

Dance Your Ass Off: After the Music Stops

Imagine losing 90 pounds in just three months. Now imagine doing it on national television. That's what West Hollywood local Michael Brooks did during his sassy stay on the hit Oxygen reality show *Dance Your Ass Off*.

But what happens when the dancing stops?

Nearly five years after his time on the show, the third-place fan favorite reflects on the challenges of keeping the weight off and the struggles of adjusting to life back in the real world.

During filming, Brooks was locked away in a Hollywood Hills mansion with no contact to the outside world, and was placed on a strict schedule of fitness and dieting under close supervision by the show's personal trainers and coaches. Brooks cites such a controlled environment as not only a big reason for his success, but also a big challenge when it came to keeping the weight off after the show.

"Back in the real world, everything is a temptation," says Brooks. "You have to constantly remind yourself of where you were and fight those temptations on a daily basis."

He pauses, and then changes his tone as if revealing a secret. "And sometimes," he whispers in his trademark Southern twang, "sometimes, you give in to those temptations."

Brooks always knew the journey would be long and difficult, during both the show and the maintenance afterward. Although he has no regrets about being a cast member, he does wish there had been some sort of post-show guidance provided on how to adjust to his new lifestyle outside the mansion walls.

"They drop you off, honey, and they call you a week later to check on you," says Brooks. And that's it.

"For people who do reality shows where you're literally separated from the outside world, they really need to have more of a transition back into that environment. That would be my only regret," he said. "Or maybe that's more of a concern."

Despite the challenges, Brooks has been able to keep off much of the weight he lost. He succeeded in part by becoming certified as a personal trainer in 2011, and hopes to share the secrets of his success with those who don't have the luxury of an intense team of trainers watching over them 24/7.

Brooks says that one of the most important lessons he learned is that sometimes, in order to see a problem properly, you have to take a step back and be separated from your normal life.

"In order to repair yourself, you literally have to tear yourself down and build yourself back up again," Brooks shares. "And the outcome will always be much better on the other side than the stagnant spot you're stuck in at the moment."