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**DEAR DEIDRE**



# The weigh team

By SHARON HENDRY

Published: Today

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**MEET** the incredible team who prove that Georgia Davis's amazing weight loss is down to more than just a crash diet.

Yesterday we told how the schoolgirl has lost an incredible **12 STONE** in seven months at Wellspring, the world's leading weight loss academy.

Today we show you how you can also fight the flab no matter how big you are or how many Easter eggs you munched.



Result ... Georgia Davis has lost 12 stone  
Marc Giddings



Before ... Georgia tipped the scales at 33st aged 15

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Georgia, 16, checked in last summer after tipping the scales at 33st aged 15.

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Doctors gave her an ultimatum: Lose 20st or die. After securing a year's scholarship at the US camp in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, a team of experts were on hand to welcome her.

The Wellspring programme, which costs £4,200 per month, puts its success down to a strict routine combined with behavioural therapy.

Students wake at 6.30am and do a games warm-up between 7am and 8am that includes basketball, hockey, soccer and American football.

After a low-fat breakfast, school lessons run from 9am to 3pm. There is another games session until 5pm, then a healthy evening meal. There is a final activity session from 6.30pm to 8pm then more study until 10pm, when lights go out.

Sessions with behavioural coaches also help children understand the causes of their obesity — and tackle it.

Wellspring employs 40 staff who help to look after 45 students aged between 11 and 18. Georgia's treatment also involves weekly telephone sessions with her mum Lesley, 54.

Lesley also struggles with a weight problem and must learn to adapt to Georgia's new healthy lifestyle when she returns home.

Here, we introduce some of the experts behind Georgia's success. They say that if she continues making progress at the Academy she could reach her target weight of 11st by June 2010.

**SUSAN BORGMAN, 46, behavioural coach says:** "Georgia and all children who are overweight have experienced a lot of failure and feel overwhelmed by the problem of obesity.

"Georgia felt that coming to Wellspring was her last hope but she saw it as an opportunity she was going to get the most out of.

"The children here are immediately immersed in good habits. They start the day with exercise and a healthy breakfast.

"It's a positive atmosphere and they start to feel energised, so their depression begins to lift.

"I began to work with Georgia trying to address the root cause of her eating disorder.

"She has a tendency to be a real black-and-white thinker and anything in between sends her into a panic.

"There had been a lot of criticism of her mother and her attitude to Georgia's problem which had made Georgia very upset over the years.

"One of the main things we have showed Georgia is how to break down big problems into smaller, more manageable steps.

"Georgia has quite a way to go in terms of being able to manage all those anxiety triggers but by the time she leaves here at a healthy weight we will have a plan for every contingency."



Help ... behavioural coach Susan Borgman

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## Top tips

1. You can't have positive results without a positive attitude.
2. Move to lose. Eating a low fat diet is critical but moving is essential for a positive mental attitude. Get a pedometer, get it on and walk 10,000 steps per day.

**JOHN TAYLOR, 29, physical trainer says:** "The first thing I do is give the kids an assessment. In Georgia's case we had to factor in the fact she had Type 2 diabetes and a knee which was prone to dislocating.

"I had to increase her mobility without causing her pain.



What she ate ... Georgia's diet before

teach team building skills."

"Our goal is for kids to be walking 10,000 steps per day. At first we just had Georgia walking around the room for five minutes.

"Then we got her up to 30 minutes without stopping, then finally onto a treadmill where we increased the intensity to 2mph. Eventually, Georgia added the cross-trainer to her workout and now does 140 strides per minute for 30 minutes.

"The worst thing I could do would be to make it boot camp-style. These kids are not going to exercise like that when they leave, and the idea is to get them to enjoy exercise so they do it for the rest of their lives.

"Weight training is also essential for building muscle tone. Finally, we use sports like football and basketball to

## Top tips

1. Get your child moving – a lot of excess weight comes from being sedentary. Aim for 10,000 steps per day.
2. You are your child's best role model. You can't tell your child to walk 10,000 steps if you are watching TV. Get out there and join in.

**JEAN LEONARD, 42, cook manager says:** "The food I cook has to take into account Wellspring's unique weight loss approach.

"The children are allowed up to 1,500 calories and 12g of fat per day in served or what we call 'controlled foods'.

"These are made up of things like low-fat lasagne, buffalo meat, cooked and grilled chicken and even pizza made with pitta bread and low-fat cheese.

"Then the students can fill themselves up on as much 'uncontrolled' food as they like. This is made up of salad, vegetables and fruit. They must write all their meal choices down each day in a food diary.

"We try to copy the look and feel of food the children love. And they learn how to cook it so that when they go home they will practise different cooking methods with their parents baking and grilling instead of frying.

"Georgia was one of our biggest students but she quickly got to grips with healthy eating. Now her favourite foods are bagels, buffalo burgers, baked potatoes and chicken fingers."



What Georgia eats now ... healthy options

## Top tips

**1. Write it down. Self-monitoring your food intake by keeping a diary and then assessing it at the end of each day or week is key.**

**2. Keep having fun. If you are going out with friends to the cinema don't worry about feeling hungry but avoid the junk food by snacking at home in advance.**

**DREW BECK, 23, resident adviser says:** "Mine is the role of a surrogate parent. It's my responsibility to resolve any conflicts between the students and help them adjust to being away from home. Georgia has a positive attitude. We've never heard her complain."

**MARY VALENTINE, 23, resident adviser says:** "Georgia is super-motivated and really happy to be here. It's our job to listen to them and motivate them. I talk a lot with Georgia about how she will be able to maintain this lifestyle."

Advertisement

**SARAH BOULAY, 23, head resident adviser says:** "When I first met Georgia she had trouble even walking. Now she has me sweating during a tennis match."

**JEFF RICE, 44, programme director says:** "I'm responsible for overseeing all the activities and making sure each student walks 10,000 steps per day. Georgia is now self-motivated."

**BILLY PORTER, 40, academic director says:** "When she arrived she was operating on a low cognitive level and had problems with classifying information. She felt she wasn't cared for in her old academic environment but has advanced hugely."

**RACHAEL GORDON, 25, programme supervisor says:** "It's my job to help her fill her free time."

**JOHN GORDON, 45,** is chief marketing and business development officer, **KRISTIN GROCE, 30,** is the financial manager.

- Georgia's Story: 33 Stone at 15 is on BBC1 at 10.35pm on April 21.

For further information and advice on eating disorders go to [bbc.co.uk/headroom](http://bbc.co.uk/headroom)

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