

SUCCESS STORY: 50 Pounds Lighter, Veteran Embraces Lifestyle Changes

In 1990, Joseph E. Rizza weighed 168 pounds, a normal weight for a five foot, eight inch man. But less than 10 years later, the Vietnam Veteran was seriously overweight and had multiple health problems including high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar and high cholesterol, and other issues like snoring, back and joint pain, along with restless, sleepless nights.

Today, thanks to his successful participation in the MOVE! Program, the 63-year-old Palm Coast, Florida resident is maintaining a 50-pound weight loss and his overall health is greatly improved. "In fact, we call on Joe to be a motivational speaker with our MOVE! 2 class," said Teresita Janiola, RN, of the William V. Chappell, Jr., VA Satellite Outpatient Clinic in Daytona Beach, FL. "He's a great success story and a great motivator for others in the MOVE! program," she said.

JOE'S STORY:

Joe found himself in his 40's with a demanding, yet sedentary job, sitting for hours in front of a computer screen. As younger people, Joe and his wife had been very active, however, as Joe's job responsibilities became more demanding and his personal life became more complex, his level of physical activity decreased.

Then, health problems started to appear. In the mid-1990's, his provider put him on medication for high blood pressure and cholesterol, and his weight slowly crept up, until in 2009, he weighed in at 230 pounds. Despite the weight gain, Joe says he didn't perceive himself as significantly overweight. Instead, he thought his problems were the typical signs of aging.

Then the bomb dropped. In August 2010, Joe's VA Primary Care Provider Dr. Bruce Crewe, along with Joe's family provider, delivered some frightening news.

"They told me that I was at best, three years away from diabetes, and that my heart and kidneys were at serious risk. I needed to lose weight," Joe said.

At Dr. Crewe's invitation, it was then that Joe adopted a "lifestyle change" that permanently changed his behavior with very positive results. "The MOVE! folks helped me, made me feel good when I succeeded, and supported me, but didn't coddle me," he said.



THE KEYS TO SUCCESS: IN JOE'S OWN WORDS

Education: Know what you are about to eat and the need for a balanced diet.

Exercise: You don't need to run five miles a day and pump iron to stay healthy, but you do need about 20 minutes of brisk daily activity including walking.

Food Diary and Meal Planning: Keep track of what you eat every day. You can't lose weight if you don't know how many calories you consume.

Accountability and Support: The weekly weigh-in at the MOVE! Clinic and reporting your progress is very important. I felt a personal obligation to my MOVE! coordinators--they were so invested in me.

Creativity and Enthusiasm: Come up with enjoyable, balanced meals within your calorie budget. I look forward to eating healthy, properly sized meals today with the same enthusiasm I used to have for junk food and excess.

Rewards: I feel good that I have more energy, like what I see in the mirror, and enjoy life more!

Contact your VA health care provider to find out how to enroll.
To learn more about MOVE!, go to www.move.va.gov/