

Business

WEIGHT LOSS COUNSELOR WALKS THE WALK

Following her own remarkable success, Linda Fiveson devotes herself to advising others on health, nutrition and weight loss.

Linda Fiveson remembers the day vividly. The then 31-year-old mother of two had gone to the doctor feeling a bit under the weather.

Fiveson, president and founder of [Long Island Weight Counseling, Inc.](#) in Syosset, was told she had diabetes by the doctor. Then she heard the word "obese". She said the visit was an epiphany and that she needed to take action.

"I needed to prove something to myself," Fiveson said.

The first thing Linda said she did was enroll in a couple of college courses to bolster her wounded psyche.

At 260 lbs., she also knew she needed to lose weight, but having previously tried virtually every diet imaginable to no avail, she was determined to find her own way. Shying away from the portion control many diets require, Fiveson came up with a plan.

"I'm just going to give up the foods that make me fat... the flour and sugar," she recalled telling herself. "But I'm not going to be weighing and measuring."

Her resolve and her self-designed plan paid off as she ended up losing 140 lbs. At the suggestion of an uncle who happened to work as an accountant for Weight Watchers, Fiveson began to do presentations sharing her success story.

"I would speak at a PTA meeting, or a temple meeting," she said. "I didn't charge... I was just so proud and very motivated – I loved it!"

That was the first step in what she calls the evolution of her business. To enhance her knowledge, Fiveson enrolled at C.W. Post College, graduating with a degree in Nutrition.

In 1980, she relented to the spirited urging of an 'entrepreneurial friend' who assured her she could make a career as a weight loss counselor and took out a personal ad saying simply 'I lost 140 lbs. and so can you!'

"The woman who took my ad over the phone became my first client, but I had nothing prepared," Fiveson said. "I didn't know what to do. I'm sitting there typing up what was going to be the program, pulling together recipes."

Despite the panicky start, that first client recommended others, and the business took off.

As clients would come for meetings, she began to share healthy recipes created in her own kitchen. Over time, this evolved into *Fabulous Fakes*, Fiveson's line of healthy foods that replicate the taste of tempting, fattening foods, but which have no sugar, flour or gluten.

"If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with," she joked about the foods.

As she has counseled thousands of clients over the years, Fiveson is still ever mindful of her own eating.

"I was a fat child and I still have a 'fat personality.' I'm a mindless eater - it's a behavior that's part of who I am," she explained.

"But you have to do it with the right foods," she added. "That's what I've learned."

Long Island Weight Counseling, Inc. is located at 633 Jericho Turnpike. For more information, visit www.lindafiveson.com or call 516-496-2300.

