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Winthrop Student Appears on Today Show to Tell of 168-Pound Loss

Winthrop University

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Winthrop Student Appears on Today Show to Tell of 168-Pound Loss

Quick Facts

- Now a sophomore, the healthcare management major appeared on national television this week to talk about how she lost 168 pounds “the right way.”
- She told the Today show hosts about how her hypothyroidism drastically slowed her metabolism, and she saw her weight increase to more than 300 pounds on her 5 foot, 7 inch frame.



Before/After shots of Chandler Cunningham

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – **Chandler Cunningham** arrived at Winthrop University from Anderson, South Carolina, as a freshman ready to live a new, slimmed-down life.

Now a sophomore, the healthcare management major appeared on national television this week to talk about how she lost 168 pounds “the right way.”

She told the **Today show** hosts about how her hypothyroidism played a major role in her weight gain as a child. It drastically slowed her metabolism and she saw her weight increase to more than 300 pounds on her 5 foot, 7 inch frame.

She credited her psychologist, Dr. Cara Reeves, of the “**New Impact**” program with the **Greenville Health System** for helping her lose weight, along with other team members, a nutritionist and pediatrician. “My doctor tried to discover why I gained weight,” Cunningham said. “I learned that I keep things in. I credit her a lot with my success.”

Cunningham said during the **Today show’s Joy Fit Club segment** that she lost the weight over two years, beginning when she was 16. ([See the video here](#)) She counted calories and restricted her diet to 1,600 calories a day and then further reduced it to 1,200. She also exercised five to six times a week, mostly walking and other cardio fitness.

She showed off her trim figure on the show by wearing the maid of honor gown she wore in her sister’s wedding in May. Her mother accompanied her to New York City for the show and a weekend in the Big Apple.

Her slimmed-body required some adjustments along the way, particularly to get rid of the skin excess. Cunningham has had two different skin removal surgeries – the first one removed seven pounds of skin from her abdomen and back.

By the time Cunningham was ready to attend college, she had dropped from 309 pounds to 141 pounds. “I didn’t even recognize her,” said **Sonya Trujillo**, who vaguely knew Cunningham in the Anderson schools but has since become her best friend at Winthrop.

Trujillo is very proud of her friend’s hard work, her words of encouragement for others and her new-found discipline. “I’ve watched her gain confidence,” Trujillo said of her friend.

At first Cunningham said she was reluctant to share her story. "I want to tell others they can do anything with hard work and determination."

She continues to stick to a **healthy diet**, such as tuna, grilled meats, fish, turkey, veggie burgers and other nutritious foods. She substitutes spaghetti squash for pasta, uses powdered peanut butter and drinks black coffee with no syrup or with sugar-free syrup and non-fat milk. "I'm pretty good at counting calories and can do it off the top of my head," Cunningham said.

Her goal at this point is to use her experience with weight loss in finding a job to help children with their fitness. "I love health care and this is a good fit for me," she said.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or longshawj@winthrop.edu.

[\[Back to Previous Page\]](#)

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Alumni & Friends	Directions	Employment	Library	Records & Registration	Visit the Campus
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