

Chapter Three

A New Experiment: Fit at Fifty-Eight

My presentation at the Utah Public Health Convention was pretty much my last hurrah with McDonald's. I definitely had mixed emotions about that event because it went so well and yet I knew my time in the spotlight with McDonald's was winding down. I felt like we really had one of the greatest health and wellness messages out there, and now fewer people were going to be exposed to it.

I suppose I'm somewhat biased when I say how powerful my message of choice and responsibility is, but the responses I've gotten from people—especially those who've dealt with weight issues as I have—have confirmed that the lessons learned from my McDonald's experiment really can make a difference in people's lives. If McDonald's was no longer going to provide me with a platform to get my message out, I had to figure out how I could take it to the next level on my own.

During the last couple months of 2016, pretty much around the holidays, I took a total break from everything and put some weight back on. I didn't want to get up to the 280 pounds I was four years ago, but it felt good to let myself go for a while. It gave me a chance to separate from the headiness of my McDonald's adventure and think about what to do next. It was almost as if I had to go back to being my real self for a while before I could decide what my future was going to look like.

I definitely wanted to keep my options open. Going back into teaching wasn't practical, but I didn't have enough money to retire on. And because my wife Kim was thriving in a career she loved, and our kids were still in college, we weren't ready to live our dream of moving to Scottsdale, Arizona, quite yet. So I had to think of something to do to keep busy in Iowa, at least for the foreseeable future.