



Jan Huff was well aware of all the 28-day weight-loss plans and 30-day diets already out there — but she didn't want to wait that long for results.

And the Meyerland resident wasn't sure she could commit to a month's time. "How about 24 hours?" she thought. "That's something I can do."

Huff created her own full-day challenge, and it turned her life around.

The journey was prompted by a 2017 trip to the doctor, in which her lab results revealed she was prediabetic, with high cholesterol — not to mention about 40 pounds overweight.

"I didn't realize how bad I had gotten," she said. "That was my wake-up call. Enough was enough."

The results came as a shock. Huff had always been fairly active, loved cycling and competed five times in the MS 150 bike ride.

"I was athletically fit, but I wasn't necessarily eating healthy, not well-rounded or balanced," she said.

Occasionally, she would change her diet, but only to drop a few pounds. "I then gained it all back and then some," she said.

In addition, Huff was working full time, taking care of her mother and also her three then-teenage boys.

"There was a whole lot on my plate," she recalled. "I was pretty much putting everybody before me. And I wasn't my normal, chipper self. I was just going through the motions."

Her doctor offered to prescribe her medication to lower her numbers, but she wanted to research natural options.

Huff realized her approach in the past was flawed. “I’m not focusing on losing weight,” she decided. “Instead, it should be about how do I get healthy.”

All of her research pointed to four important healthy habits — eating right, drinking plenty of water, exercising and getting the right amount of sleep.

Huff wasn’t making any of them a priority. Instead, she had a sweet tooth and lived off coffee and tea. Because of the caffeine intake, she was not getting good sleep.

She wanted to exercise more but didn’t feel like she had enough time for bike rides.

Huff pledged to make an adjustment: In the next 24 hours, she would do everything differently. Basically, she would have a perfect, healthy day.

“That’s the key — making up your mind,” she said.

The night before, she made vegetable soup — and succumbed to her usual craving for sweets. She knew she would have no sugar the next day.

Huff woke up and had a large glass of water, right off the bat. She then ate a healthy breakfast.

The indoor bicycle that was unused was put to work — literally. Huff placed a table and computer in front of the bicycle so she could pedal while doing her job.

“I wouldn’t have an excuse that I didn’t have time to exercise,” Huff said.

She also went for a 20-minute walk outside and ate healthy meals all day. By 9:30 p.m., she was ready for bed.

“I was actually tired, because I wasn’t drinking caffeine all day,” she recalled. “Within 15 minutes, I was asleep.”

The following morning, Huff woke up early, before her alarm sounded.

“And I felt really good,” she said. “I knew that if I felt so good after just 24 hours, I didn’t want to go back.”



Huff decided to expand her day — and make it more of an everyday lifestyle.

Four months later, she went to her primary care doctor to retest her previous lab results. Her numbers lowered, and her cholesterol was now moderate instead of high. She was also no longer prediabetic and was losing weight.

“My doctor said you have to get this out to help others,” Huff recalled. “It was unbelievable.”

A friend helped her build a website, and she chose a name for her plan — Save Your Own Life.

“You can change your life,” Huff said. “This is not a complicated method. It’s so simple. You just have to put in the work.”

On the website, Huff shares recipes, offers tips and outlines her 24-hour challenge, as well as lifestyle changes that have helped her.

“I want to get my message out to anyone I possibly can,” she said. “And I’m not stopping. I’m not going to give up. I want to reach more people so they can live a better and healthier life.”

Becky Mitchell turned to the website for information about anti-inflammatory foods.

Mitchell has known Huff for the past 22 years. They raised their children together, and Mitchell taught all three of Huff’s sons.

Huff also volunteers at the before- and after-school care on the campus where Mitchell works.

When Huff’s health started to improve, Mitchell noticed right away. “She looked completely transformed,” Mitchell said.

Huff was eager to share her website and her new lifestyle.

Mitchell has osteoarthritis, which led to severe pain in her left knee. As a teacher, she spends a lot of time on her feet. Even navigating the long hallways at school could be torturous for her joints.

“There were so many days, I was just dragging myself in, and looking down the hallway thinking, I won’t be able to make it,” Mitchell recalled.

She decided to check out Save Your Own Life and started making smoothies out of the vegetables Huff recommended. She also brewed turmeric and ginger tea to ease inflammation, reduced her sugar intake and started carrying water with her.

“I don’t even remember when it happened, but soon, I wasn’t looking down the hall thinking I can’t do it anymore,” Mitchell said.

Huff is her inspiration, Mitchell explained.

“How can you not believe in her when you see her?” Mitchell said. “And it’s in her heart to help. She wants to share with anybody who wants better health.”

Huff’s own health has only continued to get better. She no longer craves sugar, and she continues to pedal her way through Zoom meetings and conference calls. After a year, she lost the extra 40 pounds and has kept it off.

“It’s just being healthy,” Huff said. “No more diets, no more craziness.”

Huff’s plan foregoes strict rules, except cutting processed foods and sugars as much as possible. A balance of proteins, vegetables and whole grains makes up the menu. She recommends taking note of how different foods make you feel. “When you eat junk food, you feel bad,” she said. “When you eat healthy, you feel much better.”

One requirement is to keep snacks and water always on hand. Huff recommends slicing an apple and throwing it in a Ziploc bag, carrying an orange or hummus and pretzels.

“Whenever you’re hungry, you have something healthy on you and you don’t ruin your nutrition plan,” she said.

She also recommends regular exercise, like a 30-minute cardio session or walk outside. Since she enjoys dancing, sometimes, she’ll turn up the music and get her steps that way.

“You’re going to be more successful if you do something that you enjoy,” said Huff, who is also creating her own line of activewear — leggings and T-shirts, which she hopes will be “something cute, comfortable and practical to help women get out there and be more active.”

The whole point, Huff explained, is making lasting, healthy lifestyle adjustments.

“Just make a small change, and then gradually, take another step,” she said.

After all, it was only a matter of taking those first four small steps for Huff to make a major transformation.

“I feel like I saved my own life by doing this,” she said. “I’ve been there, and now I’m here to show how to do it. I can vouch that this works. You literally have the power to save your own life, too.”

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*Photos: Annie Mulligan, Houston Chronicle / Contributor*

