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# THE CrossFit LIFE

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## A Life of Soreness

Jimmy Viola reports how Elizabeth McTear discovered CrossFit and reconnected with her body—shedding three sizes along the way.

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By Jimmy Viola

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All images: Jimmy Viola

All her life, Elizabeth McTear says she lived the right way. She snacked on vegetables and fruit instead of junk food. She spent her childhood adventuring in the outdoors. As an adult, she prefers living in cities so she can walk and bike to get around. And yet, she says, “I was always the chubby kid.”

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1 of 2

Drawing inspiration from her mother, who had quit smoking and joined a gym after years of being a heavy woman, McTear looked for a high-intensity alternative to traditional gym memberships and personal trainers.

She eventually heard of CrossFit through another student at Moore College for Art and Design, where McTear studied. With her 30th birthday and wedding both approaching in the spring, McTear signed on for an on-ramp at CrossFit South Philly in October 2010. At the very least, she reasoned, it would make her generally feel better about herself. And given her history of dead ends for fitness, McTear kept her expectations low.

The first on-ramp session at CrossFit South Philly concluded with a six-minute continuous strength-and-conditioning circuit for as many rounds as possible. McTear thought it would be easy. After all, she had trained at gyms before and practiced yoga and stayed active. Surely, McTear reckoned, these activities had prepared her to endure six measly minutes of basic movements like squats, push-ups and sit-ups.

"I got my ass kicked," McTear says. "At work the next day, I was afraid I'd fall down the stairs because my thighs burned so much."

But McTear persisted and quickly grew to love the grueling aspect of CrossFit workouts.

"I live a life of soreness. It kind of keeps me rooted in my own body," McTear says. "I feel a sense of pride knowing I did something good today and I feel muscles."



*Just another day in McTear's happy "life of soreness."*

After paying what she calls "the fat-girl fee" for her wedding dress to come in a larger size, McTear returned to her tailor to have the dress taken in because she'd lost three sizes since joining CrossFit South Philly.

McTear has dropped weight, but she's gained a lot of friends through CrossFit. In April she competed in a Fight Gone Bad workout with three of her CrossFit South Philly team members against squads from around the Greater Philadelphia area. Her teammates at CrossFit South Philly motivate McTear to forge through each workout.

"You go to the box, you play for an hour, you go home," McTear says. "Everybody wants you to succeed."

McTear says her heightened fitness awareness has even inspired her family and friends to lead healthier lifestyles, whether that means eating less junk food, quitting smoking or running a marathon. She and her mother continue to share feedback about their fitness progress to motivate each other, and her husband has curtailed his sweet tooth to encourage healthier eating habits around their house.

"My husband loves snacks and ice cream, and I told him point blank we can't have it in the house," McTear says. "Everything I do is accountable to the people around me. I feel good about being 30 years old."

