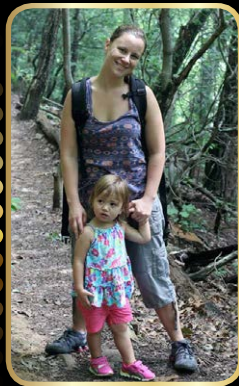
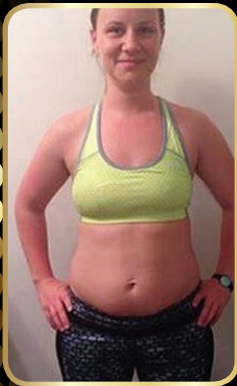


# 2017 Best Self Atlanta Magazine Courage Award Finalist

# AMY CORDERO

BEFORE



AFTER



About two years ago I hit an all-time low. I was depressed, had health issues, completely lacked confidence, and deeply struggled with body image issues. For years I wanted to change but had so many "reasons" that it just wouldn't work: My youngest was still waking up 3-4 times each night and only cried for Mama. I had a full time job. My older kid had after school activities and homework. I had a house to keep... By the time I was done with everything else, I felt like I had given all I had to give, and there was no time or energy left for taking care of me.

When I found myself unable to fit into even my old maternity jeans from three years prior, I knew something had to change. I didn't know where to start, and honestly I was afraid; I had embarked on so many yo-yo diets and short-lived fitness journeys in the past and was scared to fail again.

Ultimately, it came down to a change in mindset. What could I do differently to make changes that were sustainable over time? To make this a true lifestyle? I realized, that for the first time ever, I had to learn to prioritize ME. That was a very foreign concept and came along with a lot of mom guilt (still does at times), but deep down I knew that by finding my own health and happiness the whole family would benefit.

I joined a gym and began to work with an amazing trainer who I asked to help me be built like a bodybuilder simply because I wanted to have muscles and be strong. I remember telling her early on, as I started to see results, that my biggest fear was quitting, but her confidence in me helped me find confidence in myself.

"Even greater than the aesthetic and strength gains are the mental gains and confidence that I've experienced with this journey."

I have never been a morning person, and if you had told me I would soon be excited to wake up at 3:45am to hit the gym and smash some weights (before I need to be back home in time to wake up the kids and get them on the school bus), I would not have believed you. Constantly pushing myself to be better and be stronger have become a true passion, and the barbell is my refuge. Even greater than the aesthetic and strength gains are the mental gains and confidence that I've experienced with this journey.

In October 2016 I did the unthinkable for me and stepped ridiculously far outside of my comfort zone to compete in both Figure and Women's Physique at the Lee Haney Games. Then, just four months later, after working with yet another amazing coach, I stepped on the powerlifting platform, taking second place in my weight class at a state championship meet.

Now, if you ask me my biggest fear related to this journey, it would be that an injury would take it away from me. I'm just getting started.