n’ Easy, my diet was filled with unhealthy takeaway and I had become quite anaemic. I hardly ever ate red meat and my health was starting to suffer from not eating properly.

My flatmates were eating Lite n’ Easy and it seemed like the most sensible solution to my situation. I started ordering online and never looked back.

The results have changed my life. Eating a nutritionally balanced diet that actually tastes great has had a very positive effect on my overall health and wellbeing. I look forward to enjoying a cooked meal after a hard training session now!

I have so much more energy and my health has never been better!
Images accompanying Tanya's success story:
17. Ali (Lite n' Easy)

Start weight: 92 kilos (173cm)  
Current weight: 70 kilos  
Weight lost: 22 kilos  
Time frame: 28 weeks

My weight has always been a huge struggle, but in October last year I decided to make a change. I was so unhappy and unhealthy and I finally hit rock bottom. My mum had previously lost a lot of weight with Lite n’ Easy so I thought I would give it a go too.

My biggest struggle with trying to lose weight in the past was that it always seemed like way too much effort and I had to miss out on eating all the foods I enjoyed.

Lite n’ Easy solved all of these problems, all of my food for the week was delivered to my door and with hardly any preparation necessary my laziness was no longer an excuse for eating poorly.

The food is amazing. The Chicken Parmas for dinner are my absolute favourite, I eat them because I enjoy them, not just for weight loss and convenience.

It’s now been just over 6 months and I’ve 22 kilos! Losing all this weight has honestly changed my life, I’m so much happier, healthier and more confident in myself. It’s not just the long-term differences that I noticed though, within a
week of eating Lite n’ Easy my energy levels sky-rocketed and I just generally felt so much better.

I couldn’t recommend Lite n’ Easy more!

Images accompanying Ali G's success story:
18. **Steve and Cheryl (Lite n' Easy)**

Cheryl

Start

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weight:</td>
<td>86 kilos</td>
<td>lost:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(163 cm tall)</td>
<td>69 kilos</td>
<td>17 kilos</td>
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Steve

Start

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<th></th>
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<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
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<td>112 kilos</td>
<td>lost:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(165 cm tall)</td>
<td>87 kilos</td>
<td>25 kilos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We lost 43 kilos together!

“Our Lite n’ Easy story started out as one of convenience when we were caring for my mother who was very ill. It was a stressful time for our family and shopping, cooking and eating were way down on the priority list. So we ordered Lite n’ Easy for both of us and were very impressed by the quality of the food.

The reason we continued with Lite n’ Easy was because of the weight loss and the good health that comes with it. We have lost a combined total of 43 kilos in 10 months and we couldn’t be happier with the results!
Having easy access to healthy and delicious food has really helped us to turn our lifestyle around which is such a blessing after a rough year. Our energy levels have improved, we are sleeping better and are both feeling much better for it.

Lite n’ Easy helped us discover a much healthier and happier way to live and for that we are eternally grateful.”

Images accompanying Steve and Cheryl’s success story:
19. Amanda (Lite n' Easy)

Start weight: 82 kilos (163cm tall)
Current weight: 65 kilos
Weight lost: 17 kilos
Time frame: 7 months

“You know, it’s one of those things being a mother, you always put your kids and their needs first. I had forgotten to look after myself and had put on so much weight that it was depressing and getting in the way of enjoying my life.

Then I saw a Lite n’ Easy ad on TV and one of the success stories said she had lost 20 kilos in 30 weeks. I thought if she could do it then so could I.

What I love about Lite n’ Easy is that it complements my life and lets me enjoy my time. I have lost 17 kilos and I have been able to eat great food and get more out of life with my kids.”
Images accompanying Amanda's success story:
20. Luke Hodge (Lite n' Easy)

Hawthorn Hawks captain Luke Hodge shares his reasons for using Lite n’ Easy.

“I first started using Lite n’ Easy in 2009. I think I was about 93 kilos, which was a few kilos heavier than what I should have been playing football at. I’m now a comfortable 88 kilos thanks to Lite n’ Easy and I keep using it just to maintain my weight.

“It’s because it’s flexible and just fits in with my training program. I eat Lite n’ Easy dinners once or twice during the week and then again the night before a game because I feel lighter and more energetic the next day.

“I guess in my profession you’re always busy. So whether you’re training or you’ve got functions or you’re just playing with the kids, which is full on most of the time, it’s nice when you know there’s a convenient, healthy option in the freezer.

“When you’re younger you can get away with eating the incorrect foods. Once your body ages a little though, you need to make sure you’re doing everything you possibly can to be ready to perform. So watching my diet and making sure I’ve got something ready when I need it that’s not only healthy, but convenient is very important. That’s why I still use Lite n’ Easy.

“You can train as much as you want, but if you’re not filling your body with the right foods and making sure you’re at the correct weight to perform, you’re not
going to get the best out of yourself – and in this day and age, if you’re off just a little bit in football it’s going to cost you.”

Images accompanying Luke's success story:
21. Kathy (Lite n' Easy)

Start

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>92 kilos</strong></td>
<td><strong>72 kilos</strong></td>
<td><strong>20 kilos</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(167cm tall)</td>
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</table>

I am 52 years old and up until I discovered Lite n’ Easy, I had been overweight for many years. I hit 100 kilos in June 2013 and felt miserable. I was struggling health wise with all sorts of aches and pains. I had no energy and very poor motivation.

Then finally I decided enough was enough! I started Lite n’ Easy on a 1200 calorie 7 Day Meal Plan and after only 4 weeks I had lost 5 kilos! In less than a year I have reached my weight loss goal of 20 kilos. For the first time in years I feel fit and slim, I am full of energy and have no more aches and pains.

I have purchased two bikinis for this summer and can’t wait to get down to the beach feeling confident in my new body.

I am forever grateful to everyone at Lite n’ Easy.
Images accompanying Kathy's success story:
22. Zoe (Lite n' Easy)

“Lite n’ Easy has changed my life!”

“For years my weight had gone up and down as I yo-yoed my way through every diet imaginable. I had some success at times but it never lasted.

“Working 10-11 hours a day, I was really time poor and found planning and preparing a healthy meal plan too difficult. It took a great deal of time and effort for very little result. So I kept giving up and putting on more weight.

“I had tried Lite n’ Easy some years ago and decided to give it another go. I only wish I had remembered sooner how easy it was.

“The food was fabulous. Everyone was jealous of my lunches at work and the dinners were even better. Pasta that is actually cooked al dente and curries that have the real Thai ingredients and taste better than my local Thai take away were amazing!

“I lost 15 kilos in 16 weeks and I have returned to my bubbly, happy, positive self again. My self-confidence is back and I really cannot thank Lite n’ Easy enough. It has changed my life and brought joy back into every day for me.”
Images accompanying Zoe's success story:
**23. Jo (Lite n' Easy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82 kilos (160cm)</td>
<td>58 kilos</td>
<td>24 kilos</td>
<td>Customer since 2003</td>
</tr>
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</table>

“I wouldn’t know how to lose weight without Lite n’ Easy. For more than 10 years it has really blended into my life and it has just worked like clockwork. I’ve lost 24 kilos and the great thing is I’ve managed to keep it off.

“When you’re rushing around getting 3 kids ready for school, the only way you are going to eat is if it’s already organised for you and that’s where Lite n’ Easy comes in for me. The fact that it comes all packed by day makes it so easy.

“I always thought that food had to taste really bland to lose weight and be healthy. It’s not the case. With Lite n’ Easy you don’t feel like you have to sacrifice or deprive yourself of anything. You don’t have to cut out a food group. It’s just about eating a variety of foods that are really healthy with lots of flavour.

“If you are healthy and happy you’re a much better mother, you’re a better worker, you’re better at everything.”
Images accompanying Jo's success story:
24. Steve (Lite n' Easy)

Start

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88 kilos</td>
<td>68 kilos</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(165cm tall)</td>
<td>20 kilos</td>
<td></td>
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My wife and I decided to start Lite n’ Easy after watching the TV commercials and seeing the great results other people had achieved. Knowing it’s a well balanced diet, all prepared so there is no need to buy ingredients and waste time in the kitchen was also very appealing to us.

We started with the 7 Day Meal Plan for a few weeks to get into the swing of it and then cut back to the 5 day program and do our own thing on the weekends.

Lite n’ Easy makes life so much easier. Knowing that when we get home from work we don’t have to cook something healthy is a relief. Plus it’s so easy to order our meals. We also don’t have to waste hours at the supermarket – only a few minutes on the computer and it’s all done for the week.

I have found that Lite n’ Easy fits so well into my busy work schedule. I just open the fridge and freezer and everything’s ready to go. We have three grown up children, our youngest being a chef who has tried some of the meals and is very impressed.
I have lost 20 kilos in 20 weeks and my wife has lost 10 kilos which is awesome. We both feel so much healthier and more energetic and now believe we are doing all the right things for our bodies.

Thanks Lite n’ Easy!
25. Suzanne (Lite n' Easy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98 kilos</td>
<td>80 kilos</td>
<td>18 kilos</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(180cm tall)</td>
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I have worked very hard professionally for the last 4 years since moving to Melbourne, but I haven’t put that same level of effort into myself personally. My weight has always fluctuated due to my height and build, but when I hit 98 kilos last year I knew I had to make a change.

I decided to start Lite n’ Easy in the New Year. I had tried it once years ago but I didn’t stick to it. I knew this time around my approach would be different and I honestly think going back to Lite n’ Easy is the best decision I’ve made in a long time.

Now it’s changed my entire approach to food and health.

What I enjoy most about Lite n’ Easy is that I can eat it at home or take it to work and I don’t have to attend meetings at all like my friends who are on other weight loss programs. I love the choices for my meals and I love that it’s delivered to my door while I am at work. I get to come home and unpack it into the fridge and freezer then I am sorted for the whole week. So easy!
I set myself a goal of reaching my high school weight of 81 kilos and I’ve recently passed that. It feels amazing! I’m very into the tattoo culture and now I can show off more of my body including some of the tattoos on my legs that I’ve covered up for the last few years.

Since I’ve lost weight I not only feel awesome about myself, I also feel much healthier. I can shop easily for my size and I love walking everywhere and not being puffed. For the first time in my life I feel confident and sexy in my own skin. It’s a great feeling.

Images accompanying Suzanne’s success story:
26. Abby (Lite n' Easy)

Start weight: 78 kilos (165cm tall)  
Current weight: 62 kilos  
Weight lost: 16 kilos  
Time frame: 6 months

I’ve been on and off diets for as long as I can remember and I’m only 22! Last Christmas I had put on so much weight I didn’t feel comfortable in bathers anymore. My heaviest at this point was 80 kilos and I was disgusted in myself. My New Year’s resolution was to join Lite n’ Easy to be healthier and happier.

I’m a nurse, and with my irregular shift work and lack of time to put into cooking, Lite n’ Easy made it easy for me to eat healthy! With the extra time I had in my schedule I would go for a walk after work. As I lost weight my walk has turned into a 5 to 7 km run and I now love exercising.

I have lost 16 kilos in 6 months on the Lite n’ Easy 1200 Calorie Lunch and Dinner Plan. There is always enough food and it is great knowing it is nutritionally balanced in the right quantities without me having to think about all of that.

I never thought I’d be this happy with myself. I recently went to Fiji with my family and was confident to wear bathers. I won’t be going off Lite n’ Easy anytime soon and it’s not because I want to lose more weight. It’s because it’s just so convenient and easy for me.
I hope young people like me will realise with a little help from Lite n’ Easy it’s not hard to lose weight and be happy with yourself. If I can inspire one young person to change for the better, I would be over the moon.
27. **Maire (Lite n' Easy)**

| Start weight: 84.5 kilos | Current weight: 65 kilos | Weight lost: 19.5 kilos | Time frame: 6 months |

Back in January this year I weighed 84.5 kilos. I felt sluggish, tired, grumpy and was over trying to pour myself into size 14-16 clothes.

So I decided 2015 was going to be my year. After many years of making my life about others it was my turn. I’m turning 50 at the end of 2016 and don’t want to feel like a tired 50 year old.

I embarked on a program of exercise which included walking or jogging on the treadmill for 40 minutes almost every day. I had ordered Lite n’ Easy a couple of times in the past and I knew it helped me to lose weight. This time I was determined to give it a proper go and I lost 19.5 kilos! I feel better than I have in years.

The lifestyle change has been really easy. With the weight loss has come a new found energy and confidence so I can certainly do things a lot easier than I used to. My time is my own now. I can fit so much more into my day and at the same time be able to cope with everything because I feel so good.
I’ve bought my dream car, love my job and have a great husband and kids who have supported me all the way through. It’s onwards and upwards from here…I feel amazing!

Images accompanying Maire's success story:
28. Robby P (Lite n' Easy)

| Start weight: 67 kilos (155cm tall) | Current weight: 60 kilos | Weight lost: 7 kilos | Time frame: 6 months |

Lite n’ Easy is the best thing ever for single working people like myself! No more food shopping, preparing meals, cooking or cleaning up.

I love that my meals are portion controlled, so no more over eating. I am totally satisfied after each meal and don’t need to look for anything extra.

I now fit into clothes that I love, I have more energy and I am happy all the time.

With all the extra time Lite n’ Easy has created for me I can exercise regularly and just enjoy my life.
Images accompanying Robby's success story:
29. Carolyn (Lite n' Easy)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Start weight: 100 kilos</th>
<th>Current weight: 58 kilos</th>
<th>Weight lost: 42 kilos</th>
<th>Time frame: 18 months</th>
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Everything has changed for the better!

I suffer from Huntington’s Disease which is a neurological condition affecting the nervous system, gradually resulting in loss of brain function and mobility. Once diagnosed, I piled on the weight due to medication and inactivity.

I was confined to a wheelchair and everyday was a struggle. At 100 kilos, even simple things became very tedious for me and I relied heavily on my husband and daughter to look after my everyday needs.

Losing 42 kilos has changed everything for me. I now have the energy to walk every day and can get around with a walker, rather than being confined to a wheelchair. I can also play with my 5 beautiful grand daughters.

Thanks to everyone at Lite n’ Easy, I feel much better in both mind and body.
Images accompanying Carolyn's success story:
30. Lisa (Lite n' Easy)

| Start weight: 69 kilos | Current weight: 56 kilos | Weight lost: 13 kilos | Time frame: 12 weeks |

I first started with Lite n’ Easy to lose weight and have continued to order the meals as regular part of our busy lifestyle.

My journey began in June 2014 when I booked a trip to South Africa for Christmas. I wanted to feel and look my best for the trip and needed to drop some excess kilos. I also work really long hours and was training for a 200km Ride to Conquer Cancer in the October, so I needed a way to lose weight with minimal stress and organisation.

Instead of putting on more weight over the winter as I had done for the previous couple of years, I started with Lite n’ Easy and never looked back. I lost 13 kilos in only 12 weeks and was able to head off to South Africa feeling wonderful.

We got engaged on our return to Australia and married in April this year. And in amongst all of that I was asked to appear in a Lite n’ Easy success story TV commercial which was an absolute highlight of my time with Lite n’ Easy.

As well as the weight loss I have gained so much quality time at the end of a long day, greater confidence, less stress on my joints when I train and a greater sense of general well being. All of this makes me a much happier person and we cannot thank Lite n’ Easy enough.
Images accompanying Lisa's success story:
31. Robyn (Lite n' Easy)

Start

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Weight Lost</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69 kilos</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 kilos</td>
<td>10 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(155cm tall)</td>
<td>49 kilos</td>
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If I don’t watch what I eat, I am prone to putting on weight, especially in winter. That is not a problem anymore now that I have all my food prepared for me by Lite n’ Easy.

After many years of struggling with my weight and losing count of how many other weight loss programmes I have tried, I desperately needed a new food solution. I work six days a week so I wanted a program that required no hard work in preparation or calorie counting. I just didn’t have the time.

I had tried Lite n’ Easy some years ago but I was raising a family and wasn’t able to commit 100% to the program. Once my children had grown up and my circumstances changed, I made myself a priority. Having energy and good health became more important than ever before.

This time around I have been able to achieve a weight-loss of just over 20kg in nine months with Lite n’ Easy, so I am proof that if you don’t succeed just try, try again. Nothing is impossible!
The meal plan has been very easy to follow and I have been delighted with even more options and a greater variety of food to chose from. I have loved the results I have been able to achieve and recommend the program to all my family and friends.

My aim is to stay on the program for the long-term as it is just so convenient, the food choices are endless and the results that I have been able to achieve are proof that it works for me.

Thank you Lite n’ Easy for sticking with me!
Images accompanying Robyn's success story:
32. Ray (Lite n' Easy)

Start

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
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<th>Weight lost:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87 kilos</td>
<td>68 kilos</td>
<td>19 kilos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(171cm tall)</td>
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</table>

Time frame: 6 months

“I started Lite n’ Easy after a health scare. Although generally fit due to my work as a self-employed electrician, I was getting tired and slow. Then came a cancer scare and subsequent surgery in 2010. I slowly started accumulating weight and just accepted it.

My GP warned me that my blood sugar levels, cholesterol and blood pressure were all in the “extreme” range and that I was a prime candidate for cardiovascular disease with a waist measurement of 38 inches. We had children late in life and they are still in their teens so I wanted to be around for them for a long time.

I had to make changes.

Lite n’ Easy made sense to me. I had seen the ads on TV before but never did anything about it. Now with my GP on my back the timing was perfect. I knew I had to at least give it a go, even though I was sceptical, thinking it would not work for me.
Boy was I wrong! The Lite n’ easy meal plan fitted in very well with my lifestyle, the meals were filling, nutritious and most importantly tasty. With just a moderate amount of daily exercise, I was soon noticing the changes. I realised weight loss is not about fad diets or going nuts in the gym. Just sensible balanced food and regular exercise that is sustainable are the keys to long term success.

In just six months I lost 19 kilos and I’ve got my life back. My health is much improved overall and my GP is happy.

Lite n’ Easy is EASY and I only wish I had given it a go sooner.

Images accompanying Ray's success story:
33. Lynne and David (Lite n' Easy)

Our Lite n’ Easy story is not really one of changing our lives through big weight loss, but more about getting us through a very difficult period with some unexpected benefits along the way.

In April my husband broke his left elbow and he is left handed! We have two small children, we both work and have no other family close by. With my husband unable to drive for 6 weeks or help out at all, we had to find ways of saving time and making our lives a little easier so we could manage. That was where Lite n’ Easy came in really handy for us.

The convenience of pre-prepared meals was a godsend and saved us a huge amount of time and effort in the supermarket and the kitchen each week while my husband recovered from his injury. But it didn’t stop there.

As a side benefit I lost a few kilos and that motivated me to start exercising again for the first time in 8 years! I now have a regular exercise routine and I feel much better for it. I really liked that I was getting a balance of all food groups and I enjoyed the Lite n’ Easy lunches. It was so nice not to have to make boring sandwiches every day.

While things are now under control on the home front, my husband has continued on the program. He has lost 5 kilograms and is intending to lose a few more. He is looking better, feeling healthier and has more energy to keep up with our busy lifestyle.
Lite n’ Easy helps us to eat well all year round. We especially love the delicious soups and desserts that help get us through winter without piling on the kilos. We live near the beach and love being outdoors on the weekends. All of this is much more fun now we have more time on our hands and are looking after ourselves.

Images accompanying Lynne and David’s success story:
34. Shannon (Lite n' Easy)

Start

weight: Current Weight
85 kilos weight: lost:
(183cm 71 kilos 14 kilos

tall) 5 months

I have always been active and enjoyed participating in weekly boot camps, jogging and fun runs. Then a back injury forced me to stop all exercise for 18 months and the weight slowly crept on. I struggled to lose the weight on my own and I hated looking at myself in the mirror or photos. I dreaded shopping for clothes and remember shopping for bras and crying when I discovered my new larger bra size.

My Mum suggested I try Lite n’Easy and it has been my secret to getting back on track. I lost 14 kilos in under 6 months and I feel so much better.

It’s lovely to receive compliments from friends and family about my new look. I now have the confidence to have my photo taken and shopping for clothes is no longer traumatic.

Ordering my Lite n’ Easy online each week is easy and having the food prepared and ready to go saves me lots of time, stress and money. I used to buy my lunch from the local deli each day which was expensive and not great for me nutritionally. Now, I have healthy, tasty, balanced lunches each day. I also find that I am eating more fruit than I used to.
Lite n’ Easy is also really convenient as my husband works away. Ordering my own dinners means I get a variety of food with no wastage or cooking one dinner and then having to eat it over four consecutive nights.

The best thing is, now that my back is better and I have lost the weight I have been able to get back into exercise again. I really enjoy going to the beach with my husband for a swim or a stand up paddle. I have also joined a bike group and have met some amazing people. Wearing lycra for my bike riding is great motivation to keep the weight off!

Images accompanying Shannon’s success story:
Once I got a few years into my 40s I started putting on weight. It was as if my body had a mind of its own. I wasn’t eating any differently and my work is fairly active, so it was frustrating. As it turned out, I had hit menopause and that’s when I started thinking “That’s it! Nothing I can do so I just have to accept it as an age thing.”

I used to love shopping then all of a sudden I hated it. I’d gone from a size 10-12 up to a 16 and sometimes even a size 18, so nothing looked good on me anymore. I also started to hate going out and was constantly making excuses not to.

I’d been thinking about Lite n’ Easy for a while. There was a lady at work who’d lost about 30 kilos on Lite n’ Easy who got me thinking more. Then in November 2013 I started and it was the best thing I have ever done for myself! Right from the start I loved it.

After about a month my clothes became looser and before long I was digging out smaller clothes that I hadn’t thrown out. Once I got to the 10 kilo mark I got a pair of jeans out that I thought were never going to fit me and they did. That
spurred me on even more. I lost 23 kilos in 10 months and this has changed everything for me.

Photography is a passion of mine, so I’m often out wandering around with the camera. I’ve noticed since losing the weight that I have more stamina so I can walk further and hills hardly bother me anymore.

People often don’t recognise me now. I’ve done the photography at a Music Festival for the last three years. This year the other photographers had to look twice before they realised it was me! Now I can fit into all my old size 10 clothes, I love shopping again and it turns out I’m the one at work who is inspiring other colleagues to try Lite n’ Easy.

It really is the easiest thing ever.

Image accompanying Lisa's success story:
36. **Bronte (Lite n' Easy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84 kilos</td>
<td>70 kilos</td>
<td>14 kilos</td>
<td>16 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am 16 years old and a high school student. Before Lite n’ Easy I was self conscious of my weight and would hold back from trying new things.

The Lite n’ Easy meal plan gave me structure to my eating, it helped me to understand the foods I should be eating and the correct portions sizes.

The pre-packed day bags made it easy for me to grab my food and head off to school, or if I have a test the next day I could just pop my dinner in the microwave, grab it and eat it while I continued with my study.

Lite n’ Easy has changed my life as I now feel much more confident around my peers and can actively get involved in activities that I wouldn’t have before such. I even tried out for school basketball and was successful in making the team! Something I never dreamed possible.

I owe Lite n’ Easy for being the start of my new fit and healthy life.
Images accompanying Bronte's success story:
37. **Josephine (Lite n’ Easy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78 kilos (165cm)</td>
<td>58 kilos</td>
<td>20 kilos</td>
<td>11 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I had been overweight for some time but I’m not one for fad diets, so I was keen on finding something that was going to change the way I approached food.

Being in full time employment and running around most nights with my two boys and their extra curricula activities, like many mums I found it difficult to eat well and exercise. So, I needed a solution that was easy and convenient.

I also wanted a program that controlled my portion sizes yet offered me a variety of foods from all five food groups. Above all the food had to be delicious otherwise I wouldn’t be able to stick to it.

Lite n’ Easy proved to be the perfect solution on all counts. It was convenient with lots of choice and good food! I lost 20 kilos in under a year and have never felt better. The extra energy I have now also helps me to keep up with my hectic schedule and makes me more positive in general.

Thank you Lite n’ Easy!
Images accompanying Josephine's success story:
38. **Zoe Z (Lite n' Easy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start weight: 97 kilos (163 cm tall)</th>
<th>Current weight: 68 kilos</th>
<th>Weight lost: 29 kilos</th>
<th>Time frame: 10 months</th>
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</table>

“I didn’t think I was overweight until I saw a photo of myself. I was only 19 years old and weighed nearly 100 kilos. I didn’t have much of a life, certainly not the life of a normal teenager. I wouldn’t go out with friends because nothing would fit me and I had no confidence at all.

“Then I had knee surgery and could not exercise, so I thought it would be impossible to lose weight. In fact I was worried my weight would blow out even more. How wrong was I?

“Eating Lite n’ Easy was all I needed to do to lose 29 kilos in only 10 months!

“With Lite n’ Easy I love the fact that I know the food I am eating is healthy and portion controlled. I can still eat all the foods that I love but the meal plan shows me how much my body needs to consume to maintain a healthy weight without overeating.
“I also love waking up in the morning and having my food for the day all set out for me. There is such a variety of foods to keep me on track with losing weight that I never get bored.

“I love my life now. I have so much more energy and confidence. I am happy in my own skin and feel like I can do anything.

“Thank you Lite n’ Easy.”

Images accompanying Zoe’s success story:
Peter (Lite n' Easy)

Current weight: 95 kilos

Start weight: 130 kilos

Weight lost: 35 kilos

Time frame: 35 weeks

“My critical moment was when I slipped over and split my jeans because I was too big. I weighed the heaviest I’d ever been at 130 kilos!

“Instead of consoling myself with food and self pity as I normally would have, I got straight on the phone and called Lite n’ Easy. That was 35 weeks ago and I now weigh 95 kilos. My end goal is 90 kilos but I know that I am on track to get there in a few weeks time. I cannot describe in enough words how fantastic I feel and how easy it really was.

“The Lite n’ Easy staff have been fantastic all the way through with great support and advice at each stage of my journey. The program is easy to follow and the food is fantastic.

“My life has turned around and I am now enjoying every day to the fullest. I have great confidence again and I am really motivated. I wanted to share my experience to help others get started with their journey.

“The longest journey begins with the first step.”
A Feminist analysis of discursive practices in 'success stories' in Australian weight loss centres

Images accompanying Peter's success story:
### 40. Juliet (Lite n' Easy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>87 kilos</strong></td>
<td><strong>60 kilos</strong></td>
<td><strong>27 kilos</strong></td>
<td><strong>9 months</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(170cm tall)</td>
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“I had yo-yo dieted for the past 23 years since I had my two beautiful children, even losing a considerable amount of weight after my second pregnancy. I always put it back on with a few extra kilos each time and often felt annoyed with my lack of self control.

“Then a friend recommended Lite n’ Easy. I started in March 2013 on the 1200 calorie 5 day program and by December 2013 I had lost 27 kilos. I have maintained this weight loss ever since, just by ordering for the working week.

“Lite n’ Easy also taught me about portion control so that I can enjoy eating out with my friends and not feel guilty, especially Thai which is my favourite. I also order the Mini Meals and extra Lite n’ Easy Dinners for my 22 year old son who is a university student. He finds this convenient for a quick meal before work or when he comes home late at night.

“I have arthritis in my knees and hip and my specialist said losing this weight has helped the impact on my knees dramatically. I did not have to increase the amount of exercise to lose the weight either. I do a 15 minute walk with the dog
on most days, but working as part of a teaching team also meant I was fairly active.

“As I continued to lose weight some people didn’t recognise me. A number of friends have gone on to try Lite n’ Easy and all have been pleasantly surprised and loved the results.

“With greater confidence, I looked forward to going out and regained an interest in fashion, rather than wearing whatever I could find that fitted and was comfortable! I can honestly say I am much happier, confident and sociable since I have lost my weight.

“It is good to feel good about myself.”

Images accompanying Juliet's success story:
41. **Ben (Lite n' Easy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93 kilos</td>
<td>72 kilos</td>
<td>21 kilos</td>
<td>36 weeks</td>
</tr>
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</table>

“Less than a year ago I was so big and unfit that I couldn’t even run around the block. Then I lost 21 kilos with Lite n’ Easy and ran the full Melbourne Marathon (42.2kms)!

“The meal plan helped me lose weight and is so convenient that it allows me more time with my kids. Being fit, healthy and happy is also setting a great example for my children.

“The change in me has been immense and inspired many of my friends to lose weight and get fit to run with me in this year’s event. I get phone calls all the time asking for advice on weight loss and achieving long term lifestyle change.

“I tell them to start with Lite n’ Easy.”
Images accompanying Ben's success story:
42. **Kylie F (Lite n' Easy)**

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<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85 kilos</td>
<td>62 kilos</td>
<td>23 kilos</td>
<td>13 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(164cm tall)</td>
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“I am married with three older children and I work in a factory with a great bunch of guys, steel cap boots on and joking around all the time. Still I was never really happy with my size and so I decided to give Lite n’ Easy a try.

“I love the way I can eat more now than I ever have before and still lose weight! I also find the cost of the food to be very reasonable. I lost 23 kilos and I feel great. I have continued ordering Lite n’ Easy for over 12 months now because I really enjoy the food and the convenience.

“When I was bigger I never really enjoyed getting dressed up because I felt uncomfortable and didn't have anything nice to wear. Now I love doing my hair and make up and putting on a great outfit. It’s a lot of fun and I really enjoy everyone’s positive comments.

“Losing all that weight has made such a difference to the way I look that people who haven’t seen me for a while hardly recognise me!”
Images accompanying Kylie's success story:
43. Rachel and Phillip (Lite n' Easy)

Rachel

Start weight: 65 kilos (161cm)
Current weight: 56 kilos
Weight lost: 9 kilos
Time frame: 12 weeks

Phillip

Start weight: 104.3 kilos
Current weight: 90.8 kilos
Weight lost: 12.5 kilos
Time frame: 12 weeks

“After having 2 children quite close together, I needed some help to shift that last bit of stubborn baby weight. I had success with Lite n’ Easy years ago and knew it would work again.

“My husband Phillip joined me on the program which was a massive bonus because now I don’t have to cook every night.

“In only 12 weeks I lost 9 kilos which I did not expect. I had lost all the baby weight and then some, taking me down to my wedding weight. Needless to say I am so happy with the way I look and feel. Phillip has lost 12 kilos too and feels much healthier and confident in himself.”
“We are rapt with the results and thanks to Lite n’ Easy we feel like much better parents and partners.”

Images accompanying Rachel and Phillip's success story:
44. Reece (Lite n' Easy)

| Start weight: 109 kilos (176cm) | Current weight: 91 kilos | Weight lost: 18 kilos | Time frame: 12 weeks |

“My problem with weight gain started when I broke my leg in two places playing American football and couldn’t join the army as planned. I was off my leg for 10 weeks and gained 8 kilos! A relationship breakup and a few other compounding issues spiralled me into a little depression, and I found myself eating for the sake of eating. By the time I was 21, I weighed 115 kilos.

“I started eating frozen diet dinners from the supermarket and was spending heaps of time in the gym and only lost about 6 kilos in 3 months. The lack of progress was frustrating.

“My dad actually suggested Lite n’ Easy and when I called, the consultant couldn’t have been more accommodating. She was amazing, very supportive and informative. I felt welcome and not judged.

“Once I began eating correctly with Lite n’ Easy I was on the right track and consistently lost over a kilo per week. It reinforced to me the old adage that 80% of weight loss comes down to what you are putting in your mouth and I had been kidding myself that I could train away a bad diet. I also had to give up soft drink and late night snacks, but these were not doing me any good anyway.
“I love Lite n’ Easy because if you stick to it, you actually lose the weight. The meal plan also taught me portion control and healthy eating, so much so that when I went on holiday to Brazil recently, I followed the Lite n’ Easy principles with my food choices and I actually lost a kilo – on holiday! I also met a great girl over there and we are dating now.

“So I started at age 21 weighing 109 kilos and now at age 22 I am down to around 90-91 kilos. This, I can certainly say is all because of Lite n’ Easy.”

Images accompanying Reece’s success story:
45. Anthony (Lite n' Easy)

Start

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weight:</td>
<td>94 kilos</td>
<td>weight:</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>(178 cm tall)</td>
<td></td>
<td>lost:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80 kilos</td>
<td>14 kilos</td>
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My wife was taken ill four years ago and had to go into a nursing home. After that our situation changed quite dramatically with me going in and out to see her every day and helping to look after her as much as I could. I still work 3 days a week at Bunnings, so I started to neglect myself a little and fell into the trap of eating junk food and putting on weight.

At 93 kilos I felt I was getting too heavy and needed to do something about it. I had been considering Lite n’ Easy for a long time and finally took the plunge.

Lite n’ Easy was able to provide me with a good mixed meal plan which I found to be fantastic! Everything I needed, delivered and prepared. Before Lite n’ Easy I never bought salad or veges because cooking for one was hard to do in my situation. Lite n’ Easy made sure I was getting plenty of fruit and vegetables in my diet everyday.

I like all the snacks, any breakfast with bacon, Beef Stroganoff, Chicken Tikka Masala. The meals and snacks are great to take to work and I am the envy of everyone in the lunch room.
I lost 14 kilos in 12 weeks and I feel a lot better now that I have a good healthy diet. The heat has been more bearable this summer. I can now do 60 sit ups every morning, stretching on the pilates ball and use some weights. I feel good too because everyone tells me how great I look.

The added bonus is I have more time and less stress thinking about shopping and preparing food for myself, so I can spend more time with my wife too. All in all, Lite n’ Easy helps me to keep enjoying life and gives me more time and energy to do all the things I need.

Images accompanying Anthony’s success story:
46. Melissa P (Lite n' Easy)

Start

weight: Current Weight
80 kilos weight: lost: 20 kilos
(158cm 60 kilos 20 kilos
(tall) weeks)

“Like most mums with three kids, my life is crazy busy. I also run a dance
school, play in a band with my husband and have just opened a dancewear shop.
We wouldn’t have it any other way, but I was finding it hard to keep up.

“After having three children I was carrying lots of extra weight and I just could
not shake it. It was slowing me down!

“It was mid 2013 when I decided enough was enough and I called Lite n’ Easy.
My first delivery arrived at my door and I never looked back. It only took me 20
weeks to lose 20 kilos as the weight literally fell off me.

“The added bonus is that I don’t have to cook special meals for myself so what
precious little time I do have left after working all day (and most nights) I can
now be spending with my family instead.

“I absolutely love Lite n’ Easy and the food is delicious. I fully endorse the
program especially for anyone trying to lose weight. If like me, you have very
little spare time on your hands, then Lite n’ Easy is the solution!
“I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would get back to my pre-baby weight, let alone lose even more than that. I am currently lighter than I was on my wedding day!

“My parents, my husband and my two brothers all now order Lite n’ Easy too. Thank you Lite n’ Easy not only for giving me my life back but also my confidence as well. I receive compliments everywhere I go and I can’t tell you what a great feeling that is to hear all the time.”

Images accompanying Melissa's success story
47. Sarah (Lite n' Easy)

Start weight: 120 kilos (173cm tall)
Current weight: 60 kilos
Weight lost: 60 kilos
Time frame: 18 months

“I suffered a serious back injury and found it very difficult to cook for myself, so I began to order Lite n’ Easy.

“I’m a single mum with one grown up son and I work full time. Having Lite n’ Easy cook for me and deliver my week’s worth of food while I was recuperating was absolutely wonderful. The added benefit was that I started losing weight.

“I had been carrying those excess kilos for quite a few years but with Lite n’ Easy I went from 120 kilos to 60 kilos without ever feeling like I was on a real ‘diet’ or that I was missing out. Needless to say my back has improved significantly too.

“The flexibility of meal plan options has been great for me. I order the 5 or 7 Day Meal Plan depending on whether I’m travelling for work or going out on the weekends. Sometimes I skip weeks altogether if I am away on holidays.

“It is great to know that Lite n’ Easy is there for me ongoing, so I never really have to worry about shopping for food or cooking for myself.

“Lite n’ Easy is definitely one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.”
Images accompanying Sarah's success story:
48. Sarah W (Lite n' Easy)

Start weight: 97 kilos
Current weight: 67 kilos
Weight lost: 30 kilos

Time frame:
Maintained since 2010

My ‘light bulb’ moment came when my best friend asked me to be a bridesmaid in her wedding in 2010. I was 97 kilos, a size 18 and completely unfit. I never ate breakfast and lived on takeaway.

My mum had used Lite n’ Easy and I had watched her lose weight easily and healthily so I thought I’d give it a go. I hoped Lite n’ Easy would help me learn about portion control and healthy eating without resorting to gimmicky fads and quick-fix solutions that never worked.

Lite n’ Easy did not disappoint. I started ordering the full meal plan with breakfast, lunch and dinner and I really enjoyed the food and watching my weight drop over the next few months. I loved the different variety in the meals and the convenience of not having to cook.

Lite n’ Easy became a part of my lifestyle and getting it delivered was exciting each Wednesday, I looked forward to opening up the box for the week.

With Lite n’ Easy and two personal training sessions per week, I lost 15 kilos in time for my friend’s wedding and then kept going to lose another 15 kilos.
I have since trained to become a Personal Trainer myself, so I can inspire others that it is possible to change your life and you can achieve your dreams. I love my new life!

Images accompanying Sarah W’s success story:
49. Dr Rae (Lite n' Easy)

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<tr>
<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83.6 kilos</td>
<td>63.6 kilos</td>
<td>20 kilos</td>
<td>8 months</td>
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“I could be described as a very experienced dieter, having tried everything over the years. I have managed to lose weight successfully on occasion but as soon as I let my guard down and as work stress increased it all would gradually re-accumulate.

“Being a general practitioner I am very aware of the danger of developing mature age diabetes and other health risks of being overweight. In January 2013 I decided to start with Lite n’ Easy, prompted by the fact I had developed a degree of swelling around my ankles which suggested my weight was placing my heart under stress.

“I am very glad to say that Lite n’ Easy has indeed solved all of these problems. I lost 20 kilos in 8 months, just in time for my daughter’s wedding and I feel great! My husband has been very supportive. He orders the 1800 calorie Lunch & Dinner Plan then does his own breakfast.

“I have been delighted with the quality of the food and the excellent dietary balance Lite n’ Easy provides. Having all of our food delivered has also given me freedom from the constant bother of menu planning, shopping for food and preparing meals. This in turn gives me time for much more rewarding activities.
“All of this makes me very happy to promote Lite n’ Easy to my patients interested in achieving a much healthier lifestyle and to continue ordering for myself and my husband indefinitely.

Images accompanying Rae's success story:
50. Mardie (Lite n' Easy)

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<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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<tr>
<td>78 kilos (165cm)</td>
<td>58 kilos</td>
<td>20 kilos</td>
<td>22 weeks</td>
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Mardie leaves all the thinking to Lite n’ Easy

“Having two kids quite close together, inevitably I put on a lot of extra weight and did not have the time or energy to focus on eating properly or exercising.

“Now that I am turning 40, I just want to be here for my kids and lead a fit and healthy life. I chose Lite n’ Easy because I didn’t want to waste time stressing about what I was eating.

“With Lite n’ Easy Everything is labeled and organized for each day so don’t have to think about it at all, you just grab the meal and go. My husband Matt jumped on board to help me out. Once we had eaten all the food from Day One with Lite n’ Easy, we were locked in. It was refreshing to go through the menu and choose things that you would normally choose from a restaurant menu.

“I lost 20 kilos in 22 weeks which was amazing. I thought it would take a lot longer. I thought I would have to do a lot more exercise. So it was a great surprise to jump on the scales each month and see my weight dropping. Matt’s belt notch was dropping too.
“The best thing is Lite n’ Easy didn’t feel like a diet at all and that’s because it’s not a diet. It’s just eating healthier and eating a great variety of food. I really just wanted to eat good meals and get on with my life. Lite n’ Easy has allowed me to do that and given me my pre-baby body back as well. I could not be happier with the end result.”

Images accompanying Mardie’s success story:
51. John (Lite n' Easy)

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<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>124 kilos</td>
<td>100 kilos</td>
<td>24 kilos</td>
<td>23 weeks</td>
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24 kilos going, going, GONE!

Melbourne real estate professional, John, has lost an amazing 24 kilos in 23 weeks with Lite n’ Easy and found even more energy and confidence with his new healthier lifestyle.

“I reckon I represent thousands of salesmen in Australia who eat at the wrong time, the wrong food and don’t have their diet in order. As a real estate agent and auctioneer I basically work out of my car. I get called out of the office at odd times to show properties and I work all weekend.

“For all of my 30s and 40s I was eating for convenience rather than health, putting on more than 20 kilos. I tried exercise, pills, powders, even tapes and could not lose more than 3 or 4 kilos, then my partner suggested Lite ‘n Easy.

“Lite n’ Easy has been a real game changer. You’re getting the foods you love to eat but with the right portion control, the right amount of calories and a much better healthier version.
“I love the convenience. I have my brekky at home, I pack my lunch in my little eski and have it in the car. Then I really look forward to coming home and putting my Lite n’ Easy dinner in the microwave. I even keep some spare dinners in the office in case I have to work late.

“Hats off to the chefs because the food is restaurant quality, it really is. I love my food and if Lite n’ Easy food was not up to scratch I would have dropped it in a couple of weeks, but here I am still loving it six months later.

“I’ve lost 24 kilos, gone from a size 44 to a 34 in jeans and I can really feel the difference. I have more energy in general and I even sleep better.

“I find myself being more enthusiastic with my work. The thing I love most about my job is doing auctions, getting up in front of a big crowd. Now I feel more confident during my auctions and I’m running through the crowd, having a laugh.

“Once you lose the weight it really does look like you’ve got your life together, you’ve got your act together. Lite n’ Easy’s the only thing that has worked for me. I wish I had done it ten years ago!”
Images accompanying John's success story
52. **Kathleen & Nyree (Lite n' Easy)**

Mother and daughter duo, Kathleen and Nyree both enjoy having Lite n’ Easy meals on hand for any situation that life may throw their way.

Kathleen features in our latest Lite n’ Easy TV commercial and at 71 years of age is a wonderful testament to good health.

“Mum and I are very close, in fact she lives right next door! Considering she is in her 70’s, she has amazing energy levels and is still very involved in every facet of our daily lives including helping out with the kids. My husband and I both have busy careers so she is certainly worth her weight in gold to our family.

Still, we were conscious that we needed to eat healthy, just to keep us going through such a busy and stressful time.

So we turned to Lite n’ Easy and stocked up our fridges and freezers each week. It was so much easier knowing that everyone at home was being fed nutritious and tasty meals. It also allowed us to eat on the run and keep our energy up. We ordered Lite n’ Easy Mini Meals and Meals in a Bowl for the kids, and a range of dinner meals for other family members who dropped in.

During this time it was nice to know that while we were busy running around, Lite n’ Easy was looking after us. Now, if someone else is in a similar situation we make the call and order them a Lite n’ Easy care package – it’s always appreciated.”
Images accompanying Kathleen and Nyree's success story:
53. Jodie G (Lite n' Easy)

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<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70 kilos (166cm)</td>
<td>60 kilos</td>
<td>10 kilos</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
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FAB & FORTY!

“I initially used Lite n’ Easy for weight loss. I had my 40th birthday coming up at the end of last year and I wanted to look good for it. I also wanted to feel healthy and be fit for the next 40 years of my life.

“I lost 10 kilos in about 12 weeks and 6 months later I am still ordering just for the convenience because it makes our lives so much easier.

“I’m a wife and mother trying to juggle a full time job, so for me Lite n’ Easy means I am working smarter not harder. All of the time I used to spend food shopping and preparing meals I now spend with the kids. Food is one less thing I have to worry about, especially in the busy times before school and when I get home late from work.

“The added bonus is I’m eating real food that tastes great. Plus the kids enjoy the meals too. On busy nights when they get in late from sports or dancing they can have a healthy Lite n’ Easy meal, ready to eat in just minutes.
“It’s all of those things that make Lite n’ Easy such a good choice for our family.”

Images accompanying Jodie's success story:
54. **Jodie and Damien (Lite n' Easy)**

**Jodie**

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<th>Start weight:</th>
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<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75 kilos</td>
<td>57 kilos</td>
<td>18 kilos</td>
<td>20 weeks (2009)</td>
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**Damian**

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<th>Start weight:</th>
<th>Current weight:</th>
<th>Weight lost:</th>
<th>Time frame:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84 kilos</td>
<td>75 kilos</td>
<td>9 kilos</td>
<td>8 weeks (2009)</td>
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“Five years on we still love our Lite n’ Easy”

Jodie and Damien are long time Lite n’ Easy fans since they first had success losing a combined total of 27 kilos back in 2009.

“Damian and I always call on Lite n’ Easy when we are super busy and wanting to eat healthy to keep our weight in check. I recently went back to work full-time so it’s been great to have the meals there ready.”
“And now, even our extended family and friends are enjoying the benefits of Lite n’ Easy. Damian’s parents order the meals just for the healthy convenience. His sister Angela orders them as she has just had baby number three and wants to get back to her pre-baby weight. Then there’s our neighbour who is a busy single mum plus lots of other friends in town who have followed in our footsteps, after seeing our success.

“We love Lite n’ Easy. It’s part of the family really.”

**Jodie’s favourite: #18 Roast Chicken  Damian’s favourite: #113 Roghan Josh**

Images accompanying Jodie’s and Damien’s success story:
Appendix C

Full scope of 12WBT success stories from

www.12wbt.com.au
1. **Jeff (12WBT)**

When Jeff wasn’t able to complete the treetop adventure course his wife had given him as a birthday gift, he decided it was time to turn his life around. After losing 16 kilos in his first round of 12WBT, he’s never looked or felt better.

Some 12WBT Members can name the precise moment they realised they had to make some serious changes in their lives. For Jeff, that “light bulb moment” occurred as he hung helplessly from a tree in the middle of an obstacle course that had gotten the better of him.

“For my 41st birthday last August, my wife Megan bought us one of those treetop adventure days where you climb on ropes and do zip lines,” says Jeff. “There were four obstacle courses ranging from easy to very hard. After the first three, I was absolutely shattered as they require a lot of upper body strength and balance. When it was time for the last one, I really struggled. But once you’re up there, you have to complete the course. At one point, I fell and I was just dangling in my harness, and I said, ‘I hate being fat sometimes!’ My wife turned around and said, ‘I’ve never heard you say that about yourself before.’ It was a big moment.”

**A Change of Routine**
After the treetop challenge that changed it all.

For several years, Jeff had been coming home exhausted and ravenous after working a 10-hour shift on his feet as a production manager. After tucking into a huge dinner, he’d head to bed and have a restless night.

The next morning, he’d wake up exhausted, skip breakfast and drag himself to work. By mid-morning, he’d hit the vending machine for a chocolate bar. Although lunch was a relatively healthy sandwich and muesli bar, he didn’t eat anything else until dinner – and the cycle would start all over again.

“My problem was mainly portion size, not bad food,” says Jeff. “Megan is gluten, wheat and dairy-intolerant, which eliminates a lot. We’ve never been into takeaway because burgers contain wheat and fries contain gluten, but we would always get into a big dinner. I was probably undereating during the day and compensating during the evenings.”

But after his treetop epiphany, Jeff decided it was time for a change. “It kept playing on my mind that I couldn’t complete this course,” says Jeff. “Then I started thinking, I’ve been buying larger trousers for the last couple of years, and I’ve gone from a size 34 waist when I was in my 20s and to a size 40 in my 40s. When did that happen?”
Jeff wanted to be more active for his daughter Grace.

His wife and three-year-old daughter Grace were also major sources of motivation for him to take control of his health. “I kept thinking, I want to see Grace grow up and get married one day,” he says.

“And Megan is a nurse, so she’d tell me, ‘The bigger you get, diabetes is going to be an issue and your joints are going to play up,’ and I’d had trouble with my back for a while. So I knew it was time.”

**Taking the Plunge**

Jeff called Megan’s cousin, who’d just completed a Round of 12WBT. “I asked her what she thought of the program,” says Jeff. “She’d lost 27kg and said it was the best thing she’d ever done. She’s now smashing it doing half marathons and mud runs, and she looks fantastic. I thought, let’s get signed up.”

And so he put his name down for Round 1, 2013, but there were four weeks left to go until it started. Keen to kick-start the process, he borrowed an exercise bike from his in-laws and lost 4kg during the four weeks of Pre-Season.
He and Megan struggled with the 12WBT menu and food plan for the first few days because it wasn’t as easy as throwing something unhealthy in the oven. But he says they quickly got the hang of it and really began enjoying their meals. Even little Grace was a fan!

Jeff diligently wrote down everything he ate in a food diary and kept track of all his calories. He was astonished at how much he could actually eat and how much better he felt when he made the right food choices. “Now, breakfast is a big part of my day,” he says. “And I take a bag full of food to work every day. Everyone’s amazed at how much I eat throughout the day!”

He got right into the exercise as well. “I bought a road bike and got out on it at least twice a week,” he says. “I also have free weights in my garage, and then I started smashing out Michelle Bridges’ online cardio videos. At first, it felt weird as a man doing videos in the garage, but I started to love them. I invested in a heart rate monitor as well to create a little competition for myself and see how many calories I could burn each session.”

All Jeff’s hard work paid off – he lost 16kg in his first Round. He was even able to fit into skinny jeans for the first time in years. “I bought three pairs – I couldn’t believe it!” Jeff says.

**Brand New Goals**
Jeff looks as good as he feels

While he was thrilled with his results, Jeff was keen to continue improving his fitness, so he signed up for the Intermediate Program in the next 12WBT. “I want to try to increase my kilometres on the bike and get rid of the spare tyre I still have around the middle,” he says. “My goal weight is 80kg, but I mainly want to get fitter and more toned, so I’d be happy with 80 to 85kg.”

And that treetop course? “I redid it a while ago and I smashed it!” says Jeff. Right on!

Jeff’s Top 12WBT Tips

• Keep a food diary every day and write down every single thing you put in your mouth, even down to how much water you’re drinking. Also, write down what you’re planning to eat on a day-to-day basis so you make sure to take it with you to work. My food diary is my new bible.

• I downloaded a great app for my phone that converts kilojoules to calories. It really helps because food packets have kilojoules on them.
• If you can get the support of your friends and family, it makes all the
difference because you don’t have mates trying to force another beer into you.
And if you can get your partner behind you, that’s everything.

Jeff’s 12WBT Stats

• Height: 185cm
• Start weight: 101kg
• Weight loss in first 12WBT: 12kg
• Total weight loss: 16kg
• Current weight: 85kg
2. Barbara (12WBT)

Barbara’s Brave New Life

Barbara was a happy, healthy 35 year old.

Active, happy, healthy and only 35, Barbara’s shock health crisis was the catalyst for a complete life overhaul.

When Barbara began getting terrible headaches, she put them down to stress – even though she was loving her life. Doctors and physios agreed that Barbara’s headaches must be stress related. After all, the Kalgoorlie recruitment consultant was fit, healthy – she’d never smoked and rarely drank – and only 35.

But the headaches became so bad she had ringing in her ears and felt nauseous. So sick she could barely stand up anymore, Barbara began to get worried.

“One day I went to pick up the phone and I couldn’t hold it. That’s when I started really freaking out,” she says. Barbara phoned her sister, who took her to
hospital. After an initial consultation she was given a cat scan, and booked in for a second…

“The following Friday morning I had a nap, and when I woke up I didn’t know where anything was. I didn’t ’t know where my jeans were, I didn’t know where my hairbrush was.” Barbara’s partner rushed her to hospital. The doctor took one look and said she was having a rare form of stroke.

Barbara went into intensive care and two days later, her family was informed she was close to death, as blood clots in the brain were blocking the blood flow. In the blink of an eye, she’d lost everything.

After ten days in hospital, Barbara was finally cleared to go home. She recovered in only two months, but was forever changed. “I was just lost. I’d lost all confidence. It felt like my body was going against me and I was so worried it would happen again. Even though I still had this amazing job, wonderful partner and great family I was grieving who I once was, because I really was different. I wasn’t in a good place,” she admits.
It was a downward spiral. Worried about raising her heart rate and triggering another clot, Barbara ditched her regular workouts and put on 15 kilos. “I didn’t trust my body or my abilities any more. The I became angry because I’d put on weight and my body didn’t feel like mine anymore. I was horrible to my partner, and my family and my friends. And then, in December 2012, I pretty much hit rock bottom. I just got really, really sad about the way I felt and looked, and I thought ‘I can’t go on like this’,” Barbara says.

With her self-esteem at an all time low, an emotional recovery seemed impossible. Then Barbara watched The Biggest Loser. “I saw these really big people running and I thought ‘if they can do it, surely I can do it’. And I loved how Michelle genuinely wanted the best for them. I cried during the finale, and then I signed up for 12WBT,” she says.

Faced with the very first Pre-Season task on getting real and ditching excuses, Barbara shed more tears. “It really hit home. I hadn’t acknowledged what I’d been through, and I just sat there saying, ‘Oh my goodness.’ I realised it was fear that was holding me back.”

At that moment fear lost its hold on Barbara and she began to move forward. While the weight didn’t drop off as she’d first hoped, Barbara completed her first Round having achieved something just as valuable: “I finally got my head right, and I learned that I had to be kinder to myself,” she says.

Barbara’s whole life changed as she became happier, braver, stronger and more proud of herself. She was no longer afraid of going to the gym and training with the guys, no longer embarrassed about having her photo taken. She ditched her job to start her own business as a personal travel manager, her dream career.
“The funny thing is, this particular opportunity had presented itself to me before. But there was something holding me back, and I was scared. If I didn’t have the confidence I found through 12WBT there is no way I could have done it!” she laughs.

The same goes for Barbara’s new role as an ambassador for the National Stroke Foundation. “I hate public speaking but now my life is about being brave. I know it’s clichéd but I feel like what happened, happened for a reason.”

Barbara (left) is happy again, with friends in Bali 2012.

With the weight lifted from her mind, 39 year old Barbara is doing her second 12WBT. “The mental change has already happened, so this Round is about weight loss and the physical change that needs to happen. I have so much to look forward to,” she says.

[box] Barbara’s Top Tips

“When you go through a health crisis like a stroke, you find yourself with a new life. It might not be the one that you’ve chosen, but there are still so many amazing things you can do. My baby steps might look different to someone else’s. You just have to give yourself time, and it does get better. It totally comes down to mindset.”
“Find a support crew for your life. My partner is my biggest supporter in everything – my recovery, 12WBT, and my new business. You can’t do it without that.”

“The way you look at things from the inside will always affect the way you look on the outside. Focus on getting your head right first.”
3. Jacqueline (12WBT)

My 45kg Loss: I Simply Followed the 12WBT Plan

Jacqueline – a working single mum of four – is proof that losing 45kg CAN be done! She also now has daily ‘me time’, literally out-runs her kids and has time for her friends. Oh, and she’s just gone skydiving.

Third-time 12WBTer Jacqueline has a secret to share. She’s lost an amazing 45kg over three Rounds and it’s all because of a simple decision she made to start getting up at 4am.

She uses words like “perfect”, “fun” and “relaxed” to describe some of the ways her life has changed, which is all the more meaningful when Jacque recalls the day she signed up for 12WBT. “I was at work and felt like I couldn’t breathe – I felt pressure on all my internal organs,” she says. “On the side of my computer screen popped up a 12WBT advertisement. I clicked it to have a look and thought I’d give it a shot. I needed to do something!

“I thought 12WBT would be just like everything else I’ve tried – you lose a bit of weight then it just comes back on – but it worked! I lost a LOT of weight.”

Success With the Meal Plans

Says Jacque, “Everything in the program works together. I wasn’t eating properly, so when I first started, nutrition was the focus. I just followed the
12WBT Meal Plans. I didn’t have to decide what was for dinner and I knew that with the Shopping Lists everything was already in the house.”

She adds that she decided to cook different food for her four kids, and made two meals each night. That suited her fine, though, especially as she had enough of her 12WBT food for lunch the next day.

“When I came home from work I made what was on the Meal Plan and had dinner within half an hour,” she says. “I’d put a second serve in my purple Tupperware container, which I’ve taken to work for lunch every day since I started.”

**Changing Her Mindset to Change Her Life**

Jacqueline’s a big fan of Michelle’s Mindset Video Lessons. “They keep you focused and get you to deal with the underlying reasons why you became what you were,” she explains. “Mish gets you to think about why you were doing that
to yourself. Now I walk every morning for two hours and it gives me time to think – it’s processed a lot of problems and enabled me to move on.”

Jacque credits the Pre-Season Tasks putting her on the right track. “They start you thinking about why you want this,” she says. “If you start the program unsure, you’re not going to commit. If you know you want to make a change, you know the time is now, then you will honour your commitment.”

**Pictures of a Sunrise Inspired a Change**

One of Jacqueline’s main motivations for signing up to 12WBT was her kids. “There’s just me looking after them, so I need to be there long-term. But when I started 12WBT, I felt selfish because I went to work in the morning, came home, had dinner, then went walking in the evening and didn’t get a lot of time with them.

“Then I read a blog post by someone who’d taken photos of the sunrise when she’d been out walking and I thought, ‘I like sunrises, so I’m going to get up in the mornings.’

“I introduced myself to the three hours before 7am, which normally I slept through, and have done it ever since. I walk 10km, and in my latest Round I’ve incorporated runs into the routine.

“The best thing is I have time to sit quietly and eat breakfast before I have to wake the kids up. I’m more organised than ever – those three hours are amazing.
And I don’t have to take time out of the evenings. I still have ‘mum time’ with the kids, so it’s perfect.”

Jacque keeps track of progress with a Fitbit and says, “If I don’t do my morning walk, I only do 2000 steps in a day. But if I go for my morning walk it’s 20,000 steps before I go to work!”

**Jacqueline’s Wake-Up Weapon**

An early start can be the biggest challenge of the day, but Jacque uses this trick: “Sometimes in the morning I hear Mish’s voice in my head saying JFDI – Just Freakin’ Do It!

“The hardest bit is getting your feet from the bed to the floor. To get from 7am to 4am I moved my alarm back 15 minutes at a time. I didn’t necessarily get up, but I woke up and when I got to 4am it just wasn’t worth NOT getting up. Some mornings I go out and my hair’s not brushed and I look atrocious, but nobody else is out there!”

**Sharing the 12WBT Journey**
A surprise bonus for Jacque has been a healthier friendship. “After my first round, my best friend said, ‘You’re too busy for me now, so I’m going to get up in the morning and come walking with you.’ For the first three months, walking on my own was thinking time, and when my friend joined me I was ready to have someone to talk to while walking.”

Jacqueline adds that it was encouraging to be involved with an online community of like-minded 12WBTers.

“Joining the 30+ Facebook Group was motivating. I know the photos are real before-and-afters because I talk to these people every day,” she says.

“When I put up my photos, the responses bring a tear because they’re from people who feel how I felt when I started. It’s nice to pay it forward to the next lot of 12WBTers trying to change their lives.

She’s also made good use of the 12WT Forums. “They’re a great place to ask questions to the Support Crew. I’d never run in my life so I had a lot of questions, like how’s my foot supposed to hit the ground, and should I wear shoes when running on the beach?”

Meet the New Super Mum!
Jacque’s four kids are loving their newly energised mum. “I wasn’t fit at all before, but now I can go roller-skating and swimming AND run further than them! My 10-year-old wanted to come for a training run with me. I told him he had to run a long way and he said, ‘I can do it.’ He’s quite fit but only made 1.5km. So we walked after that and he hasn’t asked to come again!”

Jacque says the program’s Mini Milestones have kept her setting new physical challenges: “I love them as an excuse to push myself further than I dreamt I could go.”

She’s just completed one of her biggest milestones … jumping out of a plane! “About 20kg ago I made a crazy declaration that I’d go skydiving if I ever hit 65kg – and I did!” she says. “Since joining 12WBT I’ve climbed mountains, run a half marathon, done crazy things!” Now she can add sky-diving to the list. The big question is: what’s next?! 
4. Angela (12WBT)

Angela’s Success Story: “I changed the shape of my post-baby body”

Name: Angela

Current Round: Lean & Strong

Number of Rounds: 1

After giving birth to her second baby, Angela was committed to lose her baby weight. By following healthy recipes and going to the gym, she was able to lose weight over 12 months, but over time she noticed old habits were creeping back in, like ordering takeaway instead of cooking healthy meals. “I needed another challenge because I didn’t want to plateau or fall back into old habits,” she says.

Shape-Changing with Workouts

Angela (right) with friends before beginning her journey
“My motivation to sign up for 12WBT wasn’t weight loss, it was about setting another goal,” says Angela, 37. “I chose the Lean & Strong Program, because I loved BodyPump and lifting weights as well as running.”

Now in the 11th week of her first Round, she says: “I get cardio benefits through my workouts, and I’ve actually changed the shape of my body. Rather than just losing weight, I’ve become more toned and stronger.

“I also have the confidence now to lift weights that I never thought I’d be able to without ending up looking like a bodybuilder. That’s one lesson I’ve learnt – I can trust in myself and my body and it’s always going to do exactly what I ask of it.”

Another bonus is that Angela is stronger around the home. “Doing 12WBT has helped me with the kids,” she says. “I didn’t have as much energy before, but now I can keep up and even lift them if I need to.”

The 12WBT menu is like eating at a restaurant

Angela and her husband
“The bonus for signing up with 12WBT has been that I’ve lost another 3kg and have just 600g to go until I reach my ideal weight – although I don’t know how, because you never feel like you’re starving yourself!

“I absolutely love the 12WBT menus,” Angela adds. “From Michelle’s recipes I learnt how to substitute ingredients and try new things. One of my breakfasts was bread with cottage cheese, banana and walnuts. I’d never have had that before!

“Because the recipes are for two, I cook them for my husband and I. We’ve tried so many that he says it’s like eating out a restaurant. Even for Saturday’s treat meals we find something on the Program like a curry or something we don’t normally have during the week and cook it up. My husband even stopped taking vitamin tablets because he says he’s getting a whole range of food now.”

Kangaroo is on the menu!

“I’d never cooked with kangaroo before. I even use it in the kids’ spaghetti bolognese and now they’ll only eat kangaroo sausages.”

Keep weight off by doing what you love

“The key is that the Program allows me to do things that bring me the most joy – weight-lifting, going to the gym and doing gym classes.

“The only way to keep weight off and stay challenged is to harness a love for what you’re doing and make it part of your day rather than a chore. It’s not:
‘Oh, I have to go to the gym now.’ It’s more like: ‘Okay, time for the gym. This is my time!’ That’s important when you have kids.”

**Staying motivated with the 12WBT forums**

Angela has signed up for another round of Lean & Strong and finds inspiration by talking to others doing the Program. “I’m active in the Forum for Lean & Strong because it makes me feel involved, there’s a community and you get to share what you’ve been doing with others,” she says.

“We women often don’t feel comfortable flaunting our achievements – we’re taught to play them down. But I’ve enjoyed being able to go: ‘Hey, I did this today!’ And everyone’s like: ‘That’s fantastic!’ You don’t feel silly for putting it out there that you’ve had some sort of great achievement.”
5. **Tracey (12WBT)**

Tracey: Napoleon Perdis TONI&GUY Makeover Winner

In celebration of Tracey’s hard work and commitment she won a one-hour Makeover session with a Napoleon Perdis Creative Team Makeup Artist and a Hair Makeover session including a Personalised Therapy Treatment, cut and blow-dry with a TONI&GUY Art Director. Tracey also took home a Napoleon makeup bag valued at $150 and TONI&GUY Label M pack valued at $150.

When asked how a glamour makeover would complete her 12 Week Body Transformation, Tracey told us, “From workout gear, sweaty hair, no makeup, to glamorous and girly. How wonderful to complete my transformation – after a 47kg loss. Being a mum and having MS, I sometimes forget about the glamour that being a girl can bring – it would be incredible!

![Image of Tracey after makeover](image_url)

**Post Makeover:** Tracey hadn’t had a haircut in 18 months, and really gave her self-confidence a boost. “OMG thank you 12WBT, Napoleon and TONI&GUY for making me feel like a Rock Star,” exclaimed Tracey. “I
fell into a slump and haven’t dedicated any time to pampering myself. Not only do I feel fantastic, but this makeover made me feel so special and showed me I can feel and look beautiful!”

**Number of Rounds: 5**

**Kilos Lost: 47**

**About Tracey:** Tracey is a wife and mum of two; who also has MS. Since joining 12WBT thanks to a few friends who raved about it following their own success, Tracey hasn’t looked back.

For Tracey it was the everyday things that were hard to do like walking up stairs at the train station or being active with her children. Since joining 12WBT Tracey and her family’s life has changed. “I have a 16 year-old son who tells me how proud he is, we now train together, it’s given us a common ground and strengthened our relationship,” says Tracey. Tracey also loves that she can walk and skip with her eight year-old daughter to school each morning, something she could have never done before joining 12WBT.
Romance has also rekindled… “My husband and I are closer and he’s so proud and supportive which helps, he’s really embraced the 12WBT program and cooks all the meals for us, so we’re all reaping the benefits from my lifestyle change,” says Tracey.

While Tracey has met some challenges on the program, while dealing with MS, she’s never given up and says her doctors are nothing but supportive and wish all their patients would do what she has done.

“Being fitter and not carrying the extra weight definitely helps with my MS, my blood pressure has returned to normal and I’ve got so much more vitality and energy,” says Tracey.

Inspiration to join 12WBT: Just before Christmas two years ago, Tracey had her wisdom teeth removed, the first day she was able to eat solids again, was Christmas Day, after seeing photos of herself and noticing she’d lost a couple of kilos from not eating, it was enough to inspire her to think she could lose weight.
**Turning Point:** Tracey’s turning point came midway through her second round, and due to the connections and friendships she made were what spurred her on, within 16 weeks she achieved a huge goal and was able to run 5km. “it’s the community that makes the 12WBT program so special and inspiring,” says Tracey.

**Biggest Motivator:** Tracey’s biggest motivator was her family, the 12WBT program helped her to feel better within her self, “I also suffer from depression,” admits Tracey, “since joining 12WBT I am feeling more positive about everything in my life, plus having people tell me how much younger I look is so amazing to hear,” smiles Tracey.

**Tracey’s Top 12WBT Tip:** Embrace the change! Immerse yourself in the program and trust you can do it! Use the community and connections with other 12WBT members to inspire you when the going gets tough.
Bella before her first 12WBT Round, left, and, a year later and 41 kilos lighter, right.

What a difference a year can make! In 12 months Bella lost 41 kilos through the [12 Week Body Transformation](#). An entrepreneur and married mum with two small children, Bella writes about her 12WBT experience on her blog [Sailor Vee](#). She spoke to us about how the 12WBT transformed her body and her life and how blogging has helped her reach her goals.

Bella, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I am 30. I live in Tasmania and I am married with two kids — one’s 5 and one’s 18 months old. I am an entrepreneur and until June 2011 I owned a chain of real estate agencies that I had built up over three years.

Basically you started a business and had kids around the same time. So your life in the last few years has been pretty hectic?

Massively hectic!

Pre-12WBT, how high on your priority list was exercising and looking after yourself?
I just didn’t give it any thought. It just wasn’t something that I referred to. As a working mum you tend to put everything else first and my weight just kept creeping up. I knew I wasn’t eating as well as I should but I kept thinking that eating well takes far more time than I had. I had in my head that I was too busy to eat well.

It sounds like you had done other weight loss programs in the past and hadn’t had much success?

Yeah I used to be a big fan of finding any crash diet that would promise to just take weight off me really quickly. So I had done a high-protein diet with moderate success for my wedding. And I had lost weight but it had bounced right back on.

What led you to the 12WBT?

I found it randomly on Facebook after a few of my friends had ‘liked’ the program. It kept popping up in my newsfeed and I was someone who was feeling miserable and 112 kilos I couldn’t help but see it. One night I was home alone and just clicked on the website.

Bella before she signed up for the 12 Week Body Transformation.

So you signed up for the first time in 2011. How much weight did you lose in your first Round of 12WBT?
About 15 kilos.

You write about your 12WBT experience on your blog Sailor Vee and won the award for Blogger of the Round at the Round 3 2012 Finale. When did you decide to start blogging about the program?

It occurred to me that so much about 12WBT is about the mindset and that was the thing that really sets the program apart. With the first Rounds of 12WBT that I did I had done a lot of work on my diet and with my exercise but I wasn’t addressing some of the mindset issues. As I started the blog I was going through a really difficult time with my work, I owned a chain of real estate agencies and lost them. It was one of the situations that in the past I would have felt my health and nutrition would be too much to deal with alongside what was going on at work.

Previously I would have just put 12WBT on the backburner and given myself some free reign. But I was like “No, I need to write this down” and that is how I have always kind of processed emotion.

Before your blog had all your writing been private?

Yeah and when I started the blog I didn’t think anyone would ever read it! I think one of my first posts says “I don’t know that anyone will read this and I don’t know if I want them to!” I never expected the blog to get the attention that it did. But I just try to be as honest as I can with what I am doing and as long as people understand that my story isn’t straightforward either. I have days where I stuff up too.
How has blogging help you achieved your goals?

When you make things concrete and put them in writing it gives the idea weight. You have to live up to things. It is about accountability. I had a fairly slack start to Round 4 2012 and I had to put it on the blog, I said “You know what? My mindset isn’t there at the beginning of this round. But I am picking myself up and this is the way I am doing it.” Then it is out there and I have 500 or so people a day reading it so I don’t want to have to log back in next time and say “You know what? I am still eating crap food this week.’

I think once you put it out there you are kind of forced to consider your choices. Like if you are thinking of making a bad decision you go “Nope, I have made a commitment to myself and to other people, I have said it out loud and this is the way it is going to be.” It helps that way.

Bella at the Round 3 2011 finale party, left, and at the Round 3 2012 party, right.

The 12 Week Body Transformation isn’t just about weight loss, there are lots of other benefits that members say they gain from the program. What are your thoughts on that?

I completely agree. The weight loss has been a real side effect of changing my life. So 12 months ago I was 41 kilos heavier but I was also lacking the confidence and energy to be the wife and mother that I wanted to be.
The emotional strength that came with the 12WBT program has been amazing and with that I feel I have become a better mum, a better wife and moved towards being the type of person that I want to be.

I am building on that everyday. I have been looking at training as a personal trainer and would like to do some lifestyle coaching with people who are overweight to help look at changing their lives rather than changing their weight.

**What was your lifestyle like pre-12WBT? What would you have done on a weekend for example and what does a weekend look like now?**

Being as overweight as I was I think you find yourself hiding from life. Now every weekend is an opportunity to grab the kids and go find something exciting to do and that’s probably one of my favourite changes that my family have made.

In the past on weekends I would take the kids on a breakfast date to McDonalds and then we would just kind of slop around. I would download a movie and that would be about as active as it got.

These days, through the 12WBT, my whole family eats healthily, that is one thing that is quite important to me, our nutrition as a family, not for weight loss but for health benefits.

We quite regularly do big cook ups of healthy meals and my husband and I love taking the kids out and about. Tasmania where I live is amazing for outdoor activities so we can go to the beach or we have got mountains within a 25
minute drive of us, beautiful, beautiful scenic mountains. So we try and do something like that every weekend and just hang out and enjoy it.

This is your fourth 12WBT Round you have progressed through the program from a Beginner and to the Intermediate to the Advanced Lean and Fit and now Advanced Lean and Strong programs. What’s your goal now?

Now I have lost the weight I have fitness goals. I started training with a body building coach in Round 3 2012 and I have just loved the difference that weight training has made to my body in a short amount of time. Now I have lost the weight it is about shaping the body that I want!
7. **Sandra (12WBT)**

Sandra in February 2013 with her 5 year old son Cooper. A year ago she was almost 40kg heavier.

*Sandra Soo knew that if she was to be an active, healthy mother to her two children, she needed to change her habits. Enter: 12WBT.*

Sandra is good at maths – she’s a financial controller, it’s her job – but there’s one equation she only recently mastered. “I studied advanced maths but it’s taken me 40 years to understand calories in versus calories out – how to nourish my body rather than just eat,” she says.

A Common Story

Like many people, Sandra first started gaining weight when her routines changed. “I used to play netball and softball and indoor cricket when I was younger and at school. Once I started work, I stopped all my sport because I didn’t have time.” The weight crept on. A familiar story: a baby in 2007, baby weight not lost; another baby in 2010 and before she knew it, she was almost 130kg.
Sandra with an 18-month old Cooper back in 2008.

“My back would hurt when I got out of bed in the morning and I had issues with my ankles from the extra weight. My biggest fear was that I would end up not being able to move, not being able to get in and out of the car, that I would be at home all the time because I couldn’t go anywhere.”

Facing the Truth

Faced with a wardrobe full of clothes that didn’t fit, Sandra found herself creating excuses to not attend social events. It was one of these nothing-to-wear-scenarios that prompted her to think about the 12 Week Body Transformation.

A cousin doing the program invited her to the 12WBT Finale party. Sandra was dreading hunting for a cocktail dress that’d fit, so invented a reason not to go. It was one of the last excuses of that kind she made. Not longer after she took action to address her health. She knew losing the weight wasn’t going to be easy; but she also knew not doing anything could make life far harder.


Looking back, she now realises her children were missing out too. She’d avoid activities, like her daughter’s swimming lessons, because of her dread of putting on a bathing suit and a lack of energy.
“I kind of felt it was my last chance to do something. I mean I had done everything, every weight loss program and fad diet around. I had taken weight loss pills, tried everything on the market and nothing had ever worked.”

Meeting the Team

When Sandra signed up to 12WBT in January 2012, the task at hand was daunting – she had to lose more than 50 kilos to enter a healthy weight range. Her cousin gave her some advice that proved pivotal – join the 12WBT Forums and connect with the other people that had more than 30 kilos to lose.

The relationships she formed with the 30+ Crew proved crucial, she realised she could follow in the footsteps of 12WBT peers like Cathy, who at that stage had lost 30 kilos in just a few months.

These photos were taken when Sandra first signed up to 12WBT in January 2012.

“I knew I could be successful because I was watching all these people that were just normal people like me, doing it. I was beginning to understand that it could be done if I just stuck to the program.”

Her own goal was clear. She wanted to lose 40 kilos and be in a healthy BMI by her 40th birthday in August.

Discovering a New Life
Step by step, she changed her habits and lifestyle. She pulled the plug on her secret trips to McDonalds before work. Now her diet is packed with fresh, unprocessed foods and she jokes that she’s shedding kilos rather than losing them “because I’m never finding them again”.

Four Rounds of 12WBT later and Sandra’s lost 39kg in total, 21kg of that lost in those first 12 weeks.

Sandra, far right, with friends after weekend paddleboarding.

“When I first started I was a bit slow but I did what I could. I went and bought some Michelle Bridges workout DVDs and tried those. It was hard, I was slow, and it definitely didn’t feel easy.”

She now exercises six days a week and is a fun run devotee. She recently completed the Color Run with her son and has also done Run For Fun, Mud Run and City 2 Surf. She’s not stopping there, she’s always looking for new challenges. “Now I don’t ever think about not doing stuff. If something comes up, I will just go ‘let’s do that’. I don’t question it at all.”

Sandra with her son Cooper pre-Color Run and then after the fun run spattered with coloured powder.

The whole family is fitter too and regularly
exercise together. “My husband and I are both over 40 and have young kids, we know we need to be in good shape to be around for them.”

A beaming Sandra photographed for a story in Women’s Day about 12WBT members.

If you were wondering, she did hit her birthday benchmark – she was 81kgs by her 40th – but it’s not all about the numbers on the scales. Sandra says the weight loss is secondary to what she’s gained from 12WBT. “I’ve learnt it’s okay to fail because it means I’m out there giving it a go. I’ve learnt not to give up because fun is in the journey, not the destination.”

Sandra’s Top 3 12WBT Tips

1. Connect with 12WBTErs in your local area and do work outs with them. Those real world connections make a huge difference.

2. Stay connected in the Forums! One reason why 12WBT is successful is because you can find and connect with people in the same boat as you. The sharing of stories is important, if everyone was quiet and no one told their story it wouldn’t work. That community makes a huge difference.

3. Try inspiration boards. I made a deal with myself in my second Round that whatever happened, I wasn’t going to quit. I would do absolutely everything that I could to be successful; even if I was feeling cynical… I had never really believed in inspiration boards, and charts and things like that, but I tried them and they worked. It turns out I am a highly visual person!
Sandra’s Stats

Start weight: 122kg

Weight loss in first 12WBT Round: 21kg

Total weight loss: 39kg

Current weight: 83kg

Goal weight: Within a healthy range for her height – 59-75kg
8. Nick (12WBT)

Overcoming Injury: Nick’s 12WBT Story

Nick and Kasandra at the 12WBT Finale Party in May 2013.

A shoulder injury and ruptured Achilles tendon didn’t stop Nick from achieving his 12WBT goals – he simply bought a wheelchair and carried on with his training. Nick is proof that exercising with an injury is about focusing on what you can do and not what you can’t.

When 41-year-old Nick attended a 12 Week Body Transformation Finale Party with his wife Kasandra in February this year, he instantly understood why she’d managed to lose 16kg on the program. “It engages people so well,” he says. “It’s really good to help people set goals and be accountable for themselves, and it’s very realistic and sustainable as well. I saw a lot of value in that.”

So when his wife decided that for her second 12WBT she’d sign up for Lean & Strong (Advanced) – 12WBT’s Exercise Plan focused on muscle and strength building – Nick didn’t hesitate to join her. Although he didn’t have much weight to lose, he was keen to kick his fitness level up a notch. “I wanted to put on some muscle and burn off some fat,” he explains.

Nick already ate well and exercised regularly, so he didn’t have to perform a major overhaul of his lifestyle. “I was pretty active before the program and I’d
lost about 30kg in the previous three years,” he says. “I already had my weights set up at home, so I was using those and going for runs. I was building up towards training for the 12K City-Bay Fun Run in Adelaide in September.”

While it might sound like Nick had it easy compared to other 12WBTers, there was no predicting the series of setbacks that would soon threaten to derail his fitness goals.

Dealing With Injury

“I went well in the first few weeks of the Round, but halfway through I injured my shoulder, so I had to pull back on the upper-body training for a couple of weeks,” says Nick. “Then, a couple of weeks later, I blew my Achilles.”

A ruptured Achilles is seriously debilitating, it leaves you unable to weight bear on the injured leg for several months. The largest tendon in the body, the Achilles sits at the back of the heel and joins the calf muscles of the lower leg to the heel bone. The tendon plays a central role in the lower leg’s movement, allowing the muscles to bend and also to stabilise the ankle. It also helps you maintain balance while walking, running and jumping which means it is key to exercise.

A ruptured Achilles usually requires surgery and wearing a plaster or walking boot and on average it takes three to six months to fully rehabilitate. In other words, it is the kind of injury that would lead most people to retire to the couch – but not Nick.
“I soon realised I wasn’t going to be able to do the fun runs I had planned for the next three weekends, so I threw myself right back into whatever weight training I could do. I had all the gear at home – a home gym set, a bench and a recumbent bike.”

One foot? No problem! “I started off on the bike, but because I was in a half-cast, I couldn’t use the right foot at all,” says Nick. “So I started pedalling with one foot, and a couple of weeks later I was able to rest my other foot on the pedal and ride more comfortably.”

Nick with his leg in a cast halfway through a 5km ‘roll’ along the Esplanade, taken at Glenelg in Adelaide.

And this committed 12WBTer didn’t stop there – determined to stay mobile during his rehab, he bought himself a wheelchair. “It’s easy to sit on in the kitchen so I can do food preparation,” he explains. “Also, we can take it out shopping so I can spin myself around the shopping centres. I’ve even taken it down to the Esplanade by the beach and done a few 5km rolls, which is a killer workout for the shoulders and arms.”

The Power of JFDI (Just Frickin’ Doing It)

Nick is one determined man – these photos were taken three years ago when he
weighed around 110kg. He had already lost 30kg on his own before he joined 12WBT to focus on toning and strength.

So what made Nick persist when so many of us would have given up? “There was that moment when I thought I could go that way, but then I thought, ‘Nah, I’m JFDI now, I’ve come this far and it’s the only way for me.’”

He also cites the encouragement of fellow 12WBTers as a major source of inspiration to stick with the program. “I found that being on the Facebook page and Forums added so much more support,” says Nick. “There were people supporting me and I was able to support other people as well, and that really helped me stay focused on my goals.”

The Right Mindset

Nick’s hard work certainly paid off. Despite his injuries, he lost 5.4kg and added lean muscle to his frame during the Round. His determination was recognised when he was nominated in the Lean & Strong Category of the Top 10 Top Transformation Awards for Round 1, 2013 of the 12 Week Body Transformation.

And even though it might be a couple more months before he can use his foot again, Nick intends to stick to his 12WBT Exercise Plan and healthy diet until then. “I’ve got to get some pectorals now,” he laughs. “I didn’t quite get the
pecs I wanted because of the shoulder injury, so now I want to try to bulk up a bit of muscle.”

Nick’s Top 12WBT Tips

- Get into good habits and stick with them. Changing your body is not going to happen quickly, but it will happen.
- JFDI! One of Michelle Bridges’ 12WBT Mindset Videos says there’s no such thing as motivation – you can’t rely on something else, you just have to get up and do it.
- Clear the junk out of the house. If you don’t have the temptation there, you can’t eat it.
- You might have setbacks, but there’s generally a way around it. If you’re injured, don’t look at what you can’t do – look at what you can do.

Nick’s Stats

1. I never used to be able to do chin-ups but I bought a bar and after a bit of JFDI, I can now do 10 in a row.

2. I’m pretty good at cycling with one foot – it’s amazing what you can do when you put your mind to it.

3. I wear my JFDI bracelet and can JFDI with the best of them!
9. **Tracy (12WBT)**

Tracy’s 12WBT Weight Loss Story

**With two Rounds under her belt and 21 kilos lost, it’s safe to say Victorian Mum Tracy is a changed woman. She’s gone from being an observer to a participant in her own life, and couldn’t be happier – or more gorgeous!**

**The First Steps**

It’s hard to believe that not long ago Tracy was spending a lot of her down time sitting on the couch. In fact, a lot of her life was just that – down time. She now trains six days a week at the gym and loves being active with her daughters.

Tracy’s story is a common one, particularly for parents across the country. After spending years caring for others, she finally decided that the best way she could look after her family was to look after herself first.

Tracy started 12WBT in Round 4, 2012. In her first 12WBT Round she lost a huge 12.5 kilos – even though the Program fell over Christmas and New Years Eve. “I lost 12.5 kilos just working out in a local park with my daughter and niece. You definitely don’t need a gym membership to start. I couldn’t even walk a slight incline when I started. Now I run up ramps!”
After her success during her first Round, Tracy was ready to up the ante and move into the Lean & Strong (Advanced) Program. This changed Tracy’s outlook again. “I started on the Beginners Program, and opted to work out outdoors in the local park with my family. I then joined a gym as I moved onto Lean & Strong (Advanced). It’s a whole new adventure as I experience new things at the gym – different classes and machines. The program has given me a whole new program that is totally different to what I did at Beginners.”

The 12WBT Effect

The 12WBT effect has had a knock-on effect through to Tracy’s extended family, and has in turn made them grow a lot closer. They now eat together, train together and the healthy lifestyle has influenced her nieces and nephews.

So what was the immediate change she saw in her family? Their diet – in particular their portion sizes, which were, in Tracy’s own words “totally out of whack”. The change in diet has not only brought weight loss, but many health benefits for the entire family. “We feel better, have boundless energy and it’s now a rare occasion that I sleep in past 5am each day! It’s a far cry from the girl who used to sit on the couch and just watch life happen.”
A New Lease on Life

One of the best things about 12WBT, says Tracy, is the food – her favourite recipe being the Butter Chicken. In her second fwoRound she also began integrating some of the recipes out of the Michelle Bridges’ Crunch Time and Last Five Kilos recipe books. Says Tracy, “I love the fact that the exercises and the meal plans changed, even though I was going into the second 12 week Program. That was fabulous!”

Tracy’s become a 12WBT crusader in her area, as people in her community see her amazing results. “You’re never hungry. You’re always full of energy. The food is fabulous, varied and easy. Nothing takes me much time at all to prepare.” Between shuttling her kids to basketball, hitting the gym and living with a busy husband, 12WBT has made Tracy’s life easier. “I can have thing pre-prepared and they can just take it from there. I love it!”

Tracy’s Words of Wisdom

After experiencing phenomenal results, Tracy’s determined to spread the 12WBT word. “I tell everyone do it. Don’t think about it, just do it! The effects are immediate. You start to feel better, healthier, stronger, fitter. If it can do what it’s done for me, in the short time I’ve been on it, then it’s worth it. Don’t waste 20 years like I did.”
What words of encouragement can Tracy share? “I’d encourage anyone who’s thinking about it to give it a go. If I can do it, anyone can do it. If I can save someone else wasting 20 years of living I will be a happy girl!”

Tracy’s Stats:

Round 4 Start Weight: 88

End of Round 4 Weight: 75.5

Lost = 12.5

Round 1 Start weight: 76

End of Round: 67, Total Lost = 21 kg
10. Kelly (12WBT)

Kellie’s 12WBT Story

Getting ready for date night with her husband, legal secretary Kellie realised she had to stop the kilo creep. Twelve months on, the mother of two is 13kg lighter, a lot stronger, and can add marathon runner and personal trainer to her resumé.

The moment Kellie crossed the finish line of her first marathon, she burst into tears. Tears of joy, brought on by the sight of her children’s happy faces cheering her on, and the intense relief she felt after completing the massive 42 kilometre run. “In the last seven kilometres I was hurting, and I kept thinking I’m never doing a marathon again,” the mum of two recalls. “But when I finished I just had this amazing feeling and I was like, I want to do it again!”

Getting Started

Photos show Kelly’s amazing transformation. The far left is photo was taken in February 2012, middle photo was taken in November 2012, the final photo was February 2013.

Rewind just six months and a marathon hadn’t even entered the Perth-based legal secretary’s mind. Instead, she found her hours taken over by her two daughters, aged six and seven, and her full-time job.
“The weight just started creeping up,” she remembers. “I put on about nine kilos over a year but I only noticed one night when I was meant to be going out with my husband. I couldn’t find anything nice to wear – none of my nice clothes fitted me! I felt horrible,” she says. Already a fan of Michelle Bridges, having successfully followed the program in the *Crunch Time* book, Kellie decided to sign up for the 12 Week Body Transformation. “I realised that all in all I was about 12 kilos overweight, and I just needed to get on top of it. I wanted to fit back into my clothes!”

**Learning to Run (Again)**

Instead of simply choosing to focus on weight loss, Kellie decided to set herself the goal of completing a half-marathon after her first 12WBT round. “I wanted a challenge,” she says. “I used to run, and I’d managed 10k before. Even though I hadn’t run in ages, I wanted to go beyond that.” Kellie signed up for the half marathon program.

The busy mum dropped back to part-time work and threw herself into the strenuous training. “I knew having a half-marathon goal would drive me, and it did,” she says. “The hours of training per week were a big commitment, but I just kept trying to beat my own times and get on with it.”
Three months later, Kellie completed her half-marathon goal. Six months on, she clocked her very first full marathon and decided to move onto 12WBT’s Lean & Strong program.

Finding Her True Passion

Kelly struts her stuff on stage at the 12WBT Finale Party in Brisbane in February 2013.

Along the way, Kellie also discovered a passion for exercise that extended beyond just getting fit. “I remember when I first started going to the gym as a teenager, I always looked at the personal trainers and thought, ooh I’d really like to do that. I don’t know what stopped me, but I had my kids pretty young. But 12WBT made me realise how much I loved the whole thing. I thought, right, I’m just going to bite the bullet and do it,” she says.

And when she came second in the Lean & Strong program for Round 4, 2012, Kellie couldn’t have won a better prize to help her meet that new goal: a Master Trainer eCampus course at the Australian Institute of Fitness, along with a package of goodies.

“Honestly, discovering what I really want to do in my life has been the best thing out of this whole experience,” she says.
“I’ve started training people, and it’s so rewarding,” Kellie says. “I want to combine training with massage therapy, and I’m hoping to be fully qualified by August.”

A Family Affair

Kelly and her husband complete a Tough Mudder obstacle run together.

And the trim, fit mum is still setting herself new fitness goals—her next goal is to compete in a figure competition! “I definitely didn’t expect that I’d be personal training and I never thought I’d be competing in a bikini on stage in front of thousands of people, but after Lean & Strong I really got into weight training—and I never want to stop having goals,” she says.

Kellie’s daughters Olivia and Chloe are her “mini cheersquad.”

Reaching them is something Kellie says she couldn’t have done without the support of her husband and kids. “When I wanted to go out for a run at six o’clock at night but the kids hadn’t been bathed yet, he would just say, “Go!” I couldn’t have done what I did without his support. He’s always been really proud of me,” she says.

“And my girls are very sweet about it. On Mother’s Day I got a bookmark that said ‘My mum’s great because… She can run 20k’s.’ I was so surprised! But
I’m so glad I’m setting a good example. I’m so enthusiastic about life and what I’m doing these days.”

Kellie’s Top 12WBT Tips

- Trust in the program. Don’t worry about the scales too much, don’t get fixated with numbers. Just keep going.
- Don’t stress about slip ups – it happens to everyone. Just take it day by day and get back to it – don’t waste time and energy beating yourself up, because it doesn’t help.
- Keep setting goals for yourself. I learned that I was more motivated by being able to achieve goals other than just weight loss. Find what drives you!

Kellie’s Stats:

Start weight: 75kg
Weight loss in first 12WBT Round: 10.5kg
Total weight loss: 13kg
Current weight: 62kg