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FEATURE FRIDAYS: Carrie Swidecki



This weekend an unusual athlete shoots for an unusual athletic record.

Carrie Swidecki's story starts like too many Americans of this era. She quickly put on pounds, to the point of obesity, in her twenties. But today, in her mid-thirties she is not only active and back to normal, healthy weight, she is an icon for teens and young people struggling with obesity and the depression that leads them down the road of inactivity and overeating.

Carrie's chosen path has also been a fun one.....she's the Queen of Dance Dance Revolution. And this weekend Carrie heads for the record books with new endurance feats on more than one dance video game. Now this is a sporting event worth following. Dance on, Carrie!! We here at Xtreme Dream Central are rooting for you!!"

-Diana

ARCHIVES

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Hi my name is [Carrie Swidecki](#) and I'm a 36 year old 2nd grade teacher from Bakersfield, CA. 13 years ago, I was 210 pounds, plus size 18-20, and living my life in the past. Within 6 years from graduating from high school I gained 90 pounds and went from being a 120 pound athlete to being obese. In the summer of 2000 I discovered Dance Dance Revolution, lost 75 pounds, [set 3 World Records](#), and became an advocate to fight childhood obesity in the school systems. On June 15, 2013 at Otto's Video Games and More in Bakersfield, CA, I'll be setting the Guinness Book of World Records for both the Longest Marathon on a Motion-Sensing Dance Game and Longest Marathon on a Dance/Rhythm Game at the same time, by dancing 48 hours on Just Dance 4 using the Xbox Kinect. I'll make history by becoming the only person in the World to set a World Record for marathon play on all three major dance games Just Dance, Dance Central, and Dance Dance Revolution, all to bring awareness to a fun and effective way to fight obesity for all ages! I am the only female to have held any dance video game marathon records, as well as the only person to hold both sub categories for dance video game marathon World Records at the same time: The Longest Marathon on a Motion-Sensing Dance Game and Longest Marathon on a Dance/Rhythm Game.



Given all you've learned and experienced, what's your philosophy of life?

The last 13 years, I beat the odds of being a female gamer, obese, and aging in the process to set 3 World Records in the gaming industry which

is dominated by men and the youth. Over coming these obstacles taught me to appreciate life and have think skin. I never take anything for granted, I embrace each moment, and I'm very thankful to have a second chance to live life to the fullest. Obesity is one of the hardest things I've had to overcome. I've been fighting my weight since I was 18 years old and now I'm 36. That's half my life. As I aged in the arcade chasing everyone around me got younger. Everyday I could see the physical difference and felt the pressure to quit the thing I love most in this world, exergaming. I tried retire twice from my passion. When I turned 30, I quit for 3 months and I was unhappy, so I came back even stronger. Then in 2009, I went to my 1st Dance Dance Revolution US Championship Qualifying Round in Las Vegas, NV and I took my dad, because I was going to retire at 33. I remember my dad told me, "You love this why would you quit. Who cares what people think, it's your life, and dreams." It took me 9 years to learn that you can't let others dictate your life, you are the navigator of your dreams, and you have to follow your heart.

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Walk us through your typical day, what are your favorite routines?

I work full time as a 2nd grade teacher and train full time for my sport of exergaming. My day starts at 5:30 in the morning where I alternate between powerwalking, jogging, or speed jump roping a couple days a week. Then I go to work and teach 2nd grade at Sandrini Elementary School. My greatest accomplishment is being able to integrate my love for exergaming into my 2nd grade classroom to fight childhood obesity in the school systems.

The last 2 years I have used exergaming in my classroom for PE. I wrote 4 grants through Donorschoose.org to get the equipment. I have also had the pleasure of setting my 1st World Record at the [US Obesity Prevention Summit](#) in West Virginia in July of 2011. Starting December 2012, I began piloting the President's Challenge program at my school site for the after school program, exclusively using Just Dance 4 which has 95 2nd-6th grade students which I volunteered 5 hours a week to run. Then I come home, love my cats, and eat a healthy dinner. Next I'm off to exergame 4-5 hours in the evening as I prepare for my upcoming 48 hour World Record attempt on Just Dance 4 to fight Childhood obesity in the schools. I come home and the cycle starts all over again the next day.





When thinking about the traits that have made you successful, fulfilled, which one do you credit the most?

I truly believe that one person can make a difference in this world and I live my life by this. Daily I see the impact that my story, my actions of using exergaming in my classroom, and setting World Records has at a local level. Everytime I set a World Record it opens the door for more schools to include exergaming in their physical education programs as a way to fight childhood obesity. People have come up to me and tell me that my story has inspired them to use video games to get fit. One lady lost 20 pounds. Teachers throughout my district who had never thought about incorporating exergaming in their classrooms, are now using it for PE. Finally, I have parents telling me that their child was so excited about playing Just Dance at school, that they bought it at home, and get fit as a family. Seeing all these positive results at a local level is what keeps me going. I hope to get the dialogue started at a national level with using motion-sensing dance games, like Just Dance as a way to fight obesity for all ages.



Who was the most influential person in your life and did he/she instill that singular trait in you?

My parents and my cross country running coach from high school have had great influence on me. My parents were very hard workers. I saw them work over time and give up their dreams, so my siblings and I could have opportunities they never had. They install a work ethic in me at a young age and I'm thankful for that. In 1984, my parents took us to the Los Angeles Olympics to watch the women's track and field. I fell in love with running and tried out for my school track team starting in 4th grade and never made the team. I was too slow and always took last place. In Junior high I would make the cross country team, but I still took last place in every race. I would continue to run cross country in high school as well as take last place in every race. I remember my coach would tell me before and after each race, "it doesn't matter what place you finish at, but that you finish the race, and that you enjoy running." Senior year I won the Female Cross Country Award. Typically this award goes to the fastest senior female on the team, but I was the slowest all four years. My coach said I deserved it, because I never gave up. After coming in last place at a race, I would be the first person to show up for

practice. He said I had determination and heart, and that's what counts. I still run today and I think about what my coach taught me. Go out and have fun. The only person I'm racing against is myself and it doesn't matter what my time is, but that I finish the race.

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What have you gained from life's disappointments that you otherwise would not have?

The first time I played Dance Dance Revolution I fell in love with it and I didn't think anyone was watching me play. I quickly died after 10 steps and someone shouted "You Suck"! Those words and that moment left an everlasting impression on me. It challenged me and I became determined to master the game. I remember I went home and I looked in the mirror. I was 210 pounds and I didn't recognize the reflection in front of me anymore. I thought about all the awards I had won in the past and I told myself, "I'm going to do this, I'm going to beat this game, and be a champion." This is the moment I decided to fight back and stand up for myself. Sometimes it takes a negative incident to wake up. That moment gave me a goal to work towards. I dreamed of placing 3rd place in a local tournament and working hard all those years to achieve that goal, I lost 75 pounds. It took me 9 years to finally achieve that dream of taking 3rd place and in the process it changed my life. As I gained strength and confidence my dreams changed and I wanted to use my story and passion for exergaming to inspire those struggling with their weight and bring awareness to using exergaming in the schools as a way to fight childhood obesity. I hope to show that when you find something you love and work hard, you can achieve anything in this world. Never give up on your dreams and the fight to overcome obesity.

We all experience fear or uncertainty, how do you conquer those feelings?

I'm a 36 year old female that has been through it all. Very few things intimidate me. I rather live my life knowing that I tried something, then live my life in doubt, and never knowing what could of been.



When you're not devoting time to doing what you're friends and family know you for, what would people be surprised to learn you like to do?

As I gained strength and coincidence my dreams change. I dream of one day being a professional exergamer. I hope that once the public realizes how much strength and endurance it takes to exergame, they will recognize it as an official sport. Then my life will be complete and I will have come to a full circle from being once obese. I will be an athlete again for the sport of exergaming.

You can follow Carrie as she makes her attempt at the record books on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)!

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If you liked this Feature Friday interview, "Like" it and share it with your friends! Leave Carrie a comment or ask a question below.

Onward!

P.S. Have you signed up for my 7 Day Reboot? Hop in! It's Free!

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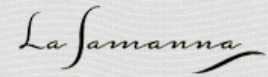
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