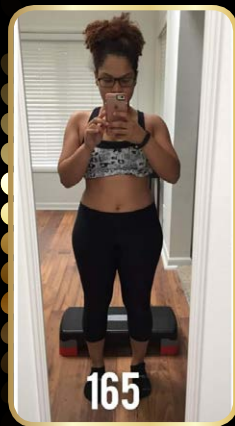


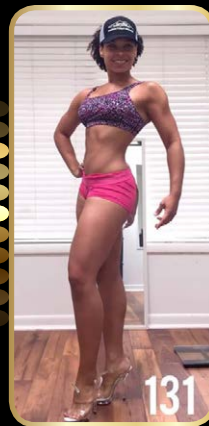
2017 Best Self Atlanta Magazine Courage Award Finalist

COLLEEN DONALD

BEFORE



AFTER



The excitement of moving to Atlanta to pursue my goals in broadcast media shortly became less exciting when I realized how alone I was.

At first, it was an exciting new adventure! I have always been ambitious and driven, so I thought it would be a breeze. However, I moved without friends or family to an entirely new place. I was a bright-eyed newly 24-year-old. The first 6 months after the move wasn't that bad. I'm outgoing, and I was a former athlete, so I kept myself in shape. But after the first year, a bad breakup, and still no employment leads, I realized being on my own was more difficult than I thought. I became depressed. I felt I had made a mistake. I was alone, fat, jobless, and drifting, now 25. I let myself go. I picked up some part-time gigs, but I just stopped caring about everything. I stopped caring about myself. I didn't even realize how much weight I gained until I looked at a picture of me in an all purple outfit my aunt had purchased for me for Christmas of 2015.

After visiting family in Florida and looking through photos, I realized I had a purpose and I was meant for greater things.

I decided to take my life back. January 3, 2016 I started working out on my own and through social media, I met some "gym rats" who introduced me to bodybuilding. I never considered it before, but I went to a show and my overachiever/competitive senses reignited: "I can do that," I said to myself. I had a goal to get in the best shape of my life by 26 years old. I ended up losing 35 pounds in 6 months and competing in my first show.

Feeling better about myself, I started getting back out of the house, networking, grad school, and I met an awesome man, Ashwin Lucas, who still inspires me every day. He won the Lee Haney Games in 2016. I met him the end of that year. It's now 2017 and I aspire to become pro, continue my pursuit in media, and show people (women specifically) that being knocked down happens, but staying down is unnecessary and to have the courage to love themselves at all stages of their journey.

Fitness saved my life, my self-esteem, my confidence and helped me find love! I hope to inspire and motivate others to not only live a healthy lifestyle, but to never give up on themselves or their dreams! I am a year and a half in this new world of fitness, and it will be officially one year since my first competition on August 15, the 2016 NPC Coastal USA's. When I saw the due date for this competition, I felt it was only fitting that my story should be told; maybe it was that I really needed to be heard! I have just turned 27, and I have a goal to become pro before 30! It takes courage and drive to be in this business, and I know I have what it takes.

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