

Soul | Real lives

Yoga helped me to lose six stone

Vernette Butler, 33, from Weybridge, Surrey, managed to shed almost half her body weight



through practising yoga. It also helped her to recover from her partner's suicide

"As a yoga teacher and counsellor I'm always on the go, teaching classes and working with clients, but my life used to be very different. Back in 2002 I used to weigh just over 13st – quite a lot for my 5ft 2in frame – and I was depressed, lethargic and stuck in a rut. I used to look in the mirror and hardly recognised the person I saw reflected back. Surely that wasn't me?

I saw an advert for a yoga DVD which promised that you would lose weight doing just 10 minutes of practice a day. 'Surely I can do that,' I thought, so I bought a copy and started having a go. I found that I enjoyed it, and to my amazement, at the end of the first week I'd lost 4lbs. Delighted, I carried on, upping my practice to 20 minutes, then an hour, then an hour and a half. Not only did the weight start to drop off, but my mood was lifting too. I felt happier and calmer. My tastes in food changed as well – I wasn't craving junk food any more. Within 18 months I'd lost six stone and I felt like a new woman.

Things were going so well, and then I was struck by a thunderbolt out of the blue. My partner of nine years, Dave, committed suicide. He was a sensitive man and he'd been depressed for some time, but I hadn't seen this coming. I just remember screaming when I was told the news, then a feeling like I was having an out of body experience. I went into auto pilot for the next couple of weeks, numb with shock.

At times when it all seemed too much I remembered the breathing techniques I'd learnt in my yoga practice, and they helped to calm me down. Then, gradually, I started doing yoga again. I'd begun to feel as though my systems were shutting down – I felt ill, crumpled up and drained from the endless crying – but as I stretched my body out again I could feel myself getting better.

You never really get over the death of a loved one, especially a suicide, but eventually I realised it was time to get on with my life. I began studying to become a yoga teacher and I also took counselling qualifications. I wanted to help other people who had gone through the same thing I had. I now run my own business teaching yoga and offering counselling and alternative therapies. It's so rewarding and I really love what I do – I know that Dave would be very proud of me."

To find out more about Vernetta's business, visit vernyoga.cd2.com

