

My return to fitness path began in December 2022 with the sudden passing of a long-time friend. I was driven to consider my own health and wellness, and I knew returning to that state would be a long, bumpy, and winding path. I'd been active in the past with hiking, mountain biking and whitewater kayaking. Life setbacks and poor decisions had accumulated, and I'd settled into soft middle age. For many reasons, it was time to make a shift to wellness.

My journey began with walking in the woods, and later adding bodyweight exercises. Working out in the forest gave physical, spiritual, and mental health benefits and returned me to the places I needed to spend time. I stepped it up later to include jogging and cleaner eating. A few months later, I stepped up again and gave up alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine for 90 days, and began working with Kelly Garrett at The Fitness Factory in Brevard, NC. We had great success for many months, and I reallocated money I would've spent on vices to the gym, to taking Pilates classes, and improving my meals. Towards the end of the year, Kelly and I discussed the Transformation Challenge. I accepted and stepped up the work for a third time.

January 2024 was a steep change; a strict meal plan, six days a week in the gym. I knew I wanted to see this through and committed fully. It was hard, and I bounced from being frustrated, to being energized, to being bored. But I always managed to return to this commitment.

Successes along the way included placing in the top three of my age class in two 5K runs, hiking and biking so much more, backpacking again, losing old weight I'd carried far too long, and making positive changes with life choices.

Challenges included an ankle injury early in the game, a permanently torn bicep, physical therapy for shoulder pain from past injuries, a mountain biking accident, relational issues, several relapses with my vices, a month-long bout with covid, and my decision to have "cheat days", when I only cheated myself and my trainer. I had many opportunities to quit and refused. With encouragement by family and friends, I chose to keep pushing on.

This transformation has meant more than just a return to physical strength and overall health. It has positively impacted other areas of my life, some of which I've possessed before, and some which are new. I've reclaimed intentionality, discipline, and focus. Through this physical training, I've vastly improved my spiritual and relational health, my nutritional balance, my mental and emotional fortitude.

I'm grateful to Kelly Garrett for her knowledge, guidance, and for pushing me when needed, to The Fitness Factory for providing such a fantastic and supportive gym to grow and learn, and to my wonderful friends who have encouraged me every step of the way.