

Misty lost 100 lbs to welcome her GI hubby home!



Larry, Misty and Nevaeh reunited, May 2012

Hug your Daddy goodbye," Misty Shaffer whispered to Nevaeh, 2. As the toddler wrapped her arms around Army specialist Larry Shaffer, Misty could no longer hold back her tears. Her husband was leaving for his second deployment to Afghanistan. Would he be safe? Would he—oh, please, God—would he come back to her? She felt sick, shaky. *Breathe*, she told herself. *Breathe*.

"We'll get through this," Larry promised, giving his wife one last kiss. "I love you so much." Then he was gone, headed for a flight to Kandahar, headed toward an uncertain future. Fear prickled along Misty's spine—yet she knew that she could *not* let herself break down and frighten the baby. *Breathe*, she repeated. "I need to be strong," Misty said, smiling at Nevaeh. "While Daddy is away being brave, Mommy will do good things, too." Misty dried her eyes and gave her daughter a squeeze. "How can I be the best mom to you, little one?" She asked herself the question over and over in the coming days. And yet, in her heart, she knew the answer all along. "To do right by my family," she finally blurted out, "I need to get healthy."

A good place to start

Misty had always been chubby. Happy, sad, angry, bored—"French fries or my mom's cake always

made life seem better," she recalls. Food was her comfort during Larry's first deployment. And when news came that he'd be shipping out again . . . her emotional eating exploded. "I'd have huge amounts of *everything* and still want more," she recalls. Soon size-22 jeans cut into her waist. She had no energy, her body ached, she kept getting sick. Her doctor agreed to prescribe diet pills. "They worked until my body got used to them," says Misty, who regained every ounce she lost. Yet she did learn something key: "I hadn't needed a special diet or exercise. When I ate less, I lost weight." So now, as she steeled herself to try again, "I knew the main thing was to get my portions under control." Since she'd moved back in with her parents, she decided to stock their freezer with Lean Cuisines and Smart Ones. She figured the meals could teach her what a healthy portion looked like. "Then I ate my first one," she says, shaking her head. "I was like, 'How is this ever going to be enough? How am I ever going to do this?'" Luckily, mom Angel overheard her . . .

One idea changes everything

Once Angel learned that Misty was fighting to get healthy, she called in the family cheerleaders: Misty's aunt Melody and sister Kim. The women started brainstorming ways to help. "What if you keep it a secret from Larry?" Angel asked. "Imagine what a surprise it'll be when he gets home!"

Suddenly, Misty had a clear image of Larry home safe and seeing her for the first time. Smiling through tears, "It was the extra motivation I needed," she says. Of course, when she thought about Larry for long, she felt a familiar knot in her stomach—and this time was no different. "People say it helps to keep busy, so I took Nevaeh to the park." And the most amazing thing happened. "I'd been starving when I left, but once I was moving, it went away." She tried the trick again the next day and the next. "Keeping busy became my thing. If I didn't stop, I wasn't hungry!"

A joyous waiting game

After a month of mostly frozen meals, "my stomach shrunk, and it got easy to eat less." She began to make more of her own meals using tips from *The Biggest Loser*—like switching to whole grains and loading up on veggies. Exercise? "It makes me so hungry, I skipped it." Still, weight poured off. When she Skyped with Larry, she had to keep her changing body hidden. That autumn, "I got under 200 pounds for the first time—and I let out a whoop!"

Misty kept shrinking as Larry's return neared. She and Nevaeh used glitter and markers to make "Welcome Home" posters. And Misty bought herself a size-8 lace sundress to wear to the airport—quite an upgrade from the baggy T-shirt she'd thrown on when her husband left. Friends tipped off a local news station to the extra-special homecoming, and the cameras were on when Larry stepped off the plane and rounded the corner into the arms of his 100-pounds-slimmer wife. He pulled back to take

it all in. "Wow," he gasped.

As months have passed, the wows haven't stopped. "Larry still does a double take when he sees me," smiles Misty, 25. And when she catches a glimpse of her own tiny reflection, her smiling husband standing behind her, "I have to pinch myself to make sure it's real!"

Reader success!
Women who tested Misty's menus for us shed up to eight pounds in a week!

Eat like Misty did!

Our nutrition team worked with Misty to re-create menus that helped her lose weight fastest. You can choose a frozen meal at every sitting or start mixing in portion-smart, home-cooked meals right away. Feel free to jazz up meals with low-cal flavorings like herbs, spices, vinegar, citrus juice, mustard and zero-cal sweetener as desired. As always, get a doctor's okay to try any new plan.



AFTER

Breakfast choose one daily



- 1 microwave breakfast (up to 220 calories)
- 1 cup fruit
- 8 oz. fat-free plain Greek yogurt, 1 cup fruit, 2 Tbs. almonds and cinnamon to taste

Lunch choose one daily

- Any frozen entree (up to 300 calories)
- Unlimited green salad, 1 Tbs. lite dressing
- 3 oz. water-packed tuna or rotisserie chicken, unlimited mixed greens and salad veggies, 3 Tbs. shredded low-fat cheese, 2 Tbs. lite dressing
- 2 oz. lean deli meat, 2 slices whole-grain bread, 1 slice fat-free cheese, 1 tsp. spicy mustard, lettuce and tomato
- Unlimited raw veggies, 2 Tbs. lite dip/dressing



Dinner choose one daily

- Any frozen entree (up to 300 calories)
- Unlimited cooked veggies or green salad, 1 Tbs. lite dressing
- 3 oz. cooked chicken breast (rotisserie is fine), 1 cup steamed green beans or asparagus, 1 cup cooked whole-grain pasta, 1/2 cup low-fat pasta sauce, 2 Tbs. Parmesan
- 2 oz. precooked shrimp or chicken, 3 cups mixed greens, 1 cup chopped raw veggies, 1/2 cup beans or chickpeas, 1/4 cup low-fat cheese, 3 Tbs. lite dressing



Snacks choose one daily

- 1 Special K snack bar
- 1 cup raw vegetables, 1/4 cup guacamole
- 1 piece or 1 cup fruit



How to make your own menus

Misty simply allowed herself about 1,200 calories a day. You can do the same, and divvy up calories however you like. On busy days, just choose three frozen entrees, add unlimited veggies on the side and snack on a 100-calorie protein bar!

Can Misty's strategy help you?

Frozen meals are a great weight-loss tool because they combine familiar foods "and fool-proof portion control," says *Portion Teller Plan* author Lisa Young, Ph.D. "Cut portions, and you will lose weight!" Sound too hard? You might be surprised. Studies show we can eat up to 77% less and still feel equally satisfied!

Support a soldier like Misty did!

To keep Larry's morale up while he was gone, Misty sent frequent care packages from their North Carolina home. It's something any of us can do for a hero overseas—whether we know one personally or not! To send to an anonymous soldier, go to USO.org.

What's best to send? Start with a free USPS 12"x12"x5" box, which care-package experts say tend to arrive fastest. Then fill it with treats that travel well (like beef jerky, trail mix, Skittles, gum); toiletries (like toothpaste, soap and shampoo to replace no-frills military-issue items), iTunes or Amazon gift cards (for books, movies and music); and touches of home (like kids' drawings and holiday decorations). Seal anything with an odor in two plastic bags to keep the scent from affecting other items. Fill extra space with individual packs of tissue. And put two address labels on the box, just in case one becomes illegible.

