



WELLfed

#LearnerStory



Senia

A remarkable change

Senia is a 50-year-old Pacific woman, living in Porirua with her husband and 10-year old son. Other members of her family, including her adult daughter and her mother, live close by. The last time Senia worked was 24 years ago, since then she's been living on benefits. Six months ago, she weighed 260kg, had been diagnosed with Type II diabetes requiring insulin, and only left the house to do the shopping. Her husband did the cleaning; she had lost all motivation and lay on the sofa all day.

At the encouragement of her husband, she had started small walks, just to the end of the road initially. One day her husband had friends around, and she heard them talking about WELLfed. That was the motivation that she needed to sign up – she wanted to make sure she got on the waiting list before they did!

Senia has now completed two terms at WELLfed – and is a different person. She has lost 130kg, she has a part-time cleaning job, and is hoping to work full time. She is cooking healthier food, and enjoys salads, as well as lower-fat meals compared to what she used to eat. She has restricted her smoking to three cigarettes a day, whereas she used to use up to a whole pack of tobacco each day.

The incredible effect is not just restricted to Senia. Her son, although he doesn't yet enjoy them, eats his salads. Importantly, he used to say that his aim was to get a good schooling then go on benefits. Seeing the change in Senia, he is now aiming to get a job when he leaves school. Her husband initially didn't like the WELLfed meals, but one particular hit was the coconut curry that she took home recently – the taste reminded him of Pacific food that he is used to, but Senia admitted it is much healthier than what she used to cook. Senia's new favourite food is WELLfed coleslaw.



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Senia describes an increase in self-confidence that she has got from losing weight. She said that previously she would not have had the confidence to come to talk with me, but she came looking lovely, and chatted easily. She got the job that she currently has by asking a local outlet if they had cleaning work available – again, a real show of new-found self-confidence.

Another change is in her shopping. Previously, as she could not walk to the bus-stop, she would get a taxi, so had to forgo some items to afford the taxi home. With her walking increasing, she can go to and from the shop by bus, so this is now no longer an issue, meaning that she has more to spend on food.

Senia is benefiting from a number of the life skills courses offered at WELLfed. She is about to sit her learner's driver's licence, and has signed up for a CV writing course at WELLfed to assist in her goal of working full time. Her story is incredible, and I was honoured that she shared it with me, in the aim of inspiring others.