

Living a healthy life for a long time to come!

How does one express his gratitude to someone who has helped him to achieve his goals, gain confidence to overcome physical and mental barriers to strive for better health, and help develop balance and symmetry in lifestyle, eating habits, body shape, and posture?

One would expect a cardiothoracic surgeon to have no problem attaining and maintaining the above-mentioned basic tenets of life, without difficulty, as if by second nature. Not necessarily. Let me explain!

I was brought up in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, a small nation in the middle of Africa. My parents, both of whom were doctors, always pushed us to do our best—particularly in terms of our education—and helped me to pursue and achieve my career goals in the face of all kinds of difficulties.

After completing high school in Kampala, which in those days was in great political turmoil, I went to Bombay, India, to complete my medical degree. It was soon after that that my parents were forced to flee Uganda due to the regime of Idi Amin. My parents, then, immigrated to England after a short stay in India. I joined my family in England upon completing a surgical residency in Bombay, eager to pursue my dream of becoming a heart surgeon, inspired by Dr. Christian Barnard, who is responsible for putting Africa on the medical map by performing the first human heart transplant in the world.

Not satisfied with the support and opportunity afforded in England, I immigrated to the United States after a grueling, six-year surgical residency, which I had to repeat to become eligible to practice heart and lung surgery in this country. Finally, after having completed almost sixteen years of surgical residencies on three different continents, I settled in Lansing and have worked incessantly to establish myself in the practice of my chosen profession.

It was during these years that I ignored my personal health and allowed the vagaries of external forces to dictate my physical shape to the extent that, at six feet, I weighed over 250 pounds, and did not have the stamina to carry out even moderate exertion. In addition, I used to get severe backaches and could not walk without becoming winded. Furthermore, I contracted tuberculosis during a visit abroad and almost died. God, however, had more in mind for me, and I gratefully recovered from the disease.

At this point I decided I should take better care of myself. But how? I tried a number of dietary regimens, including Atkins, South Beach, periods of starvation, etc., without any success. I also took up exercise, with the help of a number of trainers, but was not able to sustain my practice for long and lumbered back into my old habits of working hard, starving myself the entire day, followed by eating irresponsibly at night. This pattern, which lasted for about four to five years, did not result in any improvement. In addition, I became so frustrated I lost all faith in my ability to lose weight.

It was at this juncture in my life that I recognized I needed assistance and called Chris, whom I had known for some time. From the beginning, Chris seemed to be someone who knew not only how to help one achieve one's goals, but also maintain them. What impressed me most about Chris was his philosophy, which was all about balance, perseverance, and focus on fundamentals. This approach permeates not only Chris's exercise training regimen, but also his weight-loss regimen, as is evident in the book *On Target Living Nutrition*. In this particular book, Chris talks at length about the balance between carbohydrates, fats, and proteins, and the need to assimilate good- versus poor-quality food. Chris also emphasizes the need for gradual, progressive weight loss rather than rapid and, even worse, unbalanced weight loss, as recommended by some popular regimens. This same philosophy is evident in his exercise program, as Chris has focused on improving my core muscle development.

One would expect to understand this concept naturally, but despite the fact that my mother used to constantly remind me to walk erect as a child, I could not do it for any length of time until Chris helped me to develop my core muscle strength. With this combined approach, Chris has helped me lose over thirty-five pounds in weight; I now walk erect, fulfilling my mother's wishes; and can run over a mile and a half without difficulty. This may not sound like much to some people, but for me it is quite an accomplishment, and something I could never do even in high school. More importantly, Chris has instilled the confidence in me to know I can accomplish the next phase of my goal, which is to continue to lose more weight and maintain it, while *living a healthy life for a long time to come*.

So, Chris, thank you very much for all you have done for me, and if my experience inspires someone else to take the path to strive for excellence in health and fitness, then I would be satisfied that the gratitude has been expressed to a small degree!



With much respect,

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