

US weight-loss camp changed 20-year-old Kirsty's life

by Jenny Brookfield

A 20-YEAR-OLD who shed three stone at a US weight-loss camp says it has dramatically changed her life.

And Kirsty Powell intends to repay those who helped her lose the weight by returning to the camp as a counsellor.

The bubbly Helmshore resident now loves to exercise and is even pursuing a career in health psychology in a bid to help others with weight problems.

Kirsty, of Sunnybank, had 'tried everything' to lose weight, from the Atkins diet to detox and cabbage soup diets; she then read a magazine article about the pioneering Wellspring camp in New York while having her hair done in Rawtenstall.

After getting the okay from her parents, she jetted off to America for eight weeks during the summer, where she found that, rather than being a boot camp, the organisation took a positive approach to weight loss.

She explained: 'They describe it as a wellness camp; we weren't allowed to call it a fat camp, and as well as doing exercise like playing football and running, we had courses to help build our confidence.'

'There were also two group and two one-to-one

therapy sessions a week because they were more focused on the fact that a lot of the time it's a mental issue rather than a physical one.'

Kirsty's time at camp included cookery and nutrition lessons, showing the camp members how to enjoy their favourite meals in a more healthy way; there was also coaching in how to cope with eating out.

Weigh-ins took place once a week and Kirsty soon found the weight falling off, taking her from 15 stone to a more svelte 12 stone by the time she left - a result she was delighted with. Fellow attendees came from all over the world and the good friends she has made have encouraged Kirsty to go back next summer to become a camp counsellor.

As part of her new lifestyle she now goes to the gym every day, has joined a rugby team and has ditched her car in favour of her own two feet.

The tour company worker had also started a history degree at Edinburgh in September, but found the student lifestyle did not fit in with her new outlook on life.

Living in Edinburgh for now, she is now applying to the University of Central Lancashire to study health psychology, hoping to eventually work full-time at a

Wellspring camp or work with children with eating disorders.

She said: 'It's amazing. I'm just so much happier. I've gone from a size 18 to a 14, so I can buy anything I want now - although I'm working on getting to a size 12.'

'I was so miserable at university, going out drinking and eating takeaways all the time didn't fit in with my new lifestyle and my new friends didn't want to go to the gym, so I felt like I was slipping on the new life I'd built for myself.'

Kirsty, who is backing a [British Heart Foundation](#) online game to help children fight obesity, added: 'Some friends were upset because I didn't tell them I was going, but that was because I felt ashamed about it.'

'Now I'm just proud of the fact that I've managed to do it.'

'It's had a big effect on me and that's why I want to help other people.'

● The BHF has launched the Yoobot game allowing children to understand the long-term effects of a poor diet. Visit www.yoobot.co.uk

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KIRSTY shows off her new look after shedding three stone. Picture courtesy of the Edinburgh Evening News

INSET: Kirsty Powell before going to camp.

