

Total Transformation

A self-proclaimed “pudgy kid” discovers the power of exercise—and uses her workout know-how to give hope to others. *By Lisa Delaney*

To see Kim Austin sweating it out in the weight room, moving like a pro through her workout, you'd never guess that this buff 41-year-old mom of two once struggled with the simplest of physical tasks.

“My friends gave me pedicures because I couldn't reach my toes,” says Kim, who topped the scales at 220 pounds after miscarriages and a cross-country move sent her into a depression and her appetite into overdrive.

Now 17 years later and 85 pounds lighter, Kim isn't just able to keep herself in top condition—she's inspiring countless others to shape up, too.

Kim grew up a pudgy kid (her words) in a family of petite people. And, grudgingly, she accepted that. “I thought some people were meant to be big. I thought that was just me.”

But at age 25, when Kim reached her heaviest weight ever, all the discomforts of daily living—straining to buckle her seatbelt, or to grab a saucepot

“My favorite phrase is, ‘If you believe it, you will become it,’” Kim says. “What you tell yourself can really mold what happens in your life.”

from a low shelf—finally boiled over. Despite her doubts, Kim decided to try to change her life.

“I got fed up feeling like I was different,” Kim says. “I said, ‘I don't want to do this any more.’”

She started eating less, and bought a step aerobics video, which she popped in the VCR as often as she could. The video still sits on a shelf in her den. “It's become like a trophy,” she says.

Four weeks into her new life, Kim says, she'd lost a few pounds, and people started to notice. “That just made me want to do more,” she says.

She added walking to her regimen, hoofing it up and down the stairs to her third-floor apartment, and further tweaked her diet. “I'd have one Pop Tart instead of two, or a McDonald's cheeseburger instead of a Quarter Pounder with cheese,” she says.

Kim watched the numbers on the scale drop to 190, then to 180, then to 165. Her success led her to a part-time job for a weight loss company. During her six months there, she lost an additional 30 pounds.

“I never really had a goal,” she says. “I just thought I needed to start moving and watch what I ate.”

Then came baby number one with husband Jerry, a Navy submarine officer. Not only did Kim gain 60 pounds during her pregnancy with daughter Ellie (now 11), she found a new love in the process of losing the baby weight: strength training. Kim became a regular at her local rec center, lifting every other day



PAYING IT FORWARD: Kim now shares her story to help others get healthy.

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and reading up on technique. She used what she learned to get her body back after baby number two, son Clay, now 7 years old.

Friends and fellow gym-goers started asking for advice, and she found herself sharing recipe ideas and workouts with whoever asked. But

there was one thing she didn't share with people: just how heavy she once was.

“I thought it was a sign that I wasn't in control, or that I was weak,” Kim says. But in the last five years, she's started opening up in an effort to help other overweight women and men find hope in her story. “It's good for people to know that you're real, so now I try to be as candid as I can be,” she says. “It's been therapeutic for me to come out of the ‘fat closet.’”

The reaction she received when people found out she had been heavy led Kim to get her nutrition and fitness certification and start a personal training/nutrition counseling business with a friend who shared her history and passion. While she's no longer formally taking on clients, she's still dishing out diet and exercise advice (like her favorite workout on the next page) to a handful of fitness buddies online and in the gym near her home in southern Georgia.

“I'm always ‘consulting’—I'm just not making it a business now,” she says. “I feel best when I'm helping someone.” •

Kim's Secret-Weapon Workout

Kim Austin doesn't have time to waste time in the gym—and neither do you. That's why she advocates this circuit-type workout. Do each of these three moves once, then repeat the entire series 1-3 more times. * **TO BOOST THE BURN EVEN MORE, WALK OR JOG FOR 20-30 MINUTES AFTER YOU COMPLETE THE FULL CIRCUIT.**



A



B



C

1. Squat-Curl-Press

A. Stand with your feet about hip-width apart, holding a pair of 5lb dumbbells at your sides. Bend your knees and slowly squat down as far as is comfortable. **Don't let your knees go past your toes as you squat.** Push through your heels to return to the starting position.

B. Keeping your elbows near your sides, curl both hands toward your shoulders.

C. Rotate your arms until your palms are facing away from your body and press both dumbbells overhead. Reverse the motion, bringing your arms back into the curl position, and slowly lower to your sides. Do 8-10 repetitions, then walk in place or on a treadmill for two minutes.

JOE HARDWICK



A

2. Lunge/Row Combo

A. Stand with your feet hip-width apart, holding a pair of 5lb dumbbells at your sides. Step forward about two feet with your left foot. Bend both legs to 90 degrees (don't let your left knee go past your toes). Push off your left foot back to starting position. Repeat with right foot.

B. Keeping your back straight, lean forward from your hips until your torso reaches about 90 degrees. Let your arms extend toward the floor with your palms facing each other. Then bend your arms and pull your hands toward your torso, squeezing your shoulder blades together. Slowly lower your hands and return to starting position. Do 8-10 repetitions, then walk in place for two minutes.



B

3. Push-Up

Kneel down and, keeping your torso straight, place your hands on the floor directly beneath your shoulders. Face the floor and keep your body in a straight line from the top of your head through your lower back (**don't let your hips sag!**).

Bend your arms to lower your torso toward the floor. Pause; push through your hands to extend your arms until they are straight. Do 8-10 repetitions, then walk in place for two minutes.