

Client: LighterLife
Source: Sainsbury's Magazine (Main)
Date: 01 March 2009
Page: 59
Circulation: 308175
Size: 156cm2
AVE: 3458.52

MY STORY

'I decided to change my look'



Claire Braker-Finch, 38, a PA from Suffolk, ballooned in size after a family crisis.

'Life is about all the little decisions you make, and when it came to eating, mine just weren't right. It

started when my elder sister became dangerously ill with Behçet's syndrome, an auto-immune disease, and was taken into hospital in Cambridge. She was there for nine months and every day I travelled 25 miles from my home in Bury St Edmunds to be with her.

'The only food on offer was a burger or a snack from the machine, so that's what I ate. I'd always been skinny, so at first I didn't realise the weight was piling on. This, coupled with severe stress-related acne, meant my self-esteem hit rock-bottom.

'When my sister's condition stabilised and she was discharged from hospital, I had time to think and the change hit me like a bolt of lightning. I was horrified to discover that I'd put on over four stone. "Surely this isn't me?" I thought. I just couldn't accept it.

'My decision to lose weight was practical as well as emotional. I'd allowed myself to overeat, which made me feel bad, and that had to change. It didn't happen overnight - I went on several diets before I found a plan that worked - but once the seed had been planted, it was just a matter of time.

'A friend recommended I contact Lighter Life, which uses meal replacements and behavioural therapy to help people with at least three stone to lose. Therapy helps you understand your reactions to stress and I realised that eating only makes it worse, because it makes me feel worse about myself.

'Accepting what was behind my behaviour

made losing weight much easier. In three months I lost four stone and reached 8 stone 5lb for my wedding two years ago. I love my meals, so I still keep an eye on portion sizes, but I no longer eat to escape stress. My sister will always need looking after but I've learnt to manage our needs - without relying on food.'

MY LIGHTBULB MOMENT 'Seeing myself in the mirror. It was shocking - I didn't like what I'd done to myself so I decided to change.'

www.lighterlife.com