
THE CrossFit LIFE

Tales of a 40-Year-Old Superhero

After spending her 30s overweight and unhappy, Lisa Erickson discovers CrossFit and her inner superhero at age 40.

By Lisa Erickson

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To say that CrossFit changed my life is an understatement. It might even sound a little overdramatic to some people. But for those of us who love CrossFit, it's completely understandable.

I was a moderately fit and athletic young person, but because of health problems and life in general, I spent the better part of my 30s more than 100 lb. overweight. I was married, had two children and was just getting by on a daily basis. I finally hit rock bottom one hot summer day at SeaWorld. I was so heavy my knees hurt and I was a sweaty mess. I went to the rental counter to rent an electric scooter. All of a sudden, I realized I was so fat and miserable I was actually going to rent a scooter. I was beyond disgusted with myself.

The next day, embarrassed and unsure, I and my friend Jena Pickard (aka G.I. Jena) walked into a Globo Gym and signed up for a membership and personal training. I didn't know it then, but my life was about to change.



Before Erickson started CrossFit.



Erickson with trainer Ivan Lugo after a half marathon.

I was so lucky to get Armando Macias, whom everyone calls “Mando,” as my trainer. At first I was sure Macias was too quiet and that I’d be able to get away with being a slacker. I thought I’d be doing leg lifts on the machine or walking on a treadmill. But he had me doing crazy things.

“You want me to carry this medicine ball up and down the stairs how many times?”

I had never in my life even touched a loaded barbell, and there I was lifting it over my head. One day I asked him why all the other trainers put their clients on machines and I had to lunge around the gym with dumbbells above my head.

He said one word: “CrossFit.”

I went home and Googled it and thought there was no way I could be doing what these people were doing. Certainly I was too old and overweight.

About six months after I started with Macias, he had the opportunity to be part of his own CrossFit gym. I canceled my gym membership without hesitation and went with him. Over the last two years, CrossFit (and Macias) have transformed my mind and body from an unhappy, frumpy, overweight, stay-at-home mom to some sort of superhero who can do just about anything. At least that’s how I feel.

With over 90 lb. gone and what seems like the strength of an Amazon woman, I feel like a whole new person—and I love it. I never knew I could love Olympic lifting so much. And each time I PR on something, I think about the old me and how far I have come.

An important moment came about last year when we were trying for our 1-rep-max deadlift. I hit a PR of 272 lb. The number 272 made me emotional because 272 lb. was how much I weighed when I started this journey. To lift that heavy weight and feel the burden it put on my whole body as I lifted it resonated through my mind and reminded me how far I’ve come.



Erickson on her 40th birthday. She says, "Don't worry: I didn't eat the cake."

Sometimes I wish I hadn't wasted so much of my 30s being fat and unhappy. But regret won't get me anywhere. Instead, I am focusing on my 40s and hoping to be able to compete in CrossFit masters competitions some day.

I still have a lot of skills to master. When I started training with Macias, he would have me hang on the pull-up bars for as long as possible. I had terrible grip strength, and I was too heavy, so I could only hold on for a few seconds. When all the other new ladies at our box would come in and get a pull-up within a few months, I started to feel like I'd never get it.

My 40th birthday was in January 2011, and I set a goal that I would do a pull-up before my 40th birthday. I practiced with bands. I practiced kipping. I practiced a lot. And then one day while practicing, I accidentally did it. Then I did it again and again. My hands will never be the same.

My next goals are to master handstand push-ups and ring dips.

I want to thank CrossFit, Macias, Ivan and all my amazing friends at RainCross CrossFit.

A special note to all women who think they are too fat, too old, too weak, too out of shape to walk through the doors and try CrossFit: don't let that stop you. There's a superhero inside you trying to get out.

