

# LIVE WELL - BE WELL

## JANICE'S STORY

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“Live Well – Be Well” began as an inspiration from a UFC member. I didn’t realize the impact it would have on me. The quote from Pema Chodron, “Life is a good teacher and a good friend,” is very true. I didn’t know how true and what a reality it would be until I met our next Live Well – Be Well candidate, Janice Arana.

My meeting with Janice was very welcoming, like two old friends sharing a cup of coffee and catching up with each other. She radiates optimism, inspiring thoughts, and words of encouragement. Her story is quite inspirational, one that fits most of our typical lifestyles.

Janice was nominated by a UFC member. The member felt that Janice had found the answers that many struggle to uncover in fitness. To her point, Janice has been a member since 2004 but it wasn’t until 2010 that the pieces all came together. Janice considered all factors in being healthy; she encompassed her exercise, diet, mental and social conditions in starting her wellness journey.

In 2010, Janice’s husband had open heart surgery. During his recovery and rehabilitation, the importance of exercise was stressed. They started working out together as a “team” doing cardiovascular and strength training, making lifestyle adaptations to include their Friday night date night to be a healthy dinner. Working out is a fun and relaxed part of their lifestyle which has given Janice a great outlook on her husband’s heart problems, “Things are going to happen in life, but with working out it is something you can control and helps you in return”.

Currently, Janice works out five times per week and takes Zumba classes twice a week. Janice’s passion for Zumba lies in the variety of music, the instructors’ unique personalities, and the dance aerobics activity. It helps keep her motivated, dedicated to working out, and she’s enjoyed participating in both the Children’s Hospital Zumba party and the Community Celebration Zumba Block Party. Setting little challenges in her workouts allows some competition against herself. Run for two minutes, increase the intensity or resistance, and then carry the challenge over into the weight room with increasing weight or repetitions. I really like this view point which is in line with a statement I make to personal training clients, “Don’t strive to be better than others, strive to be your best self”.

Along with making the physical activity change, Janice has made behavior modifications. Identifying stressors and bad habits and focusing on changing them, and diet modifications like filling the refrigerator with healthy choices and finding alternatives to unhealthy food choices. The quick tip for those starting their own wellness journey – have enough healthy food in the house that you won’t fall to temptation.

A 50 pound weight loss has brought her BMI within a healthy range, but most important to Janice is the overall impact working out has had, including improved sleep, enhanced coping skills, decreased blood pressure and cholesterol, and strengthened immune system. She also gives herself little rewards when she has reached her own personal achievements.

Her advice to those who are ready to start their wellness journey – start somewhere. Walk around your block; try walking one to two miles. Cardio and strength training equipment give you real measurements, mix your cardio and strength training up, creating intervals. Mix up your workouts to focus on all parts of the body. If you need group motivation try a fitness class, add Zumba, Martial Arts, Cycling, or Yoga class to your lifestyle. When you hit plateaus, stay motivated and re-evaluate. Add an extra day to your current routine or maybe try increasing your activity by half hour a day. Look at what you are eating, control your portion size, and consume fewer calories. Making small changes will pay off. You may be asking or wondering, who inspires Janice? The answer was quite simple and direct: Those who have transformed their lives when faced with adversity. Janice’s husband is one motivator since together they act as each other’s cheerleaders. Workout music also inspires her to keep going and push through the tough parts.

Janice reminded me of a great quote, by Thomas Carlyle, about life, its speed bumps, and the plateaus we may encounter. “The block of granite which is an obstacle in the pathway of the weak, becomes a stepping-stone in the pathway of the strong”. Janice is one strong woman; not only physically but mentally.