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Building her Body

Renee Pillow's quest leads to a new focus - encouraging other women

A decade ago, Renee Pillow's weight hovered around 170 pounds after she gave birth to her second child.

She started walking on a treadmill a couple of times a week but saw few results on her 5-foot-4-inch frame.

At the time, her goal wasn't all that ambitious. She just wanted to fit into her size 12 jeans again. "I was accustomed to being that size. I just wanted to get back down to where I had been comfortable," Pillow says.

By 2000, still struggling with her weight, Pillow joined a health club.

Being at the health club in the company of other women her age who were in much better shape gave Pillow some much-needed motivation to seriously address her weight control problem.

"I was just determined," says the single mother with two sons. "I thought, I want to look like that."

It was there that her perspective underwent a major change. "I saw women who looked great, including



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black women whom I could identify with," she says. "They had muscular arms and legs; I immediately determined I wanted to look like these ladies."

With her new goal in mind, she decided to try working with a personal trainer.

Pillow made a commitment to a four-day workout schedule emphasizing strength training and cardio respiratory fitness. She also read about proper nutrition.

The hard work and dedication paid off, Pillow says. By 2002, she shed 40 pounds, firmed her body and added muscle tone.

In May 2005, a friend from the gym suggested that Pillow compete in a body building contest.

"I would never even wear shorts," she says with a laugh, "let alone get on a stage."

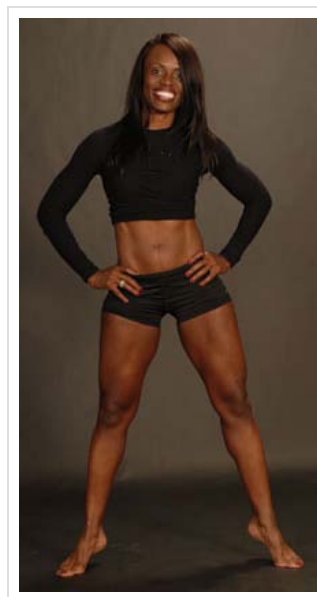
Timidly, Pillow accepted the challenge. She was stunned but elated when she took first place.

"That was my beginning," she says.

From there, body building not only became a passion, it also became a career path for Pillow. Today, she works only one day a week in her other profession as a dental hygienist. Any other time, you'll find her training other women, encouraging and believing in them.

So far, Pillow, 37, proudly reports, she has trained more than 100 women.

"I have my own identity now," she says. "I know what I'm supposed to be doing. I'm supposed to help other women. It's absolutely wonderful."



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Getting Started

Begin with a change in attitude to meet your goals

Body builder Renee Pillow offers several strategies to help you

get in the right mindset about improving your health.

> Think about your goals. Ask yourself 'What do I want?' 'What do I want my body to look like? Developed? Toned?' 'What is it going to take?' You really have to make a change in your lifestyle to get the body you want, Pillow says. Ask yourself why haven't you made those changes in the past?

> Educate yourself. The problems most women face with their health is related to not being educated, Pillow says. Getting in ideal shape takes strength training, cardio and changing your eating habits, she says. "It really does take all of that and being consistent," she says. Women, especially as they get older, start losing muscle mass every year. "Strength training allows you to define your body and speed up your metabolism," Pillow says. "If you only do cardio and change your diet, you can lose muscle and not have much definition."

> Establish good nutritional habits. "You absolutely cannot build a body without good nutrition," Pillow says. "Once I learned how to eat clean, that's when my body absolutely changed. My muscles became more defined and my energy level was wonderful." According to Pillow, eating "clean" consists of foods you can identify as having one ingredient. For example, an apple, not a pizza, should be part of a clean diet. Broccoli - not broccoli casserole - fits into the clean category. The same is true for chicken, fish and other meats.

(Source: www.fitwithrenee.com)

Article appears as published in the *IW* issue.

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