
How an Ear Infection, Stubbornness, Image Issues, Family Dinners, and McDonald's Shaped Caroline's Health

An Ear Infection

When Caroline was three years old her dad rushed her to the hospital while she was screaming from a painful ear infection. In the middle of the chaos of her yelling and of him trying to calm down his daughter, a man on a gurney was wheeled past them. Despite being extremely overweight, you could tell that he was no more than fifty years old. Surrounded by the painful faces of his family members, he was put into an intensive care room. That father had a heart attack and later died. Caroline's father Jeff is convinced that her ear infection sixteen years ago saved his life.

Reaching a weight of over two hundred pounds, Jeff decided to change his eating habits after realizing that his unhealthy diet could potentially leave his children without a father, just as it had left those children walking beside the gurney without theirs.

Stubbornness

People have always said that Caroline looks exactly like her father and he has always told her that she has his genes. So naturally like her father, Caroline has a slow metabolism and needs to eat healthier than her mom and brother who could eat a BigMac every day and not gain a pound. Because of this, growing up Caroline was treated differently than her brother Alex. Alex could gorge on food and Caroline's parents wouldn't say a word, because it wasn't a problem. While Caroline on the other hand felt as though her parents were breathing down her neck making sure she was eating healthy, this along with her big sweet tooth and love for everything chocolate, made her want to eat junk food even more. All of her friends were thin and could eat whatever they wanted. Caroline was the odd one out and refused to be different. She ate as she pleased and although she was never extremely overweight she was defiantly the largest out of all her friends and family, and slowly became aware of it. However, the more she became aware, the more stubborn she was not to eat differently and be set apart from everyone else, which is until Caroline finally hit a wall of shame before going to high school.

Image Issues

Caroline was switching school districts and entering a new school without knowing anyone. She was self-conscious and knew that she needed to lose weight if she wanted to survive the competitive jungle of freshman year. Caroline trained for cross country during the summer before high school and lost a significant amount of weight. Throughout her four years of high school she was able to keep the weight off, but despite her efforts, still wasn't at the weight she wanted to be at. Comparing herself to the rail thin girls in her classes and on T.V., Caroline believed that she needed to work even harder to lose weight before going into college.

Paranoid and determined not to gain the dreaded "freshman fifteen," she became obsessed with not her health, but rather her weight. Skipping meals and exercising every day Caroline lost fifteen pounds throughout the year instead of gaining it. The more people told her "you look great" and asked "did you lose weight?" the more motivated she became to look even thinner the next time they saw her.

This obsession eventually dwindled down when Jeff, the one who had been so stern with her about her eating habits when she was younger expressed his concern. Having the man who while growing up pressed the importance of healthy eating become concerned about her health from an opposite angle was a shock to Caroline. The word “balance” came up during his conversation with her and Caroline saw how she drastically became obsessed from overeating as a child to under eating and how unhealthy her new habits were just as unhealthy as her old ones.

Family Dinners

Eating had always been a big part of Caroline’s life. Being close with her neighbors who are like family, her fondest memories with them have been food related. Christmas Eve is her favorite night of the year. All fourteen of them go to a fancy restaurant and gorge on fresh bread, salad, and pasta. Their summer nights are filled with grilling mussels and drinking wine late into the night. They make an effort to have a sushi night at a different restaurant once a week during the summer and rolls upon rolls will be ordered. Eating has also been a social part of her family, but it has been a bigger part of their health. Now that she’s living on her own in her apartment and buying her own groceries she works to find the important “balance” between eating and exercise while still enjoying food as she does during those Christmas Eve nights.

McDonald’s

Working a summer at McDonald’s also changed her eating habits for the better. After working the fryers for hours, she no longer goes to fast food restaurants. Seeing the way the food is prepared from a behind the scenes prospective made her drift away from grease and fries. During that summer at McDonald’s, Caroline became interested in the food industry and decided to do some research on what she was actually selling customers. After watching the documentary Food Inc., and reading several articles on what was being served at fast food restaurants, she vowed to eat healthy. The chicken nuggets that she was serving weren’t only unhealthy because they were fried in grease. Her eyes were opened to the horrors of how the chicken wasn’t even chicken because from eggs the birds were mistreated, injected with chemicals, and turned into edible manufactured products. This disgusting hidden secret ruined Caroline’s appetite for fast food.

An ear infection saved Jeff’s life, and thus shaped Caroline’s. Her extreme stubbornness lead to her overweight figure and image issues. The family dinners shaped her to have a love for food, and McDonald’s taught her that all food shouldn’t be loved. All of these have shaped Caroline’s health and lifestyle that she carries out today.
