



## Sigrid can now keep up with her athletic family!

**Sigrid de Castella, 42, East Melbourne, Vic**

**A**s I handed my credit card over to the shop assistant, she spotted my familiar surname. 'Are you related to Robert de Castella?' she asked excitedly.

The marathon runner and Commonwealth Games gold medallist, known to many Aussies as Deek, is my cousin. It's such a well-known name that I often get asked about him, but back then, when I confirmed the connection, the woman's expression suddenly changed.

Her smile faltered as she inspected my frame. Then she turned her attention back to my shopping bag. The truth was, it was not the first time that had happened. People were always shocked by my looks because I didn't have the athletic body my family was famous for. In fact, I was the complete opposite – obese. At 163 centimetres tall, I weighed more than 143 kilos and just squeezed into a size 30.

I always knew I was different from the rest of my family. My father, Paul, and brother, David, had physiques typical for fitness freaks, but I had pudgy legs and a round tummy. I found some comfort in my mum Ros' curvy frame, but as the years passed I felt more like the odd one out.

Things got worse when I went to school. 'Hey, Fatty boomba!' the boys would scoff each day.

Desperate to separate myself from my sporting family, I would

avoid all exercise. I also quit swimming classes, embarrassed to be seen in my swimmers. By the time I reached high school, I weighed in at a huge 100 kilos.

Stylish teenage clothes weren't an option – I put up with daggy adult gear. It was so frustrating, but eventually I simply accepted being big. *I always have been and always will be*, I decided. Becoming an adult, my diet did nothing to help the situation. Rather than cooking for myself, I'd munch on massive portions of sugary cereals, store-bought sandwiches and creamy pastas.

Riddled with shame, I became a secret eater, scoffing chocolate bars in the privacy of my car. I felt miserable, but every kilo I gained was a barrier between me and the rest of the world.

Fortunately, in 1997, I met a man who appreciated my fuller figure. Antony, now 43, caught my eye on an online dating site and we married five years later.

I was thrilled to find someone who loved me, no matter what size I was. But that's not to say I didn't try to slim down. Antony supported me through all sorts of diets. Occasionally I'd lose around 10 kilos – but it never lasted long.

In 2004, I reached my breaking point. Stepping on to the scales, I watched in utter horror as the numbers climbed past 143 kilos and stopped on the letters OL,

meaning Over Limit. I couldn't believe I'd let myself get so huge that the scales couldn't measure me! I knew if I didn't act now I was going to die.

First, I had to find out exactly what I was dealing with, by measuring my food intake for one day. I was shocked to find I'd been eating over 4000 calories – double what I should have been! So, determined to change, I set myself a limit of 2200 calories a day.

Cutting down my portion sizes and snacks, I stuck to three regular meals, but I always tried to leave enough calories for a fun-size chocolate. It was a great way to stay motivated, and

I lost more than six kilos in six weeks! Pleased with my progress, I promised myself this wasn't going to end like every other failed diet. I was going to change for good. I introduced exercise to my routine by walking around the block, and I increased the distance each time. But it wasn't easy. Some weeks I'd barely lose anything at all!

'You're doing so well, you just have to keep going,' Antony said. I was thrilled when people started noticing the changes

## My amazing shrinking body



Every kilo I gained was a barrier between me and the world

and a shapely figure started to emerge! After months of hard work I finally weighed less than 100 kilos. By now, I was eating around 1600 calories a day – including my regular chocolate!

As long as it came in under my allowance, it was a guilt-free indulgence. Gradually, my round tummy disappeared, and it was replaced with tonnes of energy. I had even started running up to 13km a day, like my marathon family. So I set myself a test.

I'd kept a pair of unworn jeans from year 7. They'd always been too tight, but when I pulled them out and tried them on, I was just thrilled. I was wearing jeans I couldn't squeeze into at 12 years old. They were even a bit loose!

To keep myself going, I set rewards for every weight-loss milestone. When I reached 100 kilos, I got my teeth whitened. When I hit 90 kilos, Antony and I treated ourselves to a hot air

balloon ride in the Yarra Valley in Victoria. Then, after 20 months of hard work, I finally reached my goal weight of 73 kilos.

I'd lost more than 70 kilos and could now fit into a size 10. I'd even lost three shoe sizes! It felt amazing to go shopping and pick items right off the rack. Some of my friends didn't even recognise me on the street. It wasn't long before others became inspired by my weight loss and decided that they would give it a go too.

So much of it was about my mindset. Just because I was an overweight child, it didn't mean that I had to be like that forever.

I had the courage to change my life and it was the best thing I have ever done. Today, I'm trim, toned and terrific. And I'm very proud to say I can now run circles around my family! ●

**As told to Stacey Hicks**  
You can read more of Sigrid's story in *Half The Woman I Was*, published by Global Publishing. Visit [www.halfthewomanias.com](http://www.halfthewomanias.com).

# I LOST 70kg (and still ate chocolate!)



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