

Walking to a Better Future

Today Adam Baker is a different person than he was in 2007 when he first met Dr. Geoff Moore, lifestyle management specialist and director of clinical services at the Cayuga Center for Healthy Living. Baker, who is 29 years old, is a multi-media developer for Information Technology Services at Ithaca College.

Two years ago Baker was 125 pounds heavier than he is today and he was smoking a pack of cigarettes a day.

"I came to Dr. Moore with a huge heap of problems and he helped me prioritize them," says Baker. "He broke this incredibly complex problem down into simple steps and that was an enormous help. For me, looking forward was totally overwhelming; Dr. Moore helped me look at the here and now and he reassured me of a better future.

"I had always been big," explains Baker. "I was comfortable with it and didn't see my size as a problem. But things started getting out of control in college where I parked myself in front of a computer. I ate and learned but I didn't realize what was happening to me until it was almost too late.

"My mother set me up with an appointment with Dr. Moore for my 27th birthday," Baker continues. "I wanted to do something about my smoking. I could feel it was killing me and I was definitely addicted; I'd been smoking for nine years. So, I went to see Dr. Moore. We talked for a couple of hours. He's really great... he seemed to know exactly where I was coming from and what my concerns were. I didn't feel motivated to lose the weight but I wanted out of the smoking."

They tackled the smoking first. Dr. Moore prescribed antidepressants and a nicotine patch, explains Baker, "to mellow me out. And he recommended exercise to curb my cravings. I'd walk when I wanted a cigarette...and this segued into weight loss." After Baker felt his smoking cessation was under control, he told Dr. Moore he'd try a weight-loss regimen.

"I told Dr. Moore I'd commit to one month of diet and exercise; I promised to do whatever he said for a month. I started out slow, with 20 minutes of walking on the treadmill. It was brutal! I was sore and it was hard. But two to three weeks down the road I realized that I was walking faster and I could breathe going up the stairs. It was a little nugget rolling downhill

that became a snowball," Baker observes. "I went from being broken by exercise to feeling okay."

Healthy Living Class

Baker began taking the Healthy Living class at CCHL just as he was starting to exercise. "It seems like common sense to me now, looking back," he says. "The classes really broke down smoking, weight, exercise, and stress management. They helped me get a logical perspective on how intertwined they all are."

As one who says he enjoys a certain amount of stress in his life, Baker didn't think he would benefit from learning about stress management. But then his thinking changed. "After I got addicted to exercise I realized that I felt better because the glare of stress was melting off me," he says. "I get on the treadmill and just blast my music and I'm in another world. Everything melts away and I feel so much better!"

The Healthy Living classes gave Baker the basics he needed. With help from Dr. Moore, the Wellness Clinic at Ithaca College, and his mother, Sally Baker, Adam worked out a diet plan. "I didn't do a fad diet," he says. "I like all kinds of food and didn't want to give up anything. I logged and weighed every bit of food I ate and measured every calorie.

"By measuring calories in and calories out, I made this huge problem of my life into a simple mathematical equation," Baker explains. "I finally started losing weight and it flew off me. I never felt like I was sacrificing because I was really only sacrificing until the next meal."

For a year Adam Baker steadily lost weight, for a total of 125 pounds. "Dr. Moore set me up with the Wellness Clinic at Ithaca College. It's for staff, faculty, and students and it's a no judgment zone. I got a personal trainer—a grad student—who stayed on me and kept me accountable. The other thing I did was to tell everyone I knew what I was doing," Baker adds.



"The staff members at the Cayuga Center for Healthy Living have worked to build something special; they are extraordinarily committed and capable people. Together we can help our patients solve multifaceted, complicated lifestyle problems. Building this kind of program with all of these integrated components is difficult, which is why not many other places offer what we offer. Cayuga Medical Center has stepped up to do this."

Dr. Geoffrey Moore, Director of Clinical Services Cayuga Center for Healthy Living

"I was quitting smoking and I was going to the gym. So on those days when I was really hurting, I'd still go to the gym because everyone knew about my plan."

Baker says his weight has hit a plateau, but he's still working on it and still getting exercise six days a week. He is stronger than he's ever been and recently carried 30 pounds of camera equipment six miles into a remote site near Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where he grew up. "My quality of life is better and my body composition is changing. From an anthropological standpoint, I'm more accepted into society since I've lost weight. I've also discovered things I never realized I was missing out on, like going hiking with someone.

"I did this for myself," says Baker. "There were times in the middle where I just wanted to quit. But I showed up and did the work. Dr. Moore says just take it one day at a time. Do the best you can today and try to do better tomorrow.

"I think to myself: I'll just try again tomorrow and the next day. I can do this!"