

Diabetic Chef Cooks Up Positive Attitude

By Melissa Cechota, *for Lifestyle Center of America 2011*

From despondent to motivated, this Connecticut chef and full-time dietary student is serving up plates full of optimism and healthy cooking after an incredible transformation.

Scott, 47, checked into a lifestyle facility in April of 2007 to learn how to manage his type 2 diabetes, and also kicked a serious substance abuse problem during the same time. When he graduated from the program 18 days later, his newfound friends and the staff at Lifestyle Center of America (LCA) gave him a standing ovation. For once he says he was speechless; all he could muster up were tears – tears of gratitude.

Struggling with diabetes since his late 30s, Scott described himself as lethargic, depressed, overweight, and ready to give up on life. His feet had begun to tingle, his balance was off, and his passion for cooking was waning because of severe fatigue.

“I couldn’t hang on to jobs,” he says. “I am an intense, hard worker, but I was losing control.”

Doctors prescribed up to 10 medications for Scott, including insulin injections. And with a dose of denial and lines of cocaine to stay awake, his future looked grim.

After seeing an ad for LCA he decided the only way to enforce change on himself was to leave his environment of smoking, drinking, overeating, and drug use. Scott checked into LCA weighing a hearty 296, and lost 24 pounds during his 18-day stay. The largest weight he lost though was the burden of a negative attitude.

“The mental aspect of diabetes was physically devastating,” he says. “While at LCA, I got a handle on understanding negative thinking and recognizing triggers.”

He learned lifestyle motivators, such as weight control through diet and exercise; tips on relieving pain through hydrotherapy, stretching and massage; and how to maintain a positive attitude through cognitive behavior/rational motive therapy.

And this culturally-inspired chef says he enjoyed the on-site cooking school, as well. A concern he had immediately upon diagnosis of diabetes was a lack of freedom in the kitchen, but LCA laid those worries to rest. In fact, the program inspired him.

“I love the fact that I learned how to reinforce my direction in school and my career and understand more about the nutrition aspect of things,” he says.

While Scott’s zeal for cooking is coming back with his renewed energy from an additional 35 pound weight loss and a decrease in eight daily medications, he recognizes areas that need restructuring, including a set exercise regimen.

“Getting off the meds was really the motivator for me, but honestly, I am looking for a different motivator now,” he says. “If I exercise I feel totally different. It needs to stay in place, even if it’s just the walking.”

But Scott says it's not just about the exercise or the food – it's about overall health, including a positive attitude. He says the part of him who was once ready to give up on life is now enthusiastic about managing diabetes. And if this fired-up chef gets off track, he says it's nice to know how to get back on.

"I have to maintain," he says. "Knowing how-to gives incentive."

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