

THE *Shape* OF YOUR LIFE

Creating a Healthy, Happy Body and Loving It!



Module One

Understand the Basics

What kind of shape is your life in? Do you have an over-developed body and under-developed spirit? Have you filled your life with so many “other” things that you’ve let the negative demons enter your mind and destroy your self-esteem? Well the good news is, you’re not alone, and you can change all that and get your life back in shape no matter what age or stage of the game of life you are in!

You are going to create a new lifestyle that balances body, mind and spirit – all the aspects of health and fitness. One that you can control instead of having it control you. One you can follow until it becomes second nature and you don’t have to feel too overwhelmed or too overweight again. When you take charge of your life and its balance, **you** control what happens. And when you learn to balance your life and control what happens, you will be able to control your weight, because you will have become a much more powerful person and can use this power to be a phenomenal woman! You will use it to take control of your time, your temper, and your eating habits. You will use it to increase your self-confidence, and to be a better mother or friend. The possibilities are endless because it will trickle down to every aspect of your life and create an inner satisfaction and peace you never dreamed you could have.

Baby Steps

I’m going to show you how small changes that can easily be incorporated into your life can make a huge difference in your health, your weight, and your inner self.

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Then you can make bigger changes when you are ready and have mastered the baby steps. It doesn't matter how old you are or what "shape" your life is in right now...we will go one step at a time.

Remember, you don't have to be a marathon runner to reap the benefits of jogging. You don't have to go on a strict, denial, Nazi diet to lose weight. You don't even have to spend 2 hours a day in the gym to feel in charge of your life! All you have to do is be willing to throw out the misconceptions and assumptions you've been fed daily by the media and the "so-called" experts or the "research says..." or "studies show..." I can show you a study that's based on my own personal 25 years of "research", working with women of all walks of life and all ages and shapes and sizes, that proves beyond a doubt that health and weight loss, self-esteem and happiness are impossible to separate from one another! Because all of those things are best friends of empowerment.

For example: Consider every time you have tried to lose weight or to break some negative habit whether it is smoking, eating junk food, watching too much T.V., losing patience with your kids, whatever. But you don't actually succeed at stopping or breaking that habit. Something happens deep inside...maybe even unconsciously. You stop believing in your own word... your own power and credibility... and you are diminished in your own eyes!

I can testify that it isn't all about willpower! The experts will tell you just to work harder and eat less! But if for some reason it doesn't work, and you can't continue eating food that tastes like wallpaper or working out like you're trying out to be the 4th Charlie's Angel, then something must be wrong with you and oops! There goes your self-confidence! Then the fitness goals end and the cycle begins again.

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It is impossible to take the steps and the time and discipline it takes to get in shape, or to complete a challenging task, or to raise children as a single mother, and not learn something profound about yourself and who you are in the process. Some of these things you'll learn are concrete and physical... like how certain foods affect your moods and your energy ...and some are psychological and spiritual like learning you can keep your word to yourself, or that you can stick to a task even though you are hating every minute of it, or that you can overcome some obstacle that seems insurmountable!

But here is my main point....start with getting in shape physically, and your mind and spirit will automatically follow suit! They go hand in hand! They are sisters! I have seen it with more women than I can tell you! You can't change one without the other changing as well. And this is why:

The triggers for your tears or your laughter are simply your thoughts. Think of a dear friend who has died, and the tears come. Remember a great joke and you're laughing. So if merely evoking images can result in tears or laughter, why then couldn't your thoughts and emotions have an equally powerful effect on your physical body and health? Well it does! There are so many physical conditions affected by your emotions.

But it doesn't end there. The mind/body connection is a two-way street. By developing a strong body through exercise and eating, you also develop the connection between your body's chemical messengers, called "peptides". And as neuroscientist Candace Pert, PhD says, "Peptides regulate every aspect of your body, from whether you're going to destroy a tumor cell to whether you're going to digest your food properly. So the stronger your body is, the stronger that connection between your body and your mind will be."

That's why we'll learn all about using our minds and emotions as an essential tool to empower and balance our lives. You'll be able to use positive thoughts, visualizations

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and affirmations just like the Olympic athletes do, to change how you feel about yourself and how you look at your life. The mind is as powerful as the muscles, and is one of the three sides of our “shape of your life” triangle.

Nurture Your Spirit

Talk about the most neglected part of our triangle...this is it! Why? Because we are women. We are the nurturers. We have an innate, God-given sense of wanting to take care of others and to make everything alright. This is why we were chosen to be the mothers and not the men!

Have you ever been to a restaurant and seen how the mothers are cutting the meat for their small children, or making sure they are eating correctly and have what they need? Have you noticed who is the one to get up from the table the most during the meal to get the forgotten items or to fix a spill?

This is why it is so hard for we as women to take time for ourselves. It almost seems selfish when we want to take time to nurture our own inner-self! Do you feel guilty when you take time off to be alone or to buy yourself a new outfit? The whole time inside you are trying to convince yourself that you really don't need it, and that your husband or daughter needs it more! What is that?

So we are really going to have to do some serious work to bring this part of our lives in to balance with the body and mind.

In this process, you will also learn new ways to connect with those around you, thereby strengthening relationships. You'll learn to relieve stress through meditation and perhaps a yoga class! You'll discover new things about yourself...strengths you didn't know you had, by doing our “inner self” exercises and assignments that we will go through later and that are in your journal.

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By learning to “break away” from your hectic world and take a few moments to “re-group” and “re-new” yourself...you will become “pro-active” rather than just one who quickly reacts to things said and done to them without thinking it through.

When you strengthen your body physically, it increases your self-confidence and body image, and strengthens your inner self or spirit as well. Nourishing relationships, doing a small act of kindness every day, seeking help when you need it, tuning into your own body’s needs and wants, concentrating on your own successes, are just some of the things we will incorporate into the shape of our lives.

Potholes of Life

The path toward getting your life in shape is a long and hard one...filled with potholes disguised as stressful jobs, demanding relationships, fast food restaurants, etc. Then in addition, we all have our own **personal** demons as well trying to push us off course and sabotage our goals. The process of recognizing, embracing and then thwarting these personal demons will make you a stronger person and take you to a new level.

I will help clear that path and point out the potholes by presenting you with truths that you will need to prepare for and to have a successful journey through life. In going through all of this you will begin to find a lot more joy in the journey!

Ultimately, however, the course is yours! You will choose which way you will go, which path you will take, and how fast your pace will be.

Remember, every great journey begins with a great deal of preparation. How far would Columbus have gotten if he had just awakened one morning, kissed his wife, and headed out to discover the New World without the proper supplies, food or navigational

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equipment? And how far would you get taking a 1 year old on vacation without packing the endless necessities?

I don't want you to give up on your journey because you weren't prepared....so get focused and let's go over the basics you will need to get a great start!

Misconceptions

In my years of working in the fitness industry I have seen many a fad diet come and go. I have seen many a theory changed or proven wrong. I have seen types of exercises deemed the best thing for you, only to discover years later that now they are considered unsafe! Just like I have lived to see bell-bottoms come back and dangling, daisy earrings, I have come full circle in the fitness industry. I draw the line, however, on ever putting on leg-warmers and stirrup tights again! Remember those days?

Anyway, as you know, the fitness industry is a multi-billion dollar business. So like any other business, every Tom, Dick and Harry has decided to make money off our lousy self-images and out-of-shape bodies. In doing so, they have come up with every combination of diet, pills and potions to convince you they can make you into the perfect shape or size. Unfortunately, it is working, and they are winning because we are buying into it!

These people are in it for the money. They look at weight-loss and body image as black and white. What works and what doesn't, rather than at the individual person.

It is ironic that the marketing companies on one hand appeal to our many diversities by, for instance, selling hair products for curly, thick, straight, thinning, bald etc. And make-up for any skin type, color, disorder, etc., and in this way they act like they applaud our differences. Yet they have brain-washed us into believing just the opposite in the fitness industry. That is that we should all be able to go on the same diet,

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or take the same pills and we will all get the same results! What's up with that? Aren't we smarter than that? Well by now, we certainly should be.

But that's exactly how we approach dieting. Someone comes out with a new book, or we read about it in a magazine, or hear about it from someone who has actually lost weight on it, and we blindly jump in, following some theory that has absolutely nothing to do with who we are or how we live our lives or what genetics we came with! No wonder we're frustrated!

Well the fact is, we all have voices, fingers, noses, eyes, skin etc. In that way we are all completely alike. But if that's all that mattered, why are our fingerprints different? Why does one person's skin tan easily while another's blisters at the mere sight of the sun? The answer is called "biochemical individuality." This is a really important principle to understand for every aspect of the shape of your life.

This term came from Dr. Roger Williams who in his book, *Atlas of Human Anatomy*, illustrates 19 different sizes and shapes of human stomachs, and does the same for 17 livers. Then he's found the number of insulin-producing cells in the pancreas varies from 200,000 to 2.5 million. The thyroid gland in normal people varies from 8 to 50 grams. It goes on and on. But the sum of it is: EVERYONE'S DIFFERENT in literally thousands of different ways! So when someone asks, "Can I eat that and not gain weight?" The answer is, "I don't know, can you? Let's find out!"

The fact is, you can eat whatever you want, but what you eat, how often and how much all have different consequences for different people.

Just like your kids scream, "It's not fair!" and you say, "Life isn't fair!", you feel the same way, because you still want to be able to eat what Sarah does and look like she does, or look toned and great like Debbie who never works out at all.....and it just doesn't work that way. Genetics, metabolic type, age, sex, metabolic activity, blood type,

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enzyme activity, etc. all contribute to what happens inside your body when you eat that candy bar. That's why some people catch every virus and cold going around, and some don't get sick at all! So we have to find out what works for you, how strict an eating or exercise habit you want to develop, how important it is to you, and go from there.

The lesson is simple: Know thyself. Ignore this at your own peril, which you do every time you follow someone else's scheme or ask "How did you lose your weight?" without asking how YOU fit into the equation. Look to yourself and learn this lesson well, down into your very soul! Because until you get it engrained in your head, you will always be comparing and dissatisfied and trying this and that and failing again and again.

Make the Commitment

The difference between say losing weight for an important event and balancing your mind, body and spirit **for life** is **commitment**. This commitment comes from a truly, heart-felt, motivated desire not only to change, but to **maintain** that change. This is a lifelong contract with yourself. This is a promise to get up when you stumble, and to remember that the race is not to the swift, but to the one who keeps on running.

Now you might find it easy to start with that **strong** desire... the problem is **remembering** that desire when you are stressed, tired, frustrated, discouraged, or angry and that desire to get in shape seems to fade and a **new** desire comes to the foreground! When that happens, the only thing you are motivated to do is to **feel better now!** When chocolate is calling your name at the end of a stress-filled day, and the long-term rewards of your journey seem remote, you need a voice to speak or yell for the part of you that wanted to make the journey in the first place!

But basically you have two voices yelling at you. One is saying, "Stick with the task, stay on course" and one is saying, "You deserve to feel better now, eat the

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chocolate!” Which one do you listen to? You know those voices are always there, in all aspects of your life as you try to reach your goals. When you get home at night and see that piece of chocolate cake on the counter, it doesn’t automatically zip into your mouth.....You go through that tape in your head, that voice that says, “Go for it, you can work it off later.” And then the one that says, “No, I made a commitment, I really shouldn’t.” The trick is learning how to give power to the positive ones while you disempower the negative ones! There are a few great weapons I’ll teach you how to use to do just that.

But for now, another thing that is basic in laying our strong foundation and helping your commitment level so you are sure to succeed is making and learning how to use is a **contract**, a promise between you and yourself.

This contract will help strengthen your commitment and help you navigate around those potholes. It will give you the advantage during those horrible make-or-break times when you want to give up and it just doesn’t seem to be working or even worth it. How will it give you the advantage? What you will do when that happens is get the contract out of your journal, read it, and remember that you chose to give **your word** to do this. And when all else is said and done, who is the person you have to look at in the mirror first thing in the morning and last thing at night? You! Remember you are working on lifting your level of trust in the power of your own words and commitment to yourself! And you are the only person you have to answer to. **To thine own self be true!**

There is a copy of the contract in the notebook that accompanies the Shape of Your Life program under “Tools to Succeed”, and we’ll go over it in more depth in that section.

Remove Roadblocks

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Before you begin your journey, you must make a mind shift. That is, take a long, hard look at your schedule and find 4-5 hours a week to get your mind, body and spirit in shape. That may sound like a lot at first, but it really isn't that much time out of 178 hours in your week! This will take sacrifice and making sure your mind is truly in the game. We can all make excuses as to why we don't have enough time to exercise, etc., but the time is there – where is your commitment?

To make time, you might have to cut out some sleep, if you can afford to do that. But if you stick with your fitness goals, I promise your new healthy habits will give you more energy you ever had! But if that is one thing that you truly can't cut back on because you're getting up early as it is or have to start work early, then try something else.

For instance, get your planner out and block out an hour each day to exercise or to reward yourself, or on some days just to spend time alone. Act like it is a very important appointment that you cannot possibly miss.... because it is, and you are worth it! Then turn off your cell phone, pager, etc. and give yourself 30-60 minutes a day. In the long run, you will be a better mother, teacher, friend and worker for having done so. Remember, this is **a really important appointment** that you cannot cancel! You need to schedule things around it in advance. For example: You wouldn't schedule a child's dental appointment during your regular class time at the gym!

Then you have to learn to delegate and to say no! **It is okay** not to be the volunteer mother of your child's school class every day. **It is okay** to say, "You know I just don't have time to make cookies for the bake sale this week." **It is okay** not to try to be the best and most perfect person for everyone in your life at any given time!

The next step in removing roadblocks is to decide where your priorities are. A man once said, "Show me your checkbook and your day planner and I will tell you where

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your priorities are.” What he meant is where you spend your time, energy and money should be things you feel are very important. If they aren’t, your life is out of balance.

So why not take a few days and write everything you do down in your day planner, including leisure time (if you have any), T.V., social events, running errands, etc. Then analyze where you spend your time and where you could fit in those 30-60 minutes.

Set up a Support System

Women who are most successful at conquering their goals whether they are to lose weight or trying to start a new business, or whatever, are those who have developed a strong support system. Who is in your social support network? Well that would be your friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, church members, etc.

These people are the role models, motivators, nurturers, encouragers, helpers, mentors, and challengers that help you be your best. They can also be the ones who can discourage and sabotage your efforts. It is an important first step in your journey to tell these people about your new goals and aspirations. This is another step that makes you accountable to more than just yourself. It’s another step in that commitment! We all have in us the desire to succeed...especially in the eyes of those around us we care about. By voicing your goals, your support group can help you stay on track and offer encouragement, or even offer to team up with you on your journey!

Anyway, your family may have to get used to their new lifestyle or way of eating. There may be certain foods you won’t be buying anymore. You’re going to need close friends to call when temptation rears its ugly head. And everyone needs someone they can “vent” to.

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These same people in your support network who may voice support in the beginning, may not keep it up or may even sabotage your efforts later on. Why? There are many reasons. They may not realize how their words or actions affect you. They don't know how to support you so do or say the wrong thing. They may not understand the complexity and difficulty in doing what you are doing. They may be sympathetic to your frustrations rather than encourage your efforts. They may be jealous of your success because they have never been able to do the same. A good way to try to avoid all of that sabotage is to communicate. Tell them what you are doing and what you need from them. For instance, ask them not to bring yummy desserts to work and not pressure you to miss your workouts, etc. Invite them to take a Pilates class with you!

We'll talk more about surrounding yourself with people who energize you rather than rob your energy later on.

Be Accountable to Yourself

One of the most important tools of the entire journey toward getting your life in shape is a journal. This is where you record your goals, your moods, feelings, cravings, etc., in addition to what you eat, how much of it, when you did, how you felt, **everything**. The journal I offer is also a workout journal where you keep track of your exercise and strength training program.

By writing it all down, you are making yourself accountable and **aware** of what you eat and when you eat it. Then later, you can analyze it, connect the dots, and be able to conquer those situations or potholes that may get in your way. Most overeating is unconscious. It is a mindless, habitual, conditioned reaction to a wide variety of feelings and emotions, few of which have to do with hunger. By writing down what you're eating, when you're doing it and how you're feeling at the time, you are bringing them to

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consciousness and can examine what's what and then transform that automatic behavior into a more conscious one. For instance, maybe you always eat when you watch T.V. Well this is subconsciously linking a pleasurable thing like watching T.V. to eating and forms a habit. You may not even be aware of this habit, but before long, every time you switch on the television, you are reaching for something to put in your mouth!

Your journal allows you to begin to make similar connections between mood and food. One of the problems in our diets is that we eat so much of so many things, that our physical and emotional reactions to these foods are often delayed, so we don't have time to do the detective work that would lead us to discover the effects these foods have on our moods, our energy and our bodies!

The journal will allow you to better understand yourself and what it is you need to add or subtract from your life to achieve that balance that will make you happy. For many, their journal is the only place they can be alone with themselves...free from anyone else's judgments. Free to explore their own thoughts, feelings and behaviors that others or society might deem as "unacceptable".

This is also the place you will do some soul-searching later on that I will guide you through by asking you to answer questions about your desires and your goals. That will come later in our section devoted just to your inner-self, and you will use your journal to do some self-examination.

Finally, the journal is an excellent way to set up a reward system for yourself. You will set your goals – say to workout for 3 weeks in a row without missing, and then mark those off in your journal, so you can visually see your progress! Then you will reward yourself upon completion with... say, a 15 minute bubble bath! Or perhaps one of your first baby steps will be to become aware of your negative self-talk and instantly replace it with positive thoughts and affirmations.

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There are other ways to visually keep yourself accountable and your motivation high that I will cover later. But in my “Shape of Your Life” journal and day planner, there is a place to list your goal for the week and motivational tips to keep you on track. Then there is also a place to record your exercise and eating.

If you determine you need more balance in your life in the weight management area, you will want to keep track of the amount of calories you eat each meal, and there is a place for that, as well as an area to write down your moods and feelings. This way you have it all in the same place and can take it with you anywhere you go.

I have found that the journal is also great to have to look back on and read how you felt at the beginning, how far you have come, etc., when you are having a down day or need extra motivation for whatever goal you are trying to achieve.

Back on Track Attack

You can expect to slip and maybe even fall on those roadblocks at some time or another. But the difference between moving on and just plain giving up is having some strategy to deal with momentary failure. Remember the contract you made with yourself? That’s the first thing you will do. Get it out and read through it again.

Then there are two ways you **don’t** want to react to a temporary backslide. On one hand you don’t want to say, “So I ate that box of doughnuts, I’ll just start over tomorrow.” On the other hand you don’t want to **overreact** like, “See, I knew I couldn’t do it. I’ll never be successful at this so why try one more thing?”

The first thing is to acknowledge exactly what happened and the circumstances. Don’t overemphasize or underemphasize what occurred. Ask yourself what you could have done differently in that situation, so you can convert that to a positive learning step and become stronger. Next, put it into perspective. Say to yourself, “Over the last

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(however long) I have made some great changes and made some serious progress toward my goals. Compared to what I have achieved, this is hardly a catastrophe. I can learn from it and go on.”

Next comes **action**. A good general doesn't waste time dwelling on defeat! Instead, he immediately reviews what went wrong and plots a course of action that will take him back on the road to victory. Don't punish yourself by trying to exercise until you drop, just take steps to ensure that what happened won't keep repeating itself.

For example: if you found yourself bingeing on a bag of cookies that lay open on the bar, you might want to get rid of those kinds of foods in the house or put them up high over the fridge where they are not so easily accessible.

There are many ways we can overcome tripping over those roadblocks that we will go over later as we progress.

Accept Your Limits

No matter how young, how old, how spiritual or how fit you are, you must accept your mind, body and inner self for what it is on any given day. If you will truly “tune in” to your body and seek a balance, your inner self will tell you that you can't run a mile the first time you work out...that you won't be able to pass up the junk food every single time. You may have nights spent worrying where the teenagers are, or maybe you have gotten up 4 times with a baby or sick child. Maybe you didn't take the time to eat enough the day before and your body is depleted and tired. There will be times when you have physical illnesses or injuries and you can't work out for days or even weeks. You will have family emergencies and relationship problems that all take a toll on your body and your best intentions and. Your body might not let you have that balance you are seeking every single day.

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Guess what? You're not alone! We are all just like you, experiencing life! This is a process...a journey. It's not about seeing how much weight you can lose in a month or how spiritual you can become. But it's also not about how many excuses you can come up with to rationalize away your goals and get off your routine.

It is about listening to your inner self and giving your body what it needs with baby steps and doable changes...accepting yourself and your limitations along the way.

Do It For Yourself!

Yours is the only body you will ever have. You can choose to make it your best friend, or your worst enemy. You can teach it to work for you or against you. You can nurture it and feed it fuel to keep it healthy and energized, or you can work it to death and force it to run on junk that won't even allow it to make it up a hill.

Would you take your brand-new Lexus and pour flour in the gas tank and expect it to keep running for you? Well, that's obvious! Yet that's exactly what we do to our bodies and our minds!

Relationships come and go. Your children grow up and leave you. Friends may move on. Spouses may pass away or end it all. But through it all you still have you, mind, body and spirit. So you need to take care of the one person who will always be there for you.

That means don't embark on this journey just because you need to lose 25 lbs. for a class reunion in 3 months, or because you are sick of your husband nagging you about what you're eating and why you don't lose weight. If you do that, you know you are setting yourself up for failure again.

Do it because you want a happy, healthy, quality life to spend with those you love, to share with those who love you, and because this is your life to live to the fullest!