

Half THE WOMAN

DENISE CARTER
MEETS A WOMAN ON AN
AMAZING JOURNEY OF
WEIGHT LOSS



It can be a great challenge to lose weight, especially if you have been overweight all your life and have always believed you could not change.

Sigrid De Castella's situation was that bit worse.

She comes from a high-profile athletics family – her cousin Robert is former Australian world champion marathon runner and Commonwealth Games gold medallist, and others in her family ran marathons regularly, so she felt the burden of her family name and thus her weight even more.

She describes family gatherings when nothing would be said about her weight but when she felt all the more like the odd one out.

"I was the youngest child at seven and Rob was the oldest by a good 10 years," Sigrid says.

"Then there was Rob's dad, who had a bypass, and who had gone completely healthy, so there was always two sets of food at family gatherings, the usual one, and then he would be eating bean sprouts."

She was in her 30s when she started to shed the kilos, 70kg in all, going from a size 30 to a size 10, with her feet shrinking three shoe sizes.

In order to lose weight, she had to change her entire life. *Half the Woman I Was* is a fascinating book written by Sigrid, which gives an insight into these changes and her weight-loss journey.

Sigrid wants people to know there are no quick fixes, no magic solutions, and it was no great fad diet that brought her weight down. It wasn't even just diet and exercise but rather a complete change of

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lifestyle, mindset and outlook coupled with a determination to succeed over almost a two-year period.

When I ask Sigrid if there was a particular moment when she decided to change her life, an inspiring moment, or a moment of devastation, it turns out it was a combination of both feeling bad and finding a source of inspiration. Sigrid's husband, Antony, is a former biochemist and she had been asking him to help her.

"I was about six months asking him to help me but I think he really knew I had to find the answer," Sigrid says.

"I was frustrated and angry at my position and I really needed to take action. It was difficult moving around, I was out of breath, and I was getting looks from people and comments. I was not an unhappy person but I was not happy about my physical state."

At age 34, Sigrid weighed in at more than 143kg (that's 22 stone for the imperial-minded). She says it may have been even more because she didn't know exactly how much she weighed – she just knew she tipped the scales into overload.

Her inspiration initially came from television show, *America's Biggest Loser*.

"It was when it had just come out and it was a very radical show at the time," she says. "They were not only working out but bearing their hearts and souls and then they would have the weigh-ins, and oh man, the results – I saw that you could change by changing what you were eating and by doing exercise, and I thought if they could do it, I could."

Before this moment, Sigrid had no idea she could change.

"I thought I had a bad metabolism and that I would always be overweight," she says. "I had that belief."

Sigrid was sexually abused as a child and believes she put on weight subconsciously in an attempt to make herself unattractive.

"I wanted a physical barrier to being abused again," she says.

At school she was called names.

"I was called the usual, Fatty Bomba, and then Sig was very close to pig," she says.

Sigrid remembers as a child having a passion for Coco Pops, and she was also addicted to chocolate, regularly dipping into her mother's wallet to find a dollar and run to the milk bar, where she would buy chocolate that she would eat with relish in a nearby park.

"I think I did it to hide the pain and then I'd feel bloated," she says.

By the time she was nine years old, she had started on a see-saw of weight gain and attempts at weight loss, with the public humiliation of weigh-ins.

"My dad had taken me to Weight Watchers when I was eight or nine and the process was terrible; the weigh-in every week," she says.

Sigrid says hers was a very emotional journey and writing the book has been cathartic.

She took a holistic approach to weight loss and turned her entire life on its head within two years. A lover of maths and science, Sigrid enjoyed researching about food and calories and she realised she was eating 4800 calories per day.



Sigrid with husband Antony.

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"I took small steps," Sigrid says. "I couldn't do exercise at first, so I just walked a bit."

Sigrid's book, which she wrote to help others, is fascinating for many reasons.

There's her personal journey, but there's also what she has learnt; there are pages devoted to listings of carbohydrates, proteins and fats, as well as vitamins and

minerals, what they are in, their function in the body, what too little or too much can do and the types of supplements that can help.

This might sound like dry reading but it is absolutely engrossing to discover how a little bit more or a little less of something can unbalance the body and a person's health.

"As reported by Monash University research, more than 75 per cent of adult Australians are overweight or obese and that statistic is growing despite there being more than 2307 weight-loss companies in Australia alone," she says.

"I've discovered most weight-loss products and services have been designed to make money, not to get you thin."

"I wrote my book to inspire others, and to reveal the truth about weight loss so that I could help as many people as possible."

She coaches people too but in a one-on-one environment rather than in a more public group setting.

Sigrid's changes meant she lost more than 14 per cent of body fat. She felt energised, and looked so different people didn't recognise her.

"The whole thing is not just a physical approach but about my health and wealth," she says. "I left my job (as IBM manager) and my wealth increased – when I say wealth I mean spiritual wealth, and happiness and financial."

Sigrid now works for herself, writing, coaching, and says she has found a way to reach a work/life balance.

■ Sigrid De Castella's *Half the Woman I Was* is available from all good book stores, price \$29.95, and online at www.halftthewomanias.com

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