

Sharon Constable: A Story of Courage, Determination and the Will to Overcome

By: *Vince Danielsen and Dylan Berg*
Innovative Fitness Consultants Inc.

Approximately two hundred meters from the front door of Innovative Fitness West Vancouver, lies an office where one year ago a woman sat trying desperately to pull her life together. After surviving and surmounting many challenges in her life, lupus, a mysterious disease with no proven cause or cure, attacked her joints and plagued her with unparalleled fatigue. As a vibrant woman accustomed to being active with her six grandchildren, Sharon Constable was devastated from the severe joint pain, inflammation and muscle soreness. She could not negotiate a set of stairs and felt very limited in her life. In reality, if the disease was allowed to continue, she was facing the prospect of life in a wheelchair. After having endured nine months restricted to bed rest, she found herself back at work, out of sheer will.

The Decision

Sharon Constable is an extremely strong woman. She vehemently decided that she was not going to let this disease win and was fuelled by an attitude that she would not accept this disease or the limits it placed on her life. As she watched many others make their daily trek to Innovative Fitness for their workouts, she quietly dreamed about being able to eventually run herself. She started to meditate daily and found an incredible reserve of inner strength that helped her acknowledge her challenge and aspire to make a change. “I decided to stop fighting against my illness and accept it and then decided to do whatever I could to get myself past the pain, fear and self pity I was experiencing,” stated Constable.

First Experience

It took Sharon tremendous courage to make that walk to Innovative Fitness. She was scared and embarrassed with her state of health. As she tried to complete a 30 minute session in the initial stages, she asked herself, “How can I make it through 60 minutes of exercise when I can barely walk for 30 seconds”? Yet each day, she found the fortitude she needed to start her session. She read a motivation message by Ralph Marston called “The Next Hour” before every workout:

“In just one hour from now, your world can be an entirely different place than it is this moment ... The next hour is absolutely critical, for it is the one over which you now have control. You have every reason, every resource, and every ability to make it the very best you’ve ever lived.”

Ralph Marston

“Reading this made obstacles not seem so overwhelming for me, but rather an opportunity to dig deeper past the surface of myself where I found this incredible reserve of strength just waiting to be put to use,” stated Constable.

Her Growth

There is a bright, burning fire that lights Sharon from the inside out. She carries a drive and determination matched by few. Innovative Fitness simply helped her bring this passion to the surface and it is truly remarkable what she has accomplished. Sharon began her journey hardly being able to walk on the treadmill while also focusing on the strength to get up from the floor all on her own. Eventually, she set a goal of a 5 km walk that would benefit the Multiple Sclerosis Society; the first of her many goals. Nervous and unsure going into this event, Sharon surprised everyone, particularly herself, when she effortlessly power walked that entire distance. Full of confidence and receiving high accolades, she set out on a clear path of further accomplishments. The path to further accomplishments was marked by a 10 km walk/run, re-learning how to cycle and a summer duathlon. Not stopping there, she set out on another duathlon that would take over 3 hours to complete, then a 5 km, a 10km in Richmond and finally culminating with a 10 km walk/run in the 2003 Fall Classic.

Innovative Fitness trainer Dylan Berg had the pleasure to run the last 500 meters of the Fall Classic with Sharon and witness her personal best with her emotional finish. Sharon ran the last 9 minutes of that race; remarkable as it was almost double what she had ever run in any one time. Crossing the finish line hand in hand, it was truly exhilarating for Dylan to be a part of Sharon's best time in a 10 km race.

“At Innovative Fitness, I found a group of people, both trainers and clients, who believed in me,” stated Constable. “We sometimes underestimate what we can truly achieve with our health. I did for a very long time.” Underestimate, however, is not in Sharon's vocabulary anymore. “The trainers actually have to hold me back now or I would run two events per month for the whole year,” she declared. Her Innovative Fitness program now sets specific time goals for specific events to keep the pace even and balanced. Incidentally, scheduled rest has become very important as she has 6 grandchildren that all want to join her on her runs and other events.

Over this time, Sharon has lost over 50 pounds despite having to consume medications that make weight loss extremely difficult. With the progress made, she has immensely impressed her doctors and has emerged from almost all of the medications she was required to take. Her doctors cannot believe what she is now doing physically, as they have never seen someone with lupus perform at such a high level.

The Impact

Sharon loves to run and even more so loves to be active with her grandchildren. Keeping up with six children aged 4 through 8 is no easy task. However, she relishes it. The smile on her face when she tells stories of playing ice hockey with her grandsons or running to the store with her granddaughters is magnificent. That same smile accompanied a story of how she ran up the stairs at work one day, eliciting laughs full of excitement and disbelief.

All the hard work is put in perspective at these times, when looking back and reflecting. Sharon Constable has become a true inspiration to all those around her; family, friends, trainers and other clients alike. She has realized her inner strength and has adopted a great attitude towards her health, enabling her to beat any obstacle. “My experience at Innovative Fitness had

brought out a passion in me. I can now continue to explore and pursue the many wonderful opportunities of life,” stated Constable.

For Sharon Constable, “The Next Hour” will be tackled by a person who truly will never be told “You can’t.” In “The Next Hour” each one of us can take a close look at the obstacles we place in front of ourselves. For one hour, share Sharon’s attitude. Watch what happens.

If you would like to contact Sharon, she can be reached at sharonconstable@telus.net.

This article is reprinted with permission from Innovative Way, newsletter of Innovative Fitness Consultants Inc., January 2004.