



Learn how to Loozit

The surprising bonus when Robert decided to

DI BARTOK

WHEN Steven Frankel decided to sign up his overweight 13-year-old son Robert in Westmead Hospital's Loozit program, he did not expect to lose weight as well.

His other son, 11-year-old Ben, also lost some weight as the family adopted a healthier lifestyle.

"I had been worried about Robert's weight and then I read about the Loozit program in a leaflet from the boys' school," the Greystanes father said.

"Robert was 93kg and, in the first eight weeks, lost 6kg. His first aim was to get to 85kg, but he is going to keep going until he gets down to 80kg."

The eight-week program aims to re-educate overweight and obese young people between the ages of 13 and 16 about making healthier lifestyle choices with diet and exercise.

In supporting Robert, Mr Frankel lost 2kg and Ben lost 4kg, although neither of them had been very overweight.

Mr Frankel said the program suited his son more than other weight loss regimens.

"He tried Weight Watchers, but felt he didn't fit in as the meetings were full of middle-aged women," Mr Frankel said.

"This program teaches you about food, how to read food labels and make the right choices. It also emphasises the importance of moving rather than sitting in front of the computer and TV."

The Frankels are one of many success stories of the Loozit program, which has recently embraced technology to help participants.

Participants can receive SMS messages, emails and phone calls of support to reach the teenaged participants and help them manage their weight – and remember to have fun while doing so.

Loozit group leaders use a combination of messages such as 'have you had breakfast', or 'R u going for a walk'. Participants are asked to reply to some of the messages and when they do, they receive a response from the Loozit team.

For more details about Loozit, call 9845 1224.

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Steven Frankel out for a run with sons Robert and Ben



Gym a boon in recovery

DI BARTOK

Health reporter

UNTIL Cassandra Baleilekutu started working out in her local gym, she wanted to die.

The 32-year-old Merrylands woman has spent a gruelling six years recovering from horrific injuries she sustained in a car accident which claimed her fiancé.

It was while recuperating in her mother's lounge room, mourning her fiancé, in pain with little movement, that Ms Baleilekutu started having suicidal thoughts.

Ms Baleilekutu sustained 10 fractures and almost died when the car she was travelling in with her American fiancé in Texas had a head-on collision with another car.

Ms Baleilekutu would have died from her injuries if her fiancé's paramedic father had not been travelling two cars behind them.

"He was straight on the scene and, after seeing his son could not be saved, he put a line into me straightaway to stop me going into shock," Ms Baleilekutu said.

Ms Baleilekutu's biggest lingering injury is the absence of bone around her femoral artery.

"It could take years for the bone to grow back," Ms Baleilekutu's mother Helen, a nurse, said.

"Luckily, that artery was not severed despite having bone fragments floating around it."

Starting at Contours gym in Merrylands has helped her get on her feet – literally.

“... I didn't think I could (go to a gym), being in a wheelchair, and with such extreme injuries”

And in the process she has lost 30kgs, with more to go.

"I met Kelly (gym manager) in Merrylands when she was talking to people about Contours and she invited me to join," Ms Baleilekutu said.

"But I didn't think I could, being in a wheelchair and with such extreme injuries."

Three months later, Ms Baleilekutu is not only managing all the equipment, she is also walking short distances.

But it is not only the gym which has helped Ms Baleilekutu's recovery.

Her stalwart mother and brother Joseph have been her sole carers as she has slowly started to recover from her horrific injuries.

"I can't move from the lounge room and have to depend on my mother, when she is not at work, and my brother when she is, for all my needs," Ms Baleilekutu said.

"They have been incredible."

But now Helen has been paid back by also losing a large amount of weight as she does exercises with her daughter.

Contours manager Kelly Holloway said she was very proud of how much Ms Baleilekutu had achieved.

