

More Than Weight Loss: A CrossFit Testimonial

Mrs. Ann Marie Dillashaw is a homeschooling mom to two adorable daughters, Anna and Sarah Grace, as well as a loving wife to her husband Chris, who is the youth pastor at a vibrant San Antonio church.

She is also a hard-core athlete.

I remember vividly the first day Ann Marie ever came to CrossFit. She appeared to be a trifle unsure about what she was getting into (as most beginners do!) as she watched the other ladies beginning the day's warm-up routine. Her typically sunny countenance took on a nervous pallor, accentuated by premature beads of perspiration popping up across her brow.

One minute into the warm-up, she began apologizing for pausing between lunges and high-knees to catch her breath. "I can't believe I'm so out of shape; I'm so sorry!" she said, wiping the sweat from her forehead. "Is it okay to drink water?"

I assured her that no apology was necessary, that hydrating is never frowned upon, and encouraged her to continue at her own pace. She took a deep breath, one that restored her bright visage, then proceeded with a potent combination of humility and determination to complete the morning's workout of running intervals and 100+ modified push-ups as the others cheered her on.

In fact, Ann Marie's favorite part about CrossFit is "the intensity of the WOD (Workout of the Day)."

"I thrive on the determination to keep going," she says. "I find myself pushing harder, faster, and doing more than I thought possible. Honestly, if I were to do the same workout

on my own, I would not get the same results because I wouldn't be giving it all I've got.

"I was instantly impressed by how encouraging everybody was," she continues, "all laughing and cheering each other on to work harder, do their best, and challenge themselves. Having the accountability of teammates during the workout really helped push me to see what I was capable of doing."

Ann Marie joined CrossFit the very next week, eager to make a complete lifestyle change that would positively affect her roles and responsibilities as teacher, mom, youth leader, and wife.

"Plain dieting had failed me," Ann Marie says. "I had a membership at Life Time Fitness, but with no accountability, I literally never went. Personally, I was miserable with how I felt and looked and knew I was in need of a change."

"Before CrossFit, I tried working out and dieting on my own, and I did it all because I wanted to be skinny. Things have changed so much over the past six months. I work out and eat well to be healthy, in shape, and to feel good. The way I view food and fitness is just so different now."

CrossFit has created a ripple effect throughout every area of Ann Marie's life. "It's added discipline to my routine. Not only the daily discipline to make it to my workout, but an added discipline because of the things I accomplish *during* a workout, the things I'm able to push myself to do because of new-found mental strength, as well as physical. My family has benefited from a new level of focus, energy, and discipline in all areas of my life."

Ann Marie's lifestyle change didn't stop with CrossFit; she's also renovated her diet, a change that has also made a positive impact on her family. "We've swapped our usual processed foods and fatty restaurant meals for a diet full of whole, natural foods. We don't drink sugary drinks or have

daily ice cream treats. Above all else, we try to be gluten-free.”

Chris, once an avid soda drinker, has given up his favorite beverages, and even spoken to his congregation about his dietary makeover.

“I really was never interested in making a lifestyle change, especially regarding what I liked to drink,” Chris says. “However, as my girls have gotten older, I’ve realized that they cannot make healthy changes unless I first commit to changing. So, the real motivation for change is rooted in being a father.”

Ann Marie shares her family’s secret to their nutritional transformation: “We don’t stress about perfect adherence and we do not obsess about being ‘Paleo’ all the way. This has helped us make the most of our health, mood, and physical fitness.”

When Ann Marie began, she, like many people, had trouble lifting our lightest barbell of forty-five pounds. (Prospective beginners, take heart—we now have thirty-five-pound bars, too!) She was doubtful that she’d ever be able to add steel plates and lift the amount of weight she saw the others seemingly pressing, squatting, and deadlifting with ease. Today, Ann Marie uses strictly shoulder strength to press 75 pounds above her head. She can deadlift 150 pounds, last I checked. She doesn’t do modified push-ups anymore. Her endurance and stamina have improved tremendously, nixing the need for frequent breaks during workouts.

I asked Ann Marie for any advice she might have for anyone reluctant to try CrossFit because they surmise it’s too tough for them. She immediately replied, “Don’t give up! You get out of it what you put into it. The community at CrossFit 925 is something special, and if you stick with it and listen to your coaches, great things will happen!”

Actor and martial artist Bruce Lee said, “If you always put limits on everything you do, physical or anything else, it will spread into your work and into your life. There are no limits. There are only plateaus, and you must not stay there, you must go beyond them.”

CrossFit isn’t a magical key that unlocks the door to an enchanted kingdom of size 4 dresses, 150-pound deadlifts, delicious Paleo meals, and nary a soda can in sight.

If you want to change your lifestyle, pick a fitness path that interests you and wholeheartedly commit yourself to following it—be it the CrossFit path, Pilates path, Zumba path, Richard Simmons tapes path, what have you—and combine it with a healthy nutrition plan.

Stay consistent, enlist others to hold you accountable, and be patient with yourself. Enjoy every step of your journey. Celebrate every milestone. Don’t let setbacks or slip-ups drag you down. When goals are achieved, create new ones to prevent complacency and the dreaded plateaus Mr. Lee spoke of.

Above all, take Ann Marie’s advice and don’t give up.

“Commit your actions to the LORD, and your plans will succeed.” – Proverbs 16:3 (NLT)

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