



AFTERwords

A Newsletter from SIERRA TUCSON®

Spring/Summer 2007

Working (Out) Toward Recovery

By Lisa Jane Vargas

Sierra Tucson Clinical Outreach Coordinator



How did fitness and exercise play a role in my life—toward my health and toward my addictions? If we could have any “habit” or addiction, wouldn’t exercise be a “positive” one to have? Sure, I’d rather exercise several hours a day than be out drinking now. Well, there are always two sides of the story. Maybe you can identify with my experience. Since I can remember, I’ve been physically active. When I was 5 years old, I remember watching Jack LaLane on the TV and doing his exercises in my living room. (Does that date me?) In high school, I would get up extra early to do a 5:30 a.m. exercise class on TV. I had to get it in before school started. Well, that mentality has stayed with me even to this day, but it is more manageable today with some help from my programs. My exercise obsession, and it was an obsession, came to the point of exercising twice a day at the gym to make sure I got in the workout I rigidly set for myself. Hard on myself? I didn’t think so. On the weekends, in my 20s, my thoughts were that if I wanted to play tennis or mountain bike, that was fun and not considered exercise; I still needed to get in my gym weight-training and cardio on top of the “fun” activity. So, all this exercise took up about half of my day. (At this time, I also became certified as a Fitness Instructor and Personal Trainer.) I don’t know about you, but part of my dis-ease is being too hard on me. Not giving myself any slack to relax and enjoy the little things in life. During these years, my other addictions to alcohol, relationships, codependence, work, smoking, and control fed off of each other. I was contradicting myself in so many ways. I would smoke tons of cigarettes and then go mountain biking and almost keel over. As I started to heal in recovery, one of the first things I noticed about myself was that my words and actions weren’t matching. I didn’t have integrity! How could I? Not me! I would instruct a client in how to be healthier and fit and blah, blah, blah, and I’d go out and drink, smoke, and binge eat. Oh yes, I forgot that addiction—food. I look back and see that I was running. Running from me. I had all these holes to fill. Spirit or a Higher Power (H.P.) wasn’t a thought for me to turn to then. As I started my recovery, my H.P. connection grew and helped me to get where I am today.

So... fitness, good health, wellness, exercise. It’s all good (within boundaries)! You can pull anything you want up on the Internet to educate yourself on any area of health and fitness. It’s an incredible field that is a passion for me, along with recovery. Exercise and fitness are a choice. We are blessed to have this choice when we recognize that “choosing” is a gift. If you’re starting out or thinking about getting some exercise into your life, my suggestion is to start with an activity that you enjoy. It can be anything that makes your body move, flying a kite, gardening, biking, or walking. The key is to enjoy it. We talk about mindfulness at Sierra Tucson. Practice mindfulness in your activity. Watch, listen, and feel your body. Become friends with your body; it’s not the enemy, and this is the only one you’ve got! Believe me, I’ve done plenty of damage to mine. It’s resilient and forgiving if you open yourself up to it. Be gentle and kind to it; it needs you. Once you’ve identified what you enjoy, another key is to do it more than once. I think it’s smart to start anything out slow and work your way up to a maintenance level and add variety, so our bodies adapt. If you do the same thing over and over and expect different results... hey now, wait a minute... what does that sound like? Right, the definition for insanity. Well, it works similar for your body as it does for your mind. If you give your body the same thing over and over, it won’t expect a different result and it will stay the same. Hey, as we get older, our bodies get older. It takes more to keep them in shape.

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Alumni World Tour



2007 Upcoming Alumni World Tour Dates

can be found at www.SierraTucson.com and in the biweekly Alumni eNews, "Beyond the Miracle."
Sierra Tucson's alumni and family members are invited to join our Alumni Coordinator at the following events!

*This is not a complete list of events, but it shows alumni events attended by Tim McLeod.
Be sure to check our website and eNews for additions and changes.*

July 10	Charlotte, NC - Attend Alumni Support Group
July 11	Dallas, TX - Attend Alumni Support Group
July 30	Tucson, AZ - Attend Alumni Support Group
August 3-5	Tucson, AZ - Sierra Tucson Alumni Reunion, S.T.A.R. 20
August 15	Newport Beach, CA - Attend Alumni Support Group
August 28	Chicago, IL - Alumni Dinner
August 29	Detroit, MI - Attend Alumni Support Group
September 10	Tucson, AZ - Attend Alumni Support Group
September 11	Scottsdale, AZ - Attend Alumni Support Group
September 12	Los Angeles, CA - Attend Alumni Support Group
September 29	New York, NY - New York Alumni Workshop

From Rockette to Rock Bottom & Back

By Greta G., Sierra Tucson Alumna

In the spring of 2000, I felt like I had it all. I was 25 years old, was on scholarship at Broadway Dance Center in New York City, and I had recently finished performing my second season as a Radio City Rockette in the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular* shows held outside of New York. Moreover, I had just auditioned as a New York Radio City Rockette and made it. Knowing that I was going to have the experience of dancing on the “Great Stage,” I felt like I was living the dream I’d had since starting to dance at age 3.

However, I was leading a dual life. In public, I performed in front of thousands of people every day, trying hard to uphold a façade of happiness; while in private, the shackles of bulimia imprisoned me—driving me to spend \$50 to \$100 a day on food, and purging up to 30 times a day.

Bulimia was nothing new to me. I had been binge eating and purging regularly for the last 13 years and had been in two hospital treatment programs prior to moving to New York. In fact, I was in the second hospital program just *three weeks* before rehearsals started for my first season of the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular!*

I started bingeing and purging at 15, after watching a movie on bulimia in health class during my freshman year of high school. During the prior year, I had become obsessed with dieting. The calorie-counter constantly invaded my brain, creating an undying mental obsession. Although I wasn’t fat, I had a muscular body, which I distortedly equated with being fat. I wanted to have the rail-thin body that only ballet dancers or models seem to be able to maintain. I was constantly trying to lose five or ten pounds by restricting my food intake, and I compulsively cut out pictures of models and ballet dancers from magazines as a motivation for me to lose weight, while envisioning how perfect my life would be if I had their picturesque bodies. However, I loved to eat, which repeatedly caused me to break my starvation diet and have feelings of guilt and self-loathing for not being able to have any self-discipline.

After seeing the movie on bulimia, I was awestruck and intrigued at the same time. I was sick of the shakiness, mood swings, and hunger headaches that accompanied starving, so I decided to try purging. I quickly grew dependent on it. Within one year, I was out of control. I was bingeing and purging every day; purging at the dance studio before class; and I began to take diet pills, diuretics, and laxatives. What began as a game, really, just to see if I could do it, became my worst nightmare. I had no idea what I was up against, nor did I ever imagine that this addiction could rob me of my dance career or, for that matter, my life.

The bulimia continued throughout high school, and by the time I finished high school, I was purging at least five times per day. During high school, I periodically confided in my teachers. One of my teachers from school even called my mother out of concern, but my mom didn’t know how to deal with it at the time and dismissed it. I think she was hoping it was just a phase. On another occasion, my dance teacher called my mother, and after that my mother questioned me. She was angry and demanded that I stop the behavior, which I agreed to do. However, I was unable to stop, already addicted to the mind-numbing

effect that the bingeing and purging repeatedly enticed me with, and by my senior year of high school, I began therapy. For the first time, I was able to talk to someone about my feelings and the motivating factors of my self-destructive behavior. Although I loved the self-disclosure of therapy, my eating got worse.

Throughout the next ten years, the disease was in a steady escalation, causing my life to become more and more unmanageable. When I was 19, I won a one-year scholarship to a well-known dance studio in Los Angeles. My entire life, I had dreamed of dancing in Hollywood, and, naively, I thought that a geographical change was the answer to my problems. Although I promised myself that I was going to eat healthy, three days after arriving in Los Angeles, I was back into the eating disorder. I began charging thousands of dollars for food on my parents’ credit card numbers, stealing my roommate’s food, and pawning anything I could to get more money for food. I didn’t understand why I couldn’t pull myself together. I was taking classes from people I idolized. Yet even my passion for dance couldn’t fill up the emptiness that resided in my body. I did dance jobs sporadically, dancing on cruise ships, appearing on “All My Children,” performing in Las Vegas, assisting choreographers in Italy, and dancing as a Radio City Rockette. However, the eating disorder was effecting my dancing, and I constantly missed auditions to stay home, only to binge and purge the day away. In between dance jobs, I went through two hospital programs for eating disorders, but to no avail. My bottom came when I was performing at Radio City Music Hall in December of 2000 and failed to show up for work. Until that day, I had never missed a dance job because of the eating disorder. I was in such a downward spiral that all I wanted to do was end my life.

Fortunately, my therapist in New York, who I’d been seeing for the past 18 months, recommended to my parents that I go to Sierra Tucson, one of the best treatment programs in the country. Sierra Tucson changed my life. During my 28-day stay, I was on the eating disorder track, which meant that I attended intense group therapy with other people like myself, as well as individual therapy. My day started at 6:00 a.m. with a nurse who checked my vitals and a dietitian who weighed me. Then we ate breakfast, along with the other clients who were there for various addictions, only the eating disorder clientele sat at one table with monitoring staff to ensure that everyone followed their meal plan. In between meals, I participated in eating disorder therapy group, codependency group, body image group, equine-assisted therapy, acupuncture, art therapy, exercise, and a variety of 12-Step groups. The program focuses on learning healthy coping mechanisms and filling oneself up with spirituality instead of substances. Following my treatment, Sierra Tucson recommended that I go to Turning Point of Tampa for three months of extended treatment. Whereas Sierra Tucson was a psychiatric hospital that offered 24-hour medical care, Turning Point helped me to transition back to my daily living. After my treatment stint, I was planning to return to New York to start rehearsals for the Rockettes again, but in the wake of 9/11, I decided to stay in Tampa.

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(continued from page 3)

Almost six years later, I am still living in Tampa. I am now 33 years old. While the obsession is no longer at the forefront of my mind trying to persuade me to self-destruct, its voice lingers in the back of my head, patiently waiting for a day that I will listen to it. As for dancing, I wish I could say that I still dance. I tried to go back to the Rockettes, but on the first day of rehearsal, I landed in the hospital with meningitis and a kidney infection, and, thus, had to return to Tampa. I took that as a sign that it was time to hang up my dancing shoes. Today, my creative outlet is writing. I am currently in school, studying to become a social worker so that I can help people with eating disorders.

As to why I developed an eating disorder—there are a myriad of reasons. Between my family dynamics, my career choice, the social environment around me, my personality makeup, and my genetics, I had the perfect combination for an eating disorder to flourish. Most people with eating disorders share certain characteristics and influences that contribute to developing an eating disorder. Every therapist has said that I am a textbook case. I am extremely sensitive, a perfectionist, and a people-pleaser. My family, as well as myself, is very “Type A.” Each of us has our own brand of neurotic, obsessive idiosyncrasies. My parents have always had the best intentions for me and have extraordinary qualities, but in both covert and overt ways, they let me know who I needed to be. My parents were extremely obsessed with losing weight, food, and dieting; combined with their beliefs about food and overweight people, their weight was a measure of how successful and acceptable they were as people. Moreover, we didn’t talk about feelings, my parents were constantly at war, and I felt like I had to mediate and provide happiness for our family. In addition, there is a genetic component, because other people in my family have addictive behaviors. Lastly, dance didn’t help. I scrutinized every part of my body, I compared myself to other dancers’ bodies, and I trained myself to look at my body and movements in a critical way because of the perfectionistic, black-and-white nature of dance. Nonetheless, many dancers in the jazz and musical theatre world don’t have eating disorders, and even someone else in my exact familial situation may not have developed an eating disorder. Essentially, it was how I chose to react to my environment. Eating disorders are extremely complex. Anyone, given the right circumstances, is susceptible to them.

Recovery, for me, is a mixed bag of tools that I use, sometimes on a daily basis, sometimes sporadically. These tools include going to Twelve-Step meetings, working with a sponsor, journaling, calling people in recovery every day for support, doing Step-work, praying, reading meditation books, and following a food plan. For the first three years after treatment, I utilized the tools daily. Now my recovery is very laid-back. I feel almost like a “normal” person. I eat what I want and, on most days, that feels okay. However, I cannot let myself fall too far into complacency or else the eating disorder’s destructive voice starts calling my name. My eating disorder stole my dance career from me, and while I do feel regret some days, I now turn my focus to helping others and keep the memories of dance alive in my heart one day at a time.

~Greta G. ★

“Beyond the Miracle”



If you are not receiving Sierra Tucson’s e-mail bulletin, “Beyond the Miracle,” then you are missing out on some great encouragement and biweekly updates of events available to alumni.

To sign up, just go to
www.SierraTucson.com

and click on the “Alumni eNews” button!

If you use a spam filter, please add
STARRT@DesertSerenity.com
to your approved e-mail list to ensure
that you receive our eNews.

Alumni Chat Room

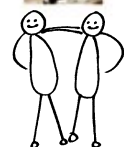
Sierra Tucson’s Alumni Chat Room is now available seven days a week to connect with and support other Sierra Tucson alumni! The Chat Room is open daily from 7 a.m. - 11 p.m. Mountain Standard Time/MST (Sierra Tucson time).

Just e-mail Tim McLeod at
AlumniCoordinator@SierraTucson.com
to request the Chat Room’s password.

Find the Alumni Chat at www.SierraTucson.com
(Click on “Alumni Resources,” then “Chat.”)



Click here to join Sierra Tucson’s
Alumni Chat, 7 a.m. - 11 p.m. MST



Working (Out) Toward Recovery *(continued from page 1)*

We all know that. So, give it some variety. It's the spice of life, right? I would always tell my students, "What you put into it is what you'll get out of it." So, progress slowly, but progress. For example, start out with your activity once a week. And give yourself credit, a hug, a pat on the back, some sort of praise. Oh, by the way, you know those "commitments" we do in our programs? Well, think of your activity as a "commitment" to yourself, just like you do for your home group or other meetings. When you feel ready, add another day to the week. There is a principle in creating fitness plans called the FITT principle. It stands for Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type. If you apply this principle, you can come up with so many variations to your workout/activity/exercise program. A great way to gauge intensity level could be using a 1-10 scale, with 1 being the easiest and 10 being the hardest.

Here's an example:

Week 1

Frequency: 1x/week,

Wednesdays for 4 weeks

Intensity: A slow, leisurely pace where I feel warmth in my body; a 2 on the scale

Time: 10 minutes

Type: Walking the dog

Week 2

Frequency: 2x/week,

Wednesdays and Fridays for 4 weeks

Intensity: A little more pace than leisurely, where I feel a 3 on the scale

Time: 15 minutes

Type: Walking the dog

Most important is safety. It's always first. So, if you feel any discomfort or pain, stop your activity immediately and consult a medical or healthcare provider. (Please consult with them prior to starting your activity.) I've been around this field a long time, so I want to point out a few things to watch for:

1. Doing too much too fast. Stop, slow down. It's worth it to go slow and work your way up little-by-little. Injuries can occur more easily if you advance too fast.
2. Stretching. It's valuable mostly after your activity. If your muscles aren't used to moving in that activity or at all, it's important to stretch them and relax after the activity.
3. Overtraining (or exercising without giving yourself a break). It's exciting to feel better about yourself and your body and see changes, but it's also very important to give your body time to recuperate between activities. For example, if you choose to use weights in your regimen, allow at least a day of rest in between working the same body parts.

4. Sleep is crucial for your body to recuperate. Get enough of it. It's also good for your mental condition.
5. Most people will do what is convenient, so if that's important to you, strive to find a gym that is close to your home or a yoga class near your workplace, for instance. Make it as easy as you can to do it.

So, "What's in it for me?" you may ask. There are many benefits to adding exercise/activity to your day. And it is a "one-day-at-a-time" thing. There are articles and news every other day, practically, regarding health and fitness matters. It's what we do with that information. Just like recovery: Are we willing to make the changes? Are we dedicated to our practice of activity? Are we open-minded to trying new things to help us toward a healthier lifestyle? I relate it to a Twelve-Step program. Today is all we have—what am I choosing to

do with my time and life? Am I going to not take a drink or do drugs or... (fill in the blank)? Just like I need to feed my spiritual fitness, I need to feed my physical fitness. This also helps affect our moods, usually in a positive way. Recently I was directed by a physician to not exercise for two weeks. I felt the effects of not working out within the first week, not only physically but emotionally and mentally. For me, exercise is a positive impact in all the areas of my life. Other benefits I can think of are getting fresh air by being outdoors, connecting with other like-minded people, and helping my bones stay strong as I get older, not to mention all the positive internal physiological benefits. I feel more alive, strong, alert, I sleep better, feel more confident, and have a positive attitude because I am doing something I enjoy. Feeling better about myself helps me be there for others, too. I am sure there are many, many more advantages. Well, why don't you try it and feel the benefits for yourself? Check it out

with your doctor first if you are just starting. It's not a bad idea to do that annually anyway.

A few other notes to mention are: be realistic about your goals, eat properly, and seek professional help (perhaps from a Registered Dietitian or Certified Personal Trainer) if you need further assistance.

This information I share with you is partly what I've learned over time in the fitness industry and in my personal life. (I am certified through the American Council on Exercise, ACE, an internationally recognized fitness organization.) There's so much to learn and know. One resource for more detailed information is www.acefitness.org.

Enjoy your day! How will you make it healthier for YOU?

~Lisa Jane Vargas ★





Alumni Support Groups

Scottsdale, AZ

When: 2nd & 4th Tuesday each month
Time: 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Place: Valley Presbyterian Church
6947 E. McDonald Drive
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253 (480-991-4267)
Contact: Robby C. 602-799-8732
(robert@orchidsound.com)

(Updated 8/30/07)

Tucson, AZ

When: Once each month
(Please inquire about dates,
location, and time.)
Contact: Tim McLeod 866-638-1650
(AlumniCoordinator@SierraTucson.com)

Los Angeles, CA

*This meeting is open to anyone who
has gone through treatment!*

When: 2nd & 4th Wednesday each month
Time: 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.
Place: 1901 Avenue of the Stars, Suite 500
Century City, CA 90067 (310-201-0005)
Contact: Bryan F. 310-201-0005
Stefani U. 310-458-3768

Marin County/San Francisco, CA

When: 2nd Thursday each month
Time: 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Place: The Mayflower Center
523 4th Street, Suite 100
San Rafael, CA 94901
(415-257-4210)
Contact: Brian C. 415-850-1840
(sugfoot@aol.com)

Newport Beach, CA

When: 3rd Wednesday each month
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: 3404 Via Lido Drive
Newport Beach, CA 92663
Contact: Jana T. 949-680-5882

Denver, CO

When: 3rd Sunday each month
Time: 6:00 p.m.
(Please inquire about location.)
Contact: Nancy S. 303-527-1830
(N_specian@hotmail.com)
Debbie S. 720-201-3151
(dlschewe@comcast.net)

Washington, DC

When: 1st Sunday every other month
(Please inquire about dates,
location, and time.)
Contact: Susan B. 202-686-9221
(slbaes@aol.com)

Southeastern Florida

When: 3rd Sunday each month
Time: 6:00 p.m.
(Please inquire about location.)
Contact: Tim A. 561-329-1445
(talston1956@aol.com)
Glen K. 561-543-0364
(kukorone02@yahoo.com)

Detroit, MI

When: Every other Wednesday
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Place: Farmington Hills Library
32737 West 12 Mile Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
Contact: Randy S. 248-231-6661
(randobigtime@yahoo.com)

Kansas City, MO

When: 3rd Wednesday each month
(Please inquire about dates,
location, and time.)
Contact: Lana E. 816-561-4346
(qponnie@sbcglobal.net)

Charlotte, NC

When: Once each month
Time: 6:00 p.m.
(Please inquire about location.)
Contact: Scott G. 704-560-2130
(scottgnc@yahoo.com)

Syracuse, NY

When: 3rd Monday each month
Time: 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Place: Manlius Pebble Hill School
5300 Jamesville Road
Dewitt, NY 13214
(Meet in Library in the Amons Building)
Contact: David C. 315-278-5293
Adrienne M. 315-247-5004
(aeichmy1@mymail.syr.edu)

Columbus, OH

When: 3rd Wednesday each month
(Please inquire about location and time.)
Contact: JoCarol R. 614-353-5604
(reinerjo@aol.com)

Dallas, TX

When: 2nd Wednesday each month
Time: 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.
Place: Hearing Professional Center
5462 Glen Lakes Drive
Dallas, TX 75231
Contact: Deborah P. 214-232-5132
(deborah@hearing-center.com)



From the Editor

By Tim McLeod
Alumni Coordinator

*"My mission is simple:
encourage the struggling,
celebrate the miracles,
and always bring the love."*

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E-mail: **AlumniCoordinator@SierraTucson.com**

Hello, my Recovery Friend,

The Sierra Tucson Alumni Reunion is right around the corner, and all of us here at Sierra Tucson look forward to seeing you! The Reunion is a wonderful time to connect with old friends and make new ones. The workshops promise to give you more tools to use on your life's journey of wellness and freedom. For more information and how to register for this awesome weekend, please visit our website at www.SierraTucson.com.

I am thrilled to announce that Sierra Tucson now has the staff in place to help individuals dealing with chronic pain conditions. So if you or someone you know has been suffering chronic pain disorders in the neck and back, headaches, neuropathies, oro-facial or arthritic pain, central nervous system sensitivity, or other musculoskeletal and rheumatic conditions, Sierra Tucson may be just what the doctor ordered to reduce the pain and gain important skills for optimal living. For more information, please see our website or call our Intake Department at 800-842-4487.

Sierra Tucson has lost a wonderful man to retirement. After 23-plus years of service at Sierra Tucson, Frank Dodge has decided to hang it up. Starting in November of 1983, Frank held several jobs throughout his time at Sierra Tucson including opening the original kitchen, managing house-keeping, opening the bookstore, assisting family members,

head of purchasing and security, a van driver, and the lead van driver! Frank was one of those guys who, if something needed to be done, he made it happen. What will be missed the most is how he could make you laugh anytime and anywhere. Frank continues to have a deep appreciation for the work that goes on here each day. I hope to get Frank to the Alumni Reunion so you can personally thank him for bringin' the love for so many years.

Last but not least, four comedians—all in recovery, including our good friend Mark Lundholm—have decided to take their show on the road. The tour is called The Comedy Addiction Tour, and they will perform in many theatres around the country. To find out when they will be in your area and learn more about each comedian, visit www.ComedyAddictionTour.com.

As always, I hope and pray that you are doing well and the blessings of recovery continue to surround you each and every day. If I can ever be of assistance or you are in need of recovery resources, please never hesitate to call.

HUGE blessings,

Tim McLeod



Frank Dodge

Don't miss the 2007 **Sierra Tucson Alumni Reunion** **S.T.A.R. 20!**

"The Soul's Connection"

August 3 - 5, 2007
Westward Look Resort



For information & registration,
visit www.SierraTucson.com

S.T.A.R.R.T.
39580 S. Lago del Oro Parkway
Tucson, AZ 85739

Address Service Requested



Spring/Summer 2007

Recipe by
Chef Kevin A. Luft

"This is a great side dish or salad to serve on a hot summer day. I have prepared this for the Eating Disorders Program cooking demonstrations, and the patients loved it!"
~ Chef "K"



Jicama-Apple-Cranberry Slaw

- 1 jicama, peeled and julienned
- 2 apples, cored and julienned (Gala apples work best, but any apples will do)
- ½ cup shredded green cabbage
- ½ cup shredded red cabbage
- 1 cup diced celery
- 1 small red onion, julienned
- ¾ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- ¾ cup light mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt*
- ½ tsp. fresh cracked peppercorns*

In a bowl, toss apples in lemon juice and combine with remaining ingredients. Chill for at least one hour before serving.

Yield 6 servings.
One serving = 1 vegetable
1 fat

*Don't use table salt and pepper in this recipe. Kosher salt and freshly cracked peppercorns do make a difference! You may increase the amount according to your taste.