

TRIATHLONS AND MOTHERHOOD



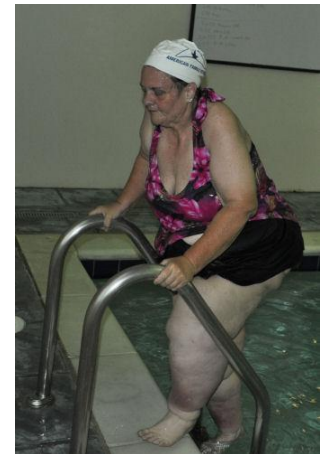
People continually ask me how the triathlon went. My answer continues to be “Incredible,” but it’s not the triathlon itself that was incredible. It was what I took home from it. Because I had previously done a run-through equivalent to the triathlon, the event itself was just another calorie-burning



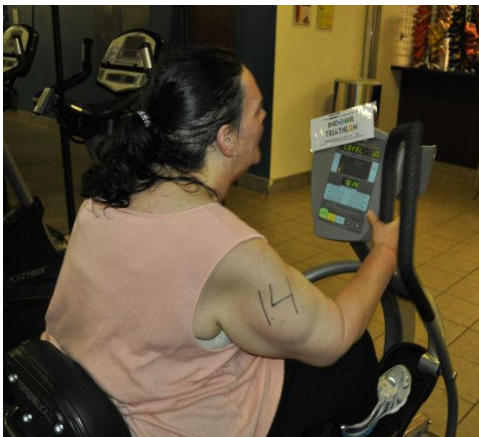
adventure. I guess since I’m a little more fit than I was last year, it didn’t wear me out like the 5k did. So let me tell you about the triathlon itself. Then I’ll tell you what was incredible about it.



You will recall from chapter 1 that this fitness thing is a whole new world to me. Well, I had the opportunities, but I chose alternate paths, never taking paths leading to fitness/sports. When I started those paths last year, I became like a kid in Disney World - can’t get enough. I’m enjoying being hooked on exercise, rather than food. Exercise promotes perpetual elation. Food was a catalyst to a perpetual depression. Though I was anxious about the 5k, I wasn’t this time. The atmosphere, my gym, is very relaxing to me anyway. As the entire world knows, I find the American Family Fitness-Fredericksburg staff and clients extremely motivating & supportive. Plus, I knew I could



do this. With those three ingredients (gym, staff/patrons, confidence) as the backdrop, I wasn’t nervous at all. It is kind of amazing to me what full circle I’ve come from having to talk myself into walking into a gym in the first place to how now I feel like I can do it all and never want to leave the gym.



Brandi (daughter), Donald (son-in-law-to-be), and I were leaving right after the triathlon to drive to South Carolina. So in preparing for the trip, I didn’t get much sleep the night before the triathlon. I am always the first one up. It takes trickery to get Brandi out of bed. Not so on April 16. She went running through the house shouting for everybody to get up, time for the tri. I’d say she was a bit excited. I assigned her to the role of taking pictures.



Sorry for the jumbling of thoughts, but as I remember things, I will include them. When I did my run-through, my only issue was transitioning from pool to bike. I had no longer any issue with climbing out of the pool via the ladder, which was a gigantic feat in itself. The allotted transition time is 5

minutes. It took me 11. Back up to the beginning of my fitness journey. Then I could not wear shoes with laces. I had to wear Velcro-closing sneakers. I can wear shoes with laces now without a problem. Before my journey, I could not put on my shoes unless I was sitting on a bed, sofa, or bench, and could bring my leg up onto the surface. My middle was just too big. Now I can bend over and tie my shoes. Those who have lived only in a thin world won't understand how important that kind of thing is, but to me it is a colossal accomplishment. Sometimes it is difficult for the mind to catch up with the body. So my brain was still thinking "Oh, it's because I need to have time to lift my leg on the bench." So in my fat thinking, I thought if I had help transitioning, it would solve the problem. I asked Alex, the truly amazing AFF-FB staff member who was in charge of the indoor triathlon, if I could have Brandi help me. She said I could but that it would eliminate me from winning the race. Well, I thought that was pretty funny. I wasn't going to win. I knew I would be last. I just wanted the distinction of being a triathlete! Why you may ask? Simple. January of 2010 I NEVER thought the word "athlete" could EVER be attached to me, much less an athlete with a numeric prefix. Now I KNOW nothing can stop me. I KNOW I can do it. I KNOW I

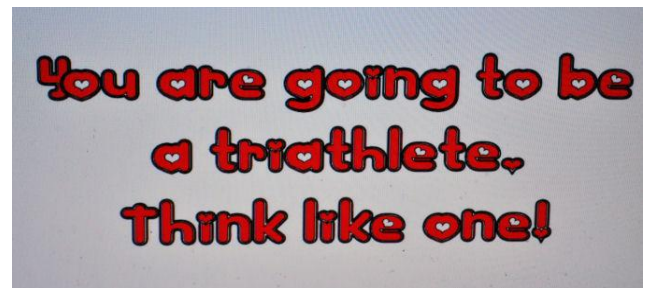


I can be a triathlete and then some. So knowing that I AM a triathlete is one more level of obstacle-ignoring for me. And, trust me, I am not special. EVERYBODY can do this. There is nothing different about me. All it takes is to move. I moved. Everybody can. Anyway, after Alex told me that, I told myself my thinking was old thinking, the fat me thinking, and not the new me. So I elected to not have transition assistance. I already had one exception – the type of bike. I didn't need another exception. After all, I am a triathlete.

Throughout this whole journey, I learn and have learned so much, even from unsuspecting folks. I think about the man who stopped his car and took his hands off the wheel to applaud my nearing the end of the 5k. Folks do or say things like that and have no clue the lasting impact they are making.

Back to Alex. There were some pre-tri clinics.

Unfortunately, work interfered and I didn't get to any of them, but when the first one came up, I asked Alex, "Could I go to that or is that for folks in a league above me?" This is one of those occasions when folks don't know the extent of their impact. She said, "You're going to be a triathlete. Start thinking like one." It became my computer background, my mantra, my threshold. In other words, stop thinking like a fat person. Think like what you are: a triathlete. So I did. And I am.



So Saturday, April 16, 2011, I got to the gym, my entourage in tow. Like I said, I was totally relaxed. I feel SO much better at 284 pounds, even though I know I'm a long way from goal. I can still remember what it was like at 500. So because I feel so much better now, I don't realize just HOW much further I have to go, which is not a bad thing. Then I saw a picture of me from the tri taken from



the 2nd level of the gym looking down & realized just how big my legs still are. After I saw that picture, I wondered how I was able to do the triathlon! It's 95% a mental accomplishment.

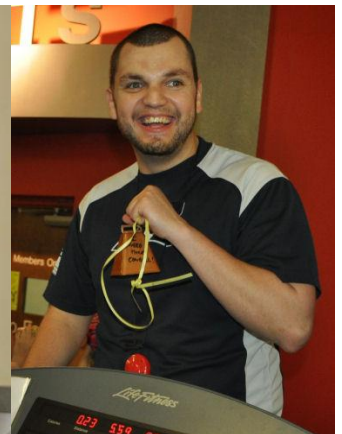
My body floats, always has. So I'm thinking I'm going to dive down under the ropes and come up in the next lane and get to my lane, Lane 3. So I dive down. My body floats. I come up on the same side of the ropes I started on. I guess I could have been embarrassed, but, instead, I found it amusing.



I've been swimming as far back as I can remember. My grandmother was a

champion swimmer in college. One day I'll fit into her old swimsuits I still have. Saturday I did side stroke and back stroke so I didn't have to worry about breathing. One of Saturday's take-home messages is before the next triathlon, I really need to practice & improve my swimming. I did five lengths, one more than I did in my run-through! So I was pretty proud of that.

Samantha, my partner in fitness, as it were, like another daughter to me, always one of my strongest supporters, did the tri with me. She was supposed to be in the wave with the 20-somethings. She chose to stick with me in my wave. Don't let her know this, but I didn't need her. When we did the 5k, I needed her there by me. I can venture out on my own now. ☺ I don't mean to minimize her support whatsoever, just that because of everything she has taught me, which is volumes of life-changing insight, I don't *need* her holding my hand now. I guess you can say she created this monster. ☺ I am so eternally grateful for her.

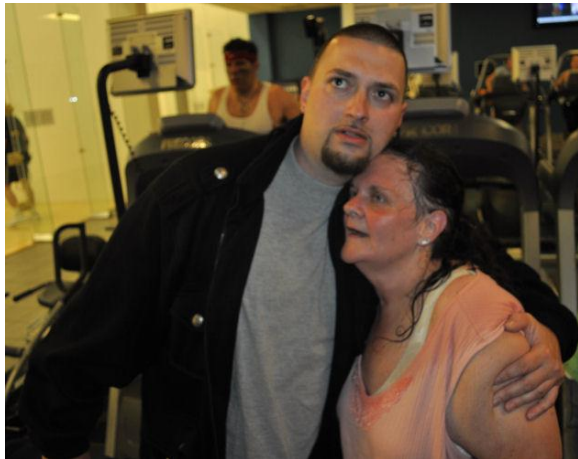


When I told my brother Doug support me, he asked if he ☺ Those of you who read

remember that the night before my 5k, Patrick went to a wedding and didn't show up for my 5k. Trust me, I've never let him forget it. Patrick is now an Iron Man. I am honored an Iron Man took the time out to stand by me for my indoor triathlon! In true Patrick form, he stood over my treadmill and kept pushing up the speed. Even if you want to quit, which I didn't, the effervescent Patrick wouldn't allow that. That's for sure. He would never in a million years let me believe anything was beyond my reach. I am also eternally grateful for him.

that Patrick came to showed up on time. chapter 1 will

Andrea drove up from the Richmond area to see me become a triathlete. It was so awesome she did that. We have an ongoing discussion about how much



better my gym is than her gym. ☺ The tri started at 7:00 AM, my wave 8:24 AM. So Andrea had to get up pretty early on a Saturday to be there for me. Others asked if they could come, but I told them they had to be a gym member. Besides, the physical presence of my small group was perfect.



at

Many gym members, other triathletes, and staff also cheered. By the end of the treadmill segment, there were other people standing with Patrick on the front side of my treadmill rooting. I have no clue who they were. Brandi said Donald (a lifelong athlete) even had tears in his eyes. Even staff member Ved's cowbell was motivating! Loved that bell!

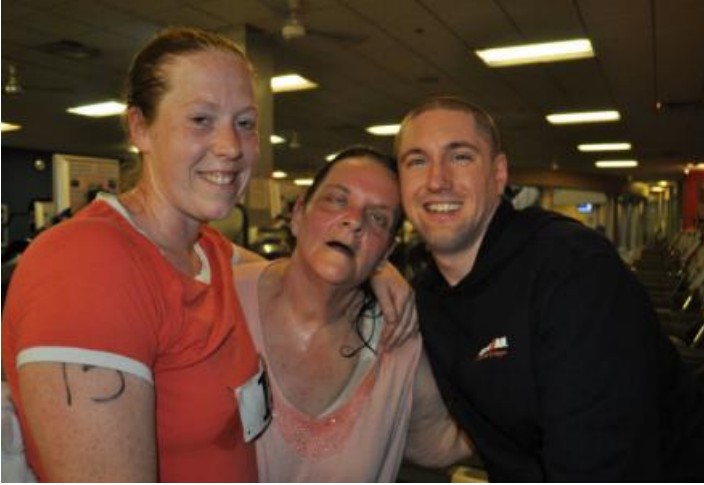


Before the tri, I had only for a very short time had the treadmill up to 3.0 mph. During the tri, I had it up to 3.3. Brandi, my photographer for the tri, was instructed by Patrick to take a picture. ☺ More take-home knowledge came from the guy on the treadmill next to me, who won my wave. Patrick said, "C'mon, Sarah. Only 15 minutes!" The guy next to me said, "No. It's one minute 15 times." Sounds simple, doesn't it? But it isn't. It's profound. It's easy for a fat person to quit. Fifteen minutes can seem like an eternity, especially after you already did 2 other sports. One minute 15 times makes it seem doable. It's one

of those tidbits of knowledge I won't forget & he won't know what an impact he made.



So it was over. I am a triathlete. Did you hear me? **I AM A TRIATHLETE.** Yes, I am proud! So proud that the number they wrote in permanent marker on my arm stayed there for three days until Donald said, "Don't you think it's time to get rid of the #?" ☺ I got up and ran every day on vacation. Even the hot South Carolina sun was not a hindrance. I was still boosted from Saturday's adrenaline.



Now for the most important take-home message. I'll have to share some background with you if you don't mind. I've never felt like a good mother. I couldn't do things other moms could do. I either could not fit the chairs or thought I could not walk the distance or whatever the case happened to be. In general people don't understand how that disappointment makes one eat, rather than diet, but that's for another chapter. When my daughter had ballet recitals or 4-H meetings or church functions or whatever, my mother would take her. I would sit home, cry, and binge. I always felt like a horrible role model and completely inadequate as a mother.

That changed Saturday.

After the triathlon, my daughter said to me "You always make me proud. The 5k made me proud, but there is nothing like how proud what you did today made me because I cannot do something like that."

That is my take-home message. At age 52, I finally feel like a good mom. I have something to give my daughter to make her proud and something which she can take into life – the can-do attitude, the nothing holds me back belief, the fitness and health journey. I am a good role model now. And if you think I will stop now after she said that, ha! That's enough to make me go another lifetime!



I am a triathlete, and I am a good mom. It doesn't get better than this.

