

## Living Without Pain - Sheryl

I walked out of the doctors surgery rooms feeling despondent yet again. For the third time, I had been told I had not lost enough weight for the surgeons to operate and give me a new knee. For the past 18 months I had been living on strong pain killers, and knew that my knee was in a really bad shape. I had been continually told that I needed to exercise and loose weight.. I knew all this. I had lived a very sporty life of netball, squash, tennis and running, swimming, cycling but now just going for an hours walk down the road, I would painfully limp home.

On my last visit to my doctor she said she would like to refer me to the 'Green Prescription'. She told me what it was. Stating "its not a weight loss program, but they encourage you to get moving in an activity that is best suited to you and will give you regular follow up". The referral was sent through and within a couple of days I received a phone call from Beth to set up an appointment. When I met Beth, she was very friendly and non judgemental, and seemed to really understand the situation I was in. I quickly built a repour with Beth having found out through conversation that she had worked for the same employer as myself. Beth went over a set of questions with me and gave me a selection of brochures and hand outs.

That night at home I looked over the handouts and became interested in one brochure called "Be Active". This was an 8 week program running in Rolleston for 2 hours every Monday. The time started at 10am. I immediately thought "that's out for me I have to work". At work the next day, I went and saw my boss and told her that I wanted to enrol in this Be Active course so that I can have a better success for my future knee surgery. I was thrilled when she allowed me to reshuffle my working hours for the 8 weeks so that I could attend every Monday. Having my work colleagues and family members support was through the program was a pivotal part of my success.

I attended the course and loved every minute of it. I loved all the new activities we got to try. I was inspired by the guest speakers. But most of all I was shown activities that I could do with a wonky knee. It got me motivated again, and in the process I met local like minded people that I could continue this journey with. Half way through the program I went back to my doctor. Another referral was made for me to visit the surgeon. I sat nervously in front of him waiting for yet another blow, but this time he said to me "Sheryl; you haven't lost as much weight as I would like, but I can see your determination and am happy to operate so long as you know the risk" I could have burst into tears right then, but instead I made a commitment that for the next 5 weeks before the operation I would be in the pool aqua jogging and strengthening up my legs prior to surgery.

The following Monday I rocked on up to my Be Active class, knowing that at the start of each session Beth would ask "has anyone got anything to share about their week?" Holding back the tears I proudly announced that after 18 months of waiting for my knee replacement I was now having surgery in 5 weeks time.

The Be Active course finished a couple of weeks later, and several friendships had formed and several of the members were going out walking and swimming and doing other activities. Over the next 5 weeks I upped my activity to give myself the best success rate I could following surgery. I attended a zumba class (which was not good for my knee) but I needed an activity for Tuesday, so that was it. I was in the pool every weekday, and then I went out walking with a group of women on a Thursday evening.

I have had my surgery. I can remember the first thing my surgeon said when I saw him the next morning. Sheryl; your knee was one of the most worn out knees I have seen in a long time. (I knew that, because I was having to try and live with it) The upper body strength I had gained from all my aqua jogging made my recovery faster, as I had strong arm and calf muscles. I was given a new lease of life and I was going to do whatever it took for my knee to be a success.

I had physio in the hospital, and was told that I needed to get a 90 degree bend in my knee within 2 weeks. I achieved this in 1. I was out walking around on my crutches the week I got home. I had 50 staples in my knee, and when I went to get them out the first thing I asked the surgeon was "when can I get back in the pool".

Thanks BE ACTIVE. I have a really good kete of activities to look forward to now that I am living without pain.

