

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT?

By JEN MURPHY



Software CEO's 1,000 Calorie Diet

Dan Galorath dropped nearly 100 pounds with the help of an obesity program run by UCLA. Now, he's relearning how to eat and exercise.

April 10, 2007

THE EXECUTIVE

Dan Galorath, 56, is the founder and chief executive of Galorath Inc., a 65-employee company based in El Segundo, Calif., that makes project-management software used by large corporations. Mr. Galorath, who lives with his wife in Palos Verdes, Calif., has five children, ranging in age from 10 to 25.

He says he was fit in his 20s, when he trained as a competitive cyclist, and he maintained his fitness into his mid-30s. But when he was in his 40s, Mr. Galorath says he stopped exercising to make time for long work days, and he started eating junk food that was in the house for his kids. The weight crept on.



Mr. Galorath before and after.

which he says was mostly water weight. He lost three-and-a-half pounds per week after.

Mr. Galorath says that he tried many diets, from Atkins to Jenny Craig to Weight Watchers, only to lose and then regain 10 to 12 pounds. He even contemplated surgery. Then he looked into the University of California, Los Angeles's Risk Factor Obesity Program. According to the program's own research, 85% of its patients -- the center sees about 400 each year -- successfully achieve their weight loss goals, and three years later 60% of them keep off all or most of the weight. Mr. Galorath filled out a nine-page application and began the program in April 2006, weighing 264 pounds.

Mr. Galorath was put on what's known as a "very low-calorie diet program." (See [details](#).) He spent nearly four-and-a-half months consuming 1,000-calories a day in powder drinks and supplements before phasing in real food. The first week Mr. Galorath lost 13 ½ pounds,

Mr. Galorath started the program on a Saturday and went to work the following Monday, but says he didn't get much done. "My body was crying out for food and the office is generally full of junk. I came home from work and just went to bed," he says. By the next day, Mr. Galorath felt better. "My body adjusted to 'starvation mode,' " he says. "So while I might have smelled food and would have liked to eat it I was not hungry. And the only time I felt dizzy was when I didn't drink sufficient water."

Over the next few months, he brought his protein shakes to work for lunch and dinner, and simply explained to colleagues that he was on a special diet.

Two weeks into the program, Mr. Galorath started doing cardio. After eight weeks he was down to 216 pounds, but he still had 36% body fat, considered obese for men. Mr. Galorath started incorporating strength training in his routine. After five-and-a-half months he was down to 177 pounds.

Nearly a year later, at 6 feet tall, Mr. Galorath weighs 190 pounds and his body fat percentage is around 23%, at the high-end of the acceptable range for a man.

VERY LOW CALORIE DIETS REQUIRE CAREFUL SUPERVISION

Experts don't recommend dropping below 1,200 calories a day, as Mr. Galorath did, without supervision. You want to make sure you are medically supervised by a nurse, a doctor, or a fitness specialist, says Leslie Curtis, a spokesperson for the National Institute of Health's Weight-Control Information Network in Bethesda, Md.

Dr. Christine Gerbstadt, a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association, is involved in research at Drexel University in Philadelphia looking at the psychobiology of eating and weight loss. She says that their patients do not go under 1,200 calories a day. "Research suggests success losing weight on a diet of 1,200 calories and going below that could slow down metabolism," she says.

Dr. David Heber, director of the UCLA program that Mr. Galorath used, says that the program's very low calorie diet reduces the metabolic rate by 10%, so that individuals still lose weight. Dr. Heber, who is a professor of medicine, says that the typical patient spends six months losing weight and an additional six months to one year in weight maintenance learning skills to keep their weight off. Throughout the program patients are closely monitored by nutritionists and doctors, and attend weekly bio-behavioral classes that teach proper food choices and exercise. "The major advantage of our program is the medical supervision which enables us to individualize diets below 1,000 calories per day safely," Dr. Heber wrote in an email. "This is necessary in people with low metabolism and requires both electrocardiograms and regular blood testing." --*J.M.*

THE WORKOUT

Mr. Galorath failed to lose weight on other diets, in part, because he says that he wasn't putting exercise into the equation. The UCLA program introduced him to the importance of physical activity and the role it played in weight loss and health. The program's staff showed him both aerobic and strength exercises that would benefit him. "I'm an exerciser for life now," he says. He meets with a personal trainer for 40-minute strength training sessions, three times a week at The Club at Pacific Corporate Towers, located in the same complex as his office. They meet at either 10 a.m. or 2:30 p.m., depending on his schedule. Twice a week they work upper body muscles and once a week they focus on lower body. Mr. Galorath says they move quickly from one exercise to the next. "There is no rest in between," he says.

"It's deadly." His trainer has him do sit ups and push ups between sets rather than rest. He completes three sets of each exercise, aiming for eight repetitions or to the point where his muscles are exhausted.

For cardio, Mr. Galorath walks three to four days a week, usually with his wife in the mornings at around 5:30 a.m. when it's cool outside. He lives at the top of the Palos Verdes Peninsula and various trails are close by. During the week, he walks for about 40 minutes up and down about 1,200 feet of elevation at a pace of four miles per hour. On Fridays and the weekend he aims for a longer five-mile loop. Both he and his wife walk with Nordic poles, a modified ski pole designed for people to train for cross-country skiing in the summer. Mr. Galorath says that he likes the poles because they give him a full body workout, incorporating many larger core and upper body muscles and because some of his weight is transferred on the poles lessening the pressure on his bad knees. Because the poles are collapsible he can fit them in his suitcase when he travels. Mr. Galorath and his wife also sometimes bike around the hills in Palos Verdes on the weekends.

THE DIET

THE WORKOUT

Monday: 40 minute strength session with trainer at the gym.
Tuesday: 40 minute walk with Nordic poles.
Wednesday: 40 minute strength session with trainer.
Thursday: 40 minute walk with Nordic poles.
Friday: 70-minute walk with Nordic poles; 40 minute strength session with trainer at the gym.
Saturday: Rest or bike ride.
Sunday: 80-minute walk with Nordic poles.

Mr. Galorath is a staunch calorie counter, using a pocket PC and occasionally a portable scale to weigh restaurant portions. In the past, he didn't pay attention to the number of calories he was burning and consuming. "I would have a breakfast burrito, which everyone eats in California, but wouldn't realize that's 1,200 calories. Or I'd ride the Lifecycle at the gym for 30 minutes and work off 200 calories only to go eat 400 calories," he says. "I can now eat

anything I want, even junk occasionally, but I do have daily calorie limits." Mr. Galorath eats between 2,200 and 3,000 calories a day, depending on how much exercise he gets.

For breakfast he might have oatmeal with two scoops of soy protein isolate and a banana. He tries to get 185 grams of protein a day -- more than three times as much as the recommended daily allowance -- so he continues to build muscle. This may sound excessive but people on severely restricted calorie diets need to consume more protein to help stave off hunger and build muscle mass, says Christine Gerbstadt, M.D., a researcher and spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association. Mr. Galorath keeps soy burgers in the fridge at his office for lunch, and will cook two in the microwave and eat them with snap peas or baby carrots and a piece of fruit. He usually has whatever his wife is cooking for dinner, but if he's already had too many calories that day he sometimes just has a soy patty. He indulges too. "The kids always have garbage around and I can't resist a brownie," he says.

THE COST

UCLA's Risk Factor Obesity Program requires an initial physical exam, which costs \$150. A parking permit for visits costs \$8 a visit. The low-calorie diet program that Mr. Galorath was on cost \$295 a month, which included weekly visits with a nurse, biweekly blood work, two doctor visits a month, weekly educational classes and some nutritional products. He spent about \$100 a week on nutritional powder and other supplements. He pays \$35 a month for his gym membership, which is subsidized by the building his company is located in, and \$35 for each personal training session. His Nordic poles cost about \$100. Mr. Galorath says he buys good trail

running shoes for walking and replaces them every four to five months, at a cost of about \$120. His bike cost \$1,400.

Mr. Galorath says he's a computer geek and bought a personal-diet program that tracks his calories and a sports-training program that tracks his sets and reps for strength training for his pocket PC. Each cost about \$25. "I really wanted to measure performance so I found a Polar heart rate monitor that approximates calories," he says. "It was top of the line and cost about \$350, but my wife's is pretty basic and cost \$100." Mr. Galorath also purchased a tiny scale online for \$30, so he could weigh food when he is at restaurants.

THE EFFORT

Significantly restricting his calorie intake took both motivation and discipline. "The first three days were horrible," he admits. "I was starving, had headaches. It was awful. I would smell food and want to eat it but my wife and kids were very supportive." He says his diet is often challenged on the road. On a recent trip to Brussels he thought he was making a healthy choice by ordering fish, but it came covered in hollandaise sauce that he wiped off. He sometimes brings a protein drink on the road just in case he has no other healthy option. Mr. Galorath says attending educational classes that explained basic behaviors and principles of weight loss were a major factor in his being able to keep his weight down. "I'm not a dumb guy but I just never understood the consequences of eating and exercise," he says. "But when you turn it into numbers and put it in a formula you realize you are in control of your weight."

THE BENEFIT

"I have seen amazing differences in the way I live," says Mr. Galorath. He had been taking Lipitor for his cholesterol which was about 220 ml/dl, but he stopped taking it when he started exercising and now his cholesterol is down to 163. He says buying clothes, a once humiliating task, is now fun. He used to hate driving in his wife's Toyota Prius because he was too big for its seats, and the coach seats on airplanes are no longer uncomfortable. Mr. Galorath says the time he spends exercising with his wife has also been good for their marriage. "We have never had an hour and 10 minutes to talk until we started walking together," he says. "With five kids you don't get that much alone time." He also has more energy to keep up with his kids. "Anything my kids can do, I can do now," he says.

Write to Jen Murphy at workout@wsj.com