

Turning Point: Enough already! Former fat kid finally found fitness routine that worked

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Teddy Kim's parents grew up in postwar South Korea. Both had siblings who had died of starvation, making for an emotional relationship with food. His parents later moved to Virginia and raised four children. Kim, now 39 and living in Minneapolis, says he grew up in an environment where overeating was the norm.

"I think in the back of their minds, their big emotional burden was having to live with the memories of siblings who starved to death. A lot of the eating patterns we had as children stemmed from that experience.

"There wasn't a good sense of what 'enough' food was. We always took more than enough.

"I've struggled with being overweight since childhood. I was the kid who got teased in the schoolyard, sometimes mercilessly. Other kids called me 'Twinkie.'

"Even as a little kid, I knew I was fat. I had a dim perception that exercise would help, but I didn't really know what healthy eating was. I didn't have access to information about eating and exercise.

"By 1995, I had ballooned to 240 pounds. That was my high point. I am 5-feet-7.

"I started running. I didn't have any instruction. I didn't know what good running looked like. I'd just go out and run. Eventually, I was running 20 miles a week.

"After a summer of running, I broke the bones in both feet. One morning, I couldn't even turn over in bed. The weight of the sheet was so painful. I had stress fractures from repetitive impact.

"I had a bit of physical

therapy. I was on crutches. I became more poorly conditioned. After my feet were healed, I didn't want to run anymore.

"My dad is a Type 2 diabetic. He started to lose his vision. That was strong motivation for me to make substantive changes in my life.

"I am still too young to be contemplating mortality, but I thought, 'I have a lot of life yet, but I have to do something to preserve it.'

"After years of not doing much of anything, I started doing CrossFit in 2008. It's a skill-intensive fitness system that incorporates elements of gymnastics, Olympic weight lifting, rowing, running, cycling. It's all about functional movement — multiple joints, multiple muscles moving in concert. The sessions are done in a small group with a trainer.

"It was the hardest thing I had ever done in my life. I was completely shocked at how out of condition I was.

"Everyone else in the group was about my age, so I couldn't make excuses.

"In the first six months of doing CrossFit, I didn't change my nutritional habits. At the time, I lived across the street from a Yum Yum Donuts shop. I was eating a lot of doughnuts.

"Now, I eat a lot of fresh produce, fresh protein. I eat any form of fresh,



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dark-green, leafy vegetables. I eat chicken, beef, pork, fish. I try to eat fresh, organic, grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free proteins. I'm strict with food quantity. I eat for satiety.



Have you turned the corner toward good health — physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually? If so, we want to hear your story. Please e-mail your ideas to rgfukushima@pioneerpress.com (no attachments, please) or call 651-228-5444. For more Turning Points, go to twincities.com/health.

"I weigh 165 pounds. I have 11 percent body fat. In the old days, I was pushing 30 percent.

"When I weighed 240 pounds, I looked at the world as a hideous obstacle course. That takes a lot of emotional energy. That means you don't have anything left over.

"My experience now is living in a world without physical boundaries. It has opened doors to many things.

"I opened the Twin Town CrossFit in Uptown in November 2009. There are seven or eight CrossFit communities in the local area. Each gym has its own sort of culture.

"My wife and I had a baby boy in October. I knew it would change my perspective on life. But I didn't realize how important it was for me to be a good dad and stick around as long as I can to help him grow up.

"I'm considering running the Minneapolis Half-Marathon in June. No stress fractures. I'm a lot healthier now than I was when I was in my 20s."