
THE CrossFit LIFE

Fit After 40

Candy Rice had never been an athlete. Then she discovered CrossFit, and everything changed.

By Candy Rice

June 2012



All images: Brian Sullivan

A few years ago I was a typical mom, running kids here and there. Taking care of myself was last on the long list of things to do. I had always been thin and never really worried about my weight or what I ate. I would grab food on the go and never really read labels. I never had to.

Then I turned 35. Friends warned me that my body would change, but I never took them seriously. But then it happened. I started noticing that I wasn't looking as fit as I had in the past. I felt like I was going backward instead of forward, and I went up a size or two in clothes. Again, I was not overweight, but I was looking in the mirror at someone I didn't recognize. It hit me that there was a difference between thin and fit. And I was thin. Not fit.

I decided I was not going to continue on this path. I called a few friends and challenged them to get fit with me. We all took our "before" pictures in bikinis. We promised to never show a soul and started taking notes in our personal journals. Well, that lasted about a month, and then we all got busy again. We pretty much all gave up in one form or another. It was so much easier to give in, to put it off until tomorrow.

Once again, the day came when I looked in the mirror and said to myself, "No, you can do better than this." That's when I set up my weights in the garage. I was never one to go to the gym. I didn't want to do anything in front of anyone. So I suffered in the 100-degree heat with fans blowing and washcloths dipped in ice water to make it through. I did that every night until I thought I would be sick. Finally, I started seeing a change in my body.

Not long after that, a friend told me about P90X. I ordered it right away and saw results immediately. I worked out at home doing that for two more years. Finally, I was back to what I thought was a healthy, new me. But I was far from it ... until the day I decided to try CrossFit in September 2011. I had heard of CrossFit before, but for some reason I thought it would be hardcore, military-style workouts. I had heard of these "terrible injuries" and women getting "too bulky." But I was curious. I wanted to see what it was about.

Here I was, 41 years old. I had never been an athlete in my life. I had never even run a mile, much less sprinted.

I still remember my first day at CrossFit Centex in Belton, Texas. I walked up with butterflies in my stomach, thinking I was a joke.

"Here I am with people half my age, trying to do things I couldn't do when I was 20, much less 40," I thought.

But I refused to give up without trying. The first day was tough. The second was tougher. But the third day I will never forget. We did box jumps. I could not do anything more than a few weights stacked on top of each other. And even then, I was slow and uncoordinated. I remember thinking to myself that I was going to leave there and never look back.

I did not ever want to feel like that again. I was humiliated. As I did those baby jumps, I watched the hardcore CrossFit athletes doing 24-inch box jumps, pull-ups and handstand push-ups. If there was a back door I would have slipped out, but I was also intrigued and inspired.

I remember thinking, "If I can make it for six months, I am better than I have ever been in my life."

I had a lot of doubt when my on-ramp was over, but I decided to commit. I wrote down my workouts, my diet and even the negative things. I felt better than ever before and had more energy than I could imagine. It was amazing the support my CrossFit box offered to me both outwardly and by just setting examples. I wanted to be like them, those hardcore athletes who worked so hard.



Fit, fabulous ... and 40.

As time went on, I started to feel stronger. I set goals and would not give up until I met them. Months went by and I started to actually look forward to the workouts. I never missed a day, and still hate to unless I absolutely have to. I now look ahead.

Now I can jump on that 24-inch box without a worry, but I think I have a smirk when I do it. I want to continue to get stronger, increase the weight on the bar, decrease my time on my WODs, get a muscle-up and possibly compete in my age group at some point. I want to be healthy and active as long as I can be.

I haven't forgotten what I went through to get there. It finally hit me the other day when someone asked me, "What do you do to stay in shape?"

I was excited to share with them my story and how CrossFit truly changed my life. I don't want to be an Olympic weightlifter. I will never compete in the CrossFit Games. But I am strong. I am healthy. I am 41 ... and I am fit.

If I can do this, anyone can. It will change your life forever.

