

Invest in Yourself

Don't be the last person you think of

Mary's Story

This year has had its challenges, but I've managed to keep the weight off. I started working with Dawn, my Strategic Health Services (SHS) health coach over a year ago. Today, I stay in touch with Dawn through a weekly email, and Dawn checks in with me once a month. It wasn't until working with Dawn and learning to be accountable for my own actions that I started losing weight and getting healthier.

Overweight since 2nd grade, I have never been successful with losing weight in the past. The death of my Mom really affected me, as my Mom made poor health choices. She was a smoker, and I saw firsthand how smoking impacted her life and death. She was only in her 70s when she passed away – just too young. And, as a single mom I wanted to make the change for my son who is a little overweight. I made the decision it was time to be a good role model.

Having support and using tools available to me helped me along my path. I purchased a Fitbit and exported the data into SHS's My Pathway to Health™ wellness portal. It has been a great way to track exercise, calories, and food. I like interacting with the web site and having so many tools at my disposal. These resources, along with Dawn's support, have helped me establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

It hasn't always been smooth sailing, however. I wasn't focused over the holidays and gained back some weight over Christmas. Then Dawn called for my monthly check in, and I have to admit I hesitated talking to her because I was embarrassed. However, I never had to explain myself and never felt judged in anyway. Dawn simply and kindly encouraged me to get back on track, and I did. Now, I really don't have to wait for someone to motivate me. This time, when I returned from vacation, I went back to eating better right away. I don't plan to go back to my old patterns and behaviors...ever.



Before

After

Mary Bradley, age 51
Bank Manager, IBA Trust
with SHS since 2014

Mary's practical tips for leading a healthy lifestyle

- Stay connected to an **accountability** partner
- If you **mess up** don't be afraid to say "the past is in the past" and **start again**
- **Invest in yourself** – don't be the last person you think of (especially as a mother)
- Find a healthy **eating plan that works for you** – if it works for you and does the job you will stick with it (limit salt, use menu planning)
- Have a **favorite snack** – mine is hummus and cucumber slices
- Make a **lifetime lifestyle change** and **don't be afraid to see your numbers** – seeing how drastically my numbers were reduced made all the difference – it was an aha moment
- Find an **exercise you like** – I love aerobics and walking
- Your **health coach** is there to help you as much as you want them to be, so take advantage of the opportunity. They check in on you even when you don't feel like talking. **They never judge**, and they send helpful tools you might never think of (like how to deal with stress when you are hungry).
- Attend **SHS's monthly webinars** – I attended one on *goal setting* and thought it was very good and helpful



Looking up her info on the My Pathway to Health™ portal, Mary sees that her overall risk score went down to a 4 (low risk) from a high last year of 16 (chronic risk). She has been able to significantly reduce many of her high risk factors.

SHS risk scores range from -2 (healthy) up to 40 (chronic risk). A member's risk for certain diseases and conditions is stratified following completion of their Health Risk Assessment and biometric health screening. This score appears, along with other detailed health information, in a Personal Health Profile customized for each member via the SHS wellness portal.

Mary's coach was able to see her chronic risk score in her report and tailor her coaching and conversations to Mary's goals based on her health status. Mary can see her current health status, along with her health history, on her portal dashboard at any time.

Mary's Screening Results

	October 2014	October 2015
Total Cholesterol	206	185
HDL	36	52
LDL	115	116
Triglycerides	276	86
Fasting Blood Glucose	107	98
Blood Pressure	199/100	120/76
Weight	286	252
BMI	54.03	40.67

My weight has held steady at 243, and that has been an accomplishment. Even though I have more to lose, staying consistent is really important, and I feel good about that. I have a health issue that has affected my ability to exercise. I'm experiencing some back pain and am having it checked out. This is another stumbling block, but one I will figure out with my care provider. I know how much better I feel when I exercise, so my goal is to get back on track with some sort of modified exercise plan.

I've learned that stress does impact so many aspects of life, including my health. As a bank manager, a single Mom, and recently experiencing the death of my mother, I have had to learn new coping skills and hand over stress to exercise and journaling. These have been very effective replacements for food. But, they had to be learned and acted upon, and now I'm glad I have these tools and resources to guide and support me during stressful times.

Another tip that has worked for me is my accountability partner, my friend in another state who is following her own weight loss plan. She helps me stick to my healthy lifestyle, which means not following too strict a plan, but being more mindful of eating healthier carbs, lower fat, and lean protein.

The portal has been a big help. I have been using My Action Plan on the portal since I started in October of 2014. I plan to update the portal with a new goal and keep my eye on reaching 150 pounds. I know I'll get there, as I've already made the investment in me, and I'll never be the last person I think of again!