Today. This is the day you look in the mirror and are proud of what you see: a strong, healthy, beautiful person staring back. We all have days when we're feeling less than confident about our bodies. But focusing on what your body can do may help you feel more positive about it. Take it from these Weight Watchers members.

BY JESSICA MIGALA

“I TRIED AN IRONMAN.”
Megan Steeber is a triathlete, but she hasn’t always been über fit. At her heaviest, the Spokane, WA, resident weighed 345 pounds and couldn’t walk long enough to exercise. But after losing the first 40 pounds on Weight Watchers, Megan graduated from playing Wii games with her kids to training to walk a 5K (she finished in a little over an hour). “I hadn’t been on a bike in 20 years.” She used that confidence boost to join a local running group. “I met people who were sporty and athletic, which is not how I thought of myself,” she says. And Megan was blown away by their support—her new group of friends introduced her to a local triathlon club, another huge stretch. “I hadn’t been on a bike in 20 years, and, as for swimming, I only knew how not to drown,” she says. With their help and encouragement, she trained for and competed in a sprint triathlon (the shortest kind), then a half Ironman, and finally, last summer, the Coeur d’Alene Ironman in Idaho, a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, and 26.2-mile run. Megan didn’t finish the competition, but she’s trying again this August. “The race didn’t go as I had hoped, but I’m excited to give it another shot,” she says.

“My shape is different from that of other athletes.” While training for these races on Plan, Megan has lost 138 pounds.* After such a dramatic weight loss, she has a lot of loose skin. “It’s been difficult to come to terms with how different my shape is compared to the other competitors out there,” she says—especially when wearing body-hugging wet suits and spandex. But one day, at the starting line of a triathlon, she looked around and had a realization: “Everyone is freaking out about their own stuff. No one cares what I look like!”

“I never imagined I could do this.” Megan is seeing herself in a new light these days: “I’m not a perfect athletic person. I have athletic friends of different shapes and sizes, and I will never look like a fitness model. But I also see myself accomplishing things that most people don’t. Growing up, I was a band kid, and I never imagined I could do anything like this. Turns out, I can.”

3 THINGS MEGAN TELLS HERSELF ABOUT WEARING SKIN-TIGHT GEAR

1. IT’S WORTH IT “When I feel insecure, I remind myself that I know my body can do this and this workout is what will get me closer to my goal.”

2. IT HELPS ME PERFORM “When I try on a wet suit, I could be negative. Instead, I remember why I’m doing this and this is what I have to wear.”

3. PEOPLE NOTICE MY STRENGTH “I’ve found that other people on the course are not staring at me with disgust, but with admiration that I’m out there racing.”

*A pilot study of 70 college-age women (ranging from ages 18 to 28, with a median age of around 20) featured in the journal Body Image found women who embraced what their bodies can do—as opposed to how they think they should look—may have greater body acceptance and satisfaction. Women who focused on “functionality”—i.e., all the things their bodies were capable of—had a more positive view of themselves when shown “thin-ideal” images than women in a control group who weren’t thinking about their body’s “abilities.” Larger studies are warranted to confirm these initial findings.
“I ACHIEVED MY IMPOSSIBLE.”

Last year was Artney Walker’s year. In 2014, the 35-year-old had set a goal to run her first marathon; she finished the Walt Disney World Marathon the following January. (Check!) Then she decided to become a Marathon Maniac, and ran four of them by the end of 2015. (Quadruple check!)

“It felt like no runners looked like me.”
But it hasn’t always been easy for Artney to call herself a runner. “I thought only thin women ran, and I’m curvy,” she says. “It felt like no one out there looked like me, and being a thicker runner can slow you down and put mental blocks in your head before you even start.”

“It’s OK that I’m slower.”
She’s still a back-of-the-pack person—but now she feels proud about that. “I used to get very sad and cry about it. But I knew I had to keep trying. Finally, after 4½ years of putting one foot in front of the other, I’ve accepted that it’s OK that I’m slower.” What changed her mind? “I’ve met some of the most incredible people and made the best friends running, especially in the back of the pack. It’s helped me have fun during the races. I stopped trying to be competitive and started enjoying it—I take selfies when I’m out there!”

“This year, I’m focusing on being active.”
Though she’s lost weight on Weight Watchers in the past, both personal stress and (ironically) marathon training caused her to gain weight. She’s back on track again, but has changed her approach. “I’m declaring 2016 the year of non-scale victories,” she says. “I was always a scale girl. I needed to see that number move in my favor. But this year I’m focusing on being active and making healthier choices.” That means things like trying to eat a salad a day to get more veggies in and doing weight lifting and core training with her husband.

“I embrace where I am on the journey.”
As Artney says, the key is to make the decision to be the healthiest you—without comparisons. “It’s all about embracing where I am on the journey, even if it’s not perfect, and loving myself on the way to where I want to be.”

3 MANTRAS ARTNEY USES TO KEEP IT POSITIVE

1. REMEMBER WHAT’S IMPORTANT
   “In the beginning, I’d compare myself to other runners. Now I remind myself that it’s about finishing. We all get the same medal once we cross the finish line.”

2. SLOW AND STEADY WINS
   “This is true in long-distance running, in weight loss, and in life. Go at your own pace, and you’ll win.”

3. THE IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE
   “When I get discouraged, I remind myself through faith that I can achieve my impossible. A marathon was never even on my radar, and now I’ve done four.”
“I STARTED TO SAY THANK YOU TO MY BODY.”

Actor and dancer Brianna Engebretsen knows the thrill of reaching goal. But she also knows the disappointment of regaining. Up 30 pounds, Brianna has recommitted herself to weight loss this year. This time, the busy 29-year-old Chicaggoan (who blogs at divaandthedivine.com) is jumping in with a new mind-set: eating well and exercising for health, “instead of trying to be a size 6 actor,” as she puts it.

“I found a work-around: the elliptical.”
That she can work out at all is a major achievement. As a child, Brianna was diagnosed with a congenital condition called CMT (Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease) that leaves her with weak muscles in her hands, arms, legs, and feet. She can’t raise her arms above her head (which makes dancing a challenge). She wanted to run as exercise, but she would trip over her feet. Now she’s found a work-around: the elliptical. “I get the feeling of going on a run without being in physical danger.”

“I love the amazing things my body has done for me.”
Brianna wasn’t always confident, but after connecting on Facebook with other people who have the same disease, she realized how lucky she is. “I now see my body as being pretty incredible; there are so many things I can do that others with CMT can’t,” she says. “I’m learning to appreciate and love what my body has done and continues to do for me on a daily basis.”

“It’s about appreciating what I can accomplish today.”
That’s why Brianna’s focused on how to be healthy rather than worrying about what she looks like. “I read somewhere if you’re upset about what size clothes you wear, cut out the tags!” she says. “It just doesn’t matter. It’s about appreciating what I can accomplish today.”

“Love yourself first.”
During this second journey back to her goal, Brianna has learned one important thing: “It’s easier to love yourself when you get to your goal, but it’s easier to achieve your goal when you love yourself first.”

3 WAYS BRIANNA SHOWS HERSELF THE LOVE

1. NOT DEFERRING
“I used to think, ‘I’m going to treat myself to X or Y when I lose 10 pounds.’ Now I show myself that I’m good enough now—even if I think I can be better.”

2. USING MOTIVATING REWARDS
“Cute workout gear inspires me to work out even more, so I’ll splurge on a new shirt or shorts.”

3. EMBRACING NOW
“I’ve said if I didn’t lose anymore weight, that’s fine with me as long as I’m healthy. I like to tell myself, ‘Your body is already pretty incredible.’ ”

“UNTIL YOU MAKE THE DECISION IN YOUR HEART TO GET HEALTHY, IT WON’T HAPPEN.”

Brianna Engebretsen, actor, singer, and dancer