

My name is Gail and I have had the good fortune to be a patient of Surgical Weight Loss Specialists since 2008. I actually had my banding done on August 19, 2008 and have successfully lost 125 pounds. To truly understand how the weight loss has impacted my life you have to know where I was coming from. Prior to meeting Doctors Arthur and Adam Glasgow my life was full of broken promises to myself to loose weight and get healthier. I began my rollercoaster weight loss journey in 8th grade. After promising myself I would not enter high school as the fat girl, not only did I enter high school overweight but graduated even heavier-broken promise. Several years later, as I planned my wedding, I promised myself I would be a thin bride – well since my wedding dress was a size 22, you can guess that promise also was unfilled. When I became a mother I promised my children that they would not have to be embarrassed by having a fat Mom growing up – another promise broken. Even after developing high blood pressure and becoming an insulin dependent diabetic I could only loss weight for a short time just to gain it all back (with a few additional added on). When my Dad became ill in Florida and I needed to take a flight down I was panicked that I would not fit in the airplane seat. This was my life prior to August 2008. My weight was always on my mind; it took a little away from the enjoyable events of my life and intensified the difficult times.

What is life like today after loosing 125 pounds; it can be described in one word – FANTASTIC! I am healthier and happier than I have ever been. I am off insulin and all blood pressure medications. I was thrilled when I recently heard my son say to one of his friends, “You should see my Mom, she looks great”. The same son who once received a letter of apology from a classmate after a teacher heard the classmate making fun of me. I am more active, enjoying many activities that I never dreamed possible – my favorite is swimming. But it is the little things every day that still amaze me: What a thrill to walk through the mall and hear someone laugh and not think that they are laughing at me. The first time I walked into one of those large size specialty stores and realized everything was too large and I needed to go to a “normal” store. I am enjoying things I never dreamed possible. I jokingly tell people that my brothers got motorcycles for their mid-life crises and I got a LapBand – we are all enjoying life as a result. And the future looks great. I have plans to hike Mount Washington this summer with a friend – when I reach the summit I will say thank you to Arthur and Adam for helping to make it all possible.

A few months ago I attended a support group where Adam talked about how he and some colleagues had discussed the need to accept that some patients fail to do the follow up that is so important to be successful. I believe both Arthur and Adam truly care about all their patients and want them to be successful. After the meeting, I really did some soul searching to figure out why this time was different for me than the numerous attempts in the past. Here are my conclusions:

1. Having a band buddy. In the hospital I exchanged phone numbers with another patient. I went way out of my comfort zone when I approached her – but thought having someone who was on the same journey and could relate to what I was going though would be helpful. We have become good friends and great support for each other.

2. I made the decision that I needed to trust that I could do this. I had started many weight loss or exercise programs with a friend, this time I was going to exercise my own. It was too easy in the past, when the friend stopped to also stop. I would do the exercise piece myself and if a friend joins me great, but if not I go anyway. Bonus, I have met a lot of new friends at the gym.
3. Staying connected to the practice: Follow up is key. I can't say it enough. The SWLS saying of "See more of us and we will see less of you" is so true. I was faithful with follow up appointments. Everyone at SWLS is supportive and never makes you feel bad when you fall off track – they encourage and support you in getting right back on. Arthur and Adam care about their patients and in my experience have never been judgmental when the scale went the wrong way; they take the time to figure out what needs to be done and to help you continue on a successful journey.
4. Support group: Talking, sharing and learning with people who have been there and done that has been very helpful to me. During the early stages of this journey it was inspiring to see and talk to successful bandsters; it made me believe it was possible to achieve my goal. I take away something from every support group including little hints of how to live life with a band (My favorite is a reheating trick of putting food in a plastic ziplock bag and placing it in boiling water – doesn't dry out food like the microwave). I hope I have contributed in some small way to someone's journey.

After reaching the above conclusions I approached Adam and Arthur with the idea of starting a mentor telephone program. My thought was that there are patients who either can not or do not feel comfortable attending a support group, but would benefit by having someone that would call and check in with them to see how things were going. Arthur, Adam and the entire SWLS team are awesome, but only we the patients have truly been there and done it. We know what is like to walk in the shoes of a newly banded patient. Our hope is that the program will give peer support to some patients that can not make support group, reminding them how critical follow up is and how it will result in their journey being successful.

The program works like this, Arthur and Adam ask new patients if they would be interested in getting a call from an experienced patient. If they are, the office forwards me the patient's name, phone number and best times to call. I assign one the new patient to one of the mentors who will initiate a call during the pre-op diet. New patients will receive calls at one month, three months, six months and one year post op. Examples of some questions I have answered when talking with new patients: What is that first fill like? What is getting stuck really like? Arthur and Adam say to call if too tight – but I don't want to bother them, should I call? I hope I have helped them – I know they have helped me. So if you are new to banding and want a call from someone who has been banded for awhile or if you have been successfully banded and want to help others please give the office a call. I am excited by the initial feedback from the new patients as well as the mentors.

Good luck and Best wishes to my fellow bandsters. Thank you Arthur and Adam for your support and wisdom, and for putting together such an awesome team to help us achieve our goals.