

Flying Free by Lisa Lang

"One, two, three..." then nothing.

Nothing but an amazing rush of adrenalin, the wind in my face, and my heart beating hard in my chest.

I was flying.

It was the culmination of an incredible journey for me, but let me tell you how it happened.

My name is Lisa; I'm 36 and a mother of four. One of my children has been receiving support from IPOP for a few years now. That is how I got involved with the organisation.

My journey started on a dreary Tuesday morning in November 2009. I had come along to IPOP's Parent Support group to meet with other parents, enjoy a cup of tea and a bit of a chat. Andrew, IPOP's Club Development Officer, came into the kitchen where we were all sitting and mentioned that he was arranging a sponsored skydive to raise money for IPOP and would any of us parents like to get involved?

I could feel myself getting excited. A skydive, wow! It was something that my husband John and I had always said we wanted to do. I immediately put my hand up, then looked around to see if anybody else had. Looking around I noticed everyone's eyes on me. I was the only one volunteering to take part. From the moment I put my hand up I was on my own!

Andrew congratulated my enthusiasm and took my details down before telling me he would be in touch with more information. Nothing more was mentioned until after the New Year. 2010 had dawned and with it the ever approaching date. April 24th, my D-Day.

I received a call from Andrew to let me know that I would need to pay a deposit to secure my place, but with that news he also had another bombshell to drop. There was a weight restriction on all the jumpers. I would have to weigh no more than 14st to be able to jump.

"Come on, be serious!" was my initial reaction. I knew I wasn't in the best shape of my life but had to pluck up the courage to step onto the scales, which I did at Boots in Barnet.

I was a staggering 16st 13lbs. That was the largest I had been since having my four children.

At this point it would have been easy for me to back out, the prospect of losing 3st too much, and I hadn't yet paid the deposit. I made my decision. I knew I would have the drive and determination that I needed to go through with this skydive. I handed over my £50 deposit

and that was it! I was signed and sealed and ready to deliver on April 24th!

I knew it would be a tough road to get down to my target weight to be able to jump, but fate seemed to be on my side. A friend of mine approached me one day.

"Are you serious about losing weight and doing the skydive?" she asked.

"Yes" I replied firmly.

She invited me to become her gym buddy. I joined LA Fitness in New Barnet and started my first session.

"Right, 10 minutes on the treadmill to start" she said.

I stepped up and survived that first ordeal.

"Come on, get on that rower!"

"How long for?" I asked.

"5 minutes" she replied.

I managed to survive that too. After 20 minutes I was ready to go home!

I had decided when I got home that I would need to change my eating habits. Healthy salads, smaller portions, lots of fruit and drinking copious amounts of water. You see I had a fabulous relationship with food, NOT!

Not only had I started to exercise and to eat healthily, I also made the huge decision to give up smoking as well. I was going for this one hundred percent!

After the first week on my new regime I went back to Boots to see if I had made any dent in my target. When I got on the scales it said I had lost an amazing seven pounds in one week! That was it.

"Game on!" I thought.

After 4 weeks I had already lost 1st 7lbs.

By the time April 24th rolled around I had worked really hard to reach my target. I turned up at the airfield with everybody else, to support them, but most importantly to jump! I had managed to get down to 14st 4lbs and was worried that they might not let me jump. They told me they would need to wind to pick up by the time I jumped and as long as it did I could go.

When it was my turn I went in to get kitted up. It was all systems go! I was really going to do this!

The trip up in the plane took about 15 minutes to reach 10,000 feet. I was going to be third out of the door, following Andrew. As he disappeared out of the door I realised it was my turn next. My instructor and I moved up to the edge of the plane and then...

"One, two, three..."

What an amazing experience. I will never forget the rollercoaster of emotions I felt that day. Thank you to everyone at IPOP, and the parents at the support group for all of the kind words of support and friendship.

From this experience I have learned never to underestimate yourself as a person and as a parent/carer. We do a fantastic job. Have pride and hope in yourself and never be afraid to ask for help, we all need it. It took a skydive for me to see what an amazing person I am. I have raised nearly £700 for IPOP from this experience, could you do that too?

Still Flying Free – An Epilogue

After the skydive I took myself back to the gym to see the personal trainer. He has now set me a more intense programme. I intend to keep going with my exercise and lose another stone and a half over the next year.

Through this experience I now have a better understanding on how to make food work for me, and I love working out at the gym, so much so that a week before the skydive I was at the gym four times for two and a half hours a day!

I am still not smoking. I now have my health, I have my fitness, but most of all I have a life.

My husband has joined me on my journey and has already lost 5 stone. He needs to lose another 3 stone to do a skydive for IPOP and wants to run a marathon within the next year. Who knows, maybe I'll run with him! One thing I do know is that I will definitely be doing another skydive.