

a life worth living



Valerie MacWilliam overcame an unhealthy lifestyle and low self-esteem and is now living the life of her dreams

By Cameran Erny



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL STYCKET

Weighing 182 pounds and a size 12, fast food was a quick solution to hunger cravings and laziness for Reader Model Valerie MacWilliam from Vancouver, B.C. Besides leading an unhealthy lifestyle and having low self-esteem, Valerie was trying to raise a premature daughter on her own. Valerie knew she needed to be healthy physically and mentally to take care of her daughter, Chelsea, who was also battling health problems.

Valerie's self-esteem was low from staying in an abusive relationship and being in and out of the hospital over 20 times with everything from knee problems to a hysterectomy. She felt suicide was the only way out, but her love for Chelsea made her strong enough to pack up and move to a better life. "I really started to transform myself when I finally left the abusive situation with my boyfriend," Valerie says. "I started working out at home to get my strength up and changed the pattern of my eating habits." Taking it step by step, Valerie began writing down her fitness goals, flipped through fitness magazines for exercise and nutrition tips, and was soon ready to tackle a healthy lifestyle.

Staying focused

Once Valerie eliminated fast food as a daily meal and ice cream as a late-night snack, which she found wasn't easy, the junk food cravings eventually went away, and she realized that mind over matter was taking effect. "I gradually began to see changes in my body, my mental attitude and my physical health," Valerie says. "I also began to feel happier, and I had more energy to take care of my daughter." But not everyone celebrated in Valerie's success. A few family and friends didn't understand her fitness goals, and why she didn't want to spend time at the bars and eating fast food. "I knew I needed to stay focused to accomplish my goals."

Striving for more

Working out at home and maintaining a steady weight of 145 pounds, Valerie felt she was not meeting her full potential. Her motivation started to wane, and she felt she had taken her workouts as far as they could go. To change up her routine, Valerie joined a local gym and began working out with a personal trainer, Steve Robinson, three to five days a week. "Steve helped me achieve results that I couldn't have on my own. He customized a workout and a nutrition plan for me to change up my normal routine." After working out consistently with her trainer, Valerie began to see better results. She was building muscle, eating healthier and her weight was dropping even more.

Exceeding expectations

After keeping consistent with her workout and nutrition program, and the personal training sessions with Steve, Valerie reached the weight she desired—123 pounds and a size 3. And her success brought her more than she expected—a

valerie's nutrition plan

7:30 A.M. BREAKFAST

- English muffin with 1 tablespoon of all-natural peanut butter
- 1 ½ scoops whey protein
- ¼ cup juice or ½ cup strawberries

10:30 A.M. SNACK

- 8-ounce yogurt
- Low-fat cheddar cheese on a whole-wheat bagel

1:30 P.M. LUNCH

- 1 can of tuna on a whole-wheat tortilla
- ½ cup watermelon

4:30 P.M. DINNER


- 1 chicken breast
- 4 asparagus spears
- ½ cup cooked kidney beans
- ½ cup cooked corn

8:00 P.M. SNACK

- 1 nectarine
- 1 scoop whey protein
- 1 slice of whole-wheat bread toasted with all-natural peanut butter

modeling and acting career in Vancouver. Due to inspiration from friends, Valerie had her headshots taken and was on her first model shoot a week later. "I have been modeling and acting for over a year, and it's a busy lifestyle with long hours," Valerie says. "Sometimes I am tempted to grab fast food to save time, but I refrain and eat a healthy meal, and I drink plenty of water." Since successfully losing 59 pounds, Valerie's energy levels and self-esteem have soared. She has tried parasailing, horseback riding and jet skiing; activities she would have never done before. "In the beginning I never thought I would look like I do now. I exceeded my expectations, and as I progressed I saw that my goal of looking and feeling great was achievable."

Mission accomplished

Valerie has kept the weight off for three years now, and she finally feels in control of her life, her goals and her overall focus. Valerie surrounds herself with supportive people who understand her fitness goals, and she has a happy and proud 11-year-old daughter. "I feel that for once I have my body, spirit and mind all together," Valerie says. "I have achieved my focus and goal on creating a healthy and happy life for my daughter and myself." 

valerie's workout schedule

DAY ONE

- **Chest** (four sets of 15 reps): Horizontal bench presses, Incline presses, Horizontal flat flies
- **Biceps** (three sets of 15 reps): Standing curls, Preacher curls, Concentration curls
- **Abs** (three sets of 15 reps): Ab machine

DAY TWO

- **Back** (four sets of 15 reps): Lat pull-downs, Seated cable rows, Standing leg dead lifts
- **Triceps** (three sets of 15 reps): Pull-downs, Kickbacks
- **Abs** (four sets of 20 reps): Crunches

DAY THREE

- **Shoulders** (three sets of 15 reps): Dumbbell raises, Seated dumbbell raises
- **Legs** (three sets of 15 reps): Leg extensions, Leg curls, Leg presses
- **Calves** (three sets of 12 reps): Seated calf raises

DAY FOUR

Repeat day one

- **Abs** (four sets of 20 reps): Ball Crunches

DAY FIVE

Repeat day two

DAY SIX

All ab exercises with two minutes of cardio in between sets

DAY SEVEN

Rest!