

Fighting a Food Addiction

Katyite Layne Spitzenger Battles for a Healthy Future on the TV Show Addicted to Food

*Written by Mary Hogan
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When Layne Spitzenger of Katy read a casting call looking for people willing to lose weight while being filmed for the TV show *Addicted to Food*, she decided to sign up on a whim. After the recession hit and her husband Garry's business began to suffer, Spitzenger felt the stress of having her company, Circle



After losing weight on the TV show *Addicted to Food*, Layne Spitzenger is now enjoying horseback riding again at Circle Lake Ranch



Addicted to Food cast members (back row) Robby, Dejuai, Layne, Elizabeth, (front row) Amy, Tinisha, Camille, and Tracey

Lake Ranch, turn from a passion and hobby into her family's main source of survival. "The more I lost myself as things became stressful, the more I turned to food," she shares. "It made me feel heavy, calm, and euphoric. I started using food to self-medicate." She realized she had ballooned from a slim size 6 to a size 18 and could no longer ride her beloved horses. She knew something had to be done. Several weeks after signing up for the casting call, she was on her way to the small town of Buffalo Gap to begin filming 42 days of intensive treatment at Shades of Hope.

Food Camp & Lifelong Friends

Before joining *Addicted to Food*, Spitzenger had started thinking her only hope for losing weight would be to escape somewhere for recuperation. As it turns out, she chose the right weight loss program to join. When she first arrived at Shades of Hope, they took all of her "stuff" – her cell phone, her magazines, and even her purse. "They want you out of your daily life, so you can look at yourself and your problems and you can address them completely,"

Spitzenberger says, adding, "It was a godsend to have it fall in my lap."

Under the guidance of therapist Tennie McCarty, Spitzenberger along with seven other cast members battled food addictions ranging from overeating to bulimia, as well as their underlying emotional struggles. They attended group sessions every day, followed the 12-step Overeaters Anonymous program, and completed challenges designed to bring them closer to overcoming their emotional constraints. Throughout the many days of therapy, counseling, and treatment, Spitzenberger became close with her castmates, and they still keep up through emails and phone calls. "Rarely a day goes by that I don't talk to one of the seven, because they're my support group," she says.

The Emotional Aspect of Addiction

Because of the show, Spitzenberger learned to slow down, calm down, and think things through instead of always going 200 miles per hour in her daily life. "It made me more thoughtful and I got rid of my anger," she shares. "Addictive people get angry and resentful, and when you have those two feelings, something is going on. You have to address it and address it properly. It's about learning how to interact with other people."

To overcome a food addiction, she says it's important to focus more on the emotional aspects, versus just on eating healthy and exercising regularly. "It's your emotions, and if you don't fix that part, no matter what, you're still going to overeat," she says.

During their time on *Addicted to Food*, the castmates learned how to confront others when they are uncomfortable or upset with something they have done or said. "It's scary, because we're trained to avoid confrontation," says Spitzenberger. Putting the practice to use in her daily life has helped her release her emotions instead of keeping them bottled up inside.

Overcoming Everyday Challenges

Since returning from *Shades of Hope*, she has come up against some challenges, but she falls back on the support of her friends from *Addicted to Food* to make it through. She admits, "It's really hard to stay on track, because life will pull the rug out from you."

For others battling a food addiction, she offers a few tips for success. First, if you can go to treatment, it's a huge jump start on the healing process. Also, join an OA group and attend meetings regularly to build up a support base. "People like us, we isolate," she shares. "You cannot stay isolated, angry, or resentful." Third, read books and articles about food recovery for motivation. And fourth, know that you're not alone. "There are others who feel your shame and your pain," says Spitzenberger.

An Active & Healthy Future

With months of hard work behind her and a bright future ahead, Spitzenberger looks forward to returning to some of her hobbies like running, horseback riding, and even mountain climbing. She and castmate Robby LeBlanc plan on climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, one of her lifelong dreams.

She also plans on starting an OA support group at Circle Lake Ranch on Friday evenings for anyone interested in attending. She is determined to not only continue the healing process, but also to help provide a resource for others struggling with food addiction. She says, "There's times I look at myself in the mirror and I think, 'What did I do to my poor little body?'" KM

MARY HOGAN enjoys being associate editor of *Katy Magazine* and admires those who take on life's challenges head-on.

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