

BARIATRIC PATIENT THANKS DR. MAREMA FOR CHANGING HER LIFE, STILL KEEPING HER WEIGHT OFF AFTER 18 YEARS

by JENNIFER JAMACK



About Dr. Marema and the Flagler Hospital Bariatric Surgery Center

Dr. Marema is one of the most respected surgeons in bariatric medicine. He is nationally recognized as a leader in treating obesity and has performed over 10,000 bariatric procedures. Dr. Marema has transformed the lives of thousands of patients through bariatric surgery and is also a successful bariatric patient himself. The Flagler Hospital Bariatric Surgery Center works closely with our patients to provide a seamless surgical and follow-up experience. Our patients are truly our #1 priority. This fully comprehensive program includes access to Nutritionists, Exercise Physiologists, Psychologists and spiritual and emotional support groups. Our program specialists can help you determine if surgery is right for you and which procedure best fits your needs. Flagler Hospital understands that each component of the program is vital to your post-operative success, and each patient would have a custom-fit to their treatment plan based on their own bariatric needs. There are several options to choose from such as Gastric Bypass, Sleeve Gastrectomy and the Reshape gastric balloon. ReShape is an FDA approved non-surgical weight loss procedure for patients with a lower BMI (between 30-40). ReShape may be a good option for people who do not qualify or do not want surgery.

To learn more about the different options the Flagler Hospital Bariatric Surgery Center has to offer, please visit: <https://www.flaglerhospital.org/Medical-Services/Medical-Weight-Loss/About-Our-Center.aspx>, or register for a free weight loss seminar here: <https://www.flaglerhospital.org/Medical-Services/Medical-Weight-Loss/Informational-Sessions-and-Videos.aspx>. Our Bariatric Coordinator Lisa Easterling is also available to answer any additional questions at (904)-819-4675.

Maggie Dominguez had been heavy her entire life. Although growing up as an athlete and very active girl, she had issues gaining weight quickly. Her sister seemed to be able to eat whatever she wanted and never gain a pound, but Maggie progressively found herself gaining weight over time. Although she was heavier, she always had high-self-esteem and felt good about herself. She truly loved who she was, and her life at home revolved a lot around tasty Cuban bread, baking with her family, and the love of Latin food. It was a staple in her house to eat and enjoy good company.

One day Maggie's outlook on life changed. Her grandfather was severely ill and he pulled Maggie aside one day to have a private conversation. He mentioned how he was concerned with Maggie's health, and made her promise to take care of herself so that if anything happened to him, she would be around to take care of her grandmother. Something changed inside Maggie that day. She knew she needed to try and lose weight if her grandfather was concerned about her health.

In the year 2000, at 350 lbs, with a morbidly obese BMI, Maggie started researching Bariatric surgery and that research led her to Holy Cross Hospital where Dr. Marema was practicing at the time. Maggie had met with multiple doctors to try to find someone who made her feel comfortable and at ease about this life-altering decision. She was not having any luck finding a surgeon who matched with her personality, and was beginning to get frustrated. However, when she made an appointment to meet with Dr. Marema everything finally made sense.

"One thing that stuck out to me was when Dr. Marema said: 'This is not the easy way out. It will be really hard, but I'm telling you if you stick to the plan and follow the instructions, you won't regret it,'" Maggie shares. "I felt like there were no surprises, and that Dr. Marema was genuinely



honest throughout this whole process."

Maggie decided that Bariatric Surgery was the right decision. Before the surgery, she attended multiple sessions at the support group to fully comprehend the process and see what triggers other patients had around food. At this point, Maggie was "all-in" and had attended her pre-op appointments with her mother, who was extremely concerned about the bariatric surgery process. Maggie mentioned how attentive Dr. Marema was toward her mother's questions, and made her feel more at ease with his transparency about the surgery and what challenges her daughter would go through during the journey. After being presented with a few surgical options, Maggie chose to do a complete Gastric Bypass with an incision that followed all the way to her belly button.

On July 1st, 2000 Maggie had the Gastric Bypass procedure. She knew that this was a life-altering decision and that she would have to be very strict and listen to everything Dr. Marema had to say. She noted that after surgery she diligently took her vitamins, ate the right foods, and focused on the end goal, her health. She knew there were going to be challenges, as some patients experience lightheadedness and weakness with rapid weight loss and can encounter sickness from eating trigger foods. "I didn't realize that my whole life revolved around food, family and cooking. I had to adjust so many things right off the bat to ensure that I was able to commit myself 100% to the program."

"I remember going shopping one day at Lane Bryant because I was losing weight rapidly, and I started crying. I called my sister and told her that nothing in the store fit, and that I had no clue where to shop. I was always

shopping in plus size stores, and for the first time, I was finally able to go into a regular store. It was a monumental, yet emotional moment for me." My sister was ecstatic on the other end of the line, and said she would be right up to meet me at the mall and take me shopping. "It's moments like that, that still stand out to me till this day. For a while I felt like I completely lost my identity and who I was. What I saw in the mirror was still this girl, who was heavy, and even at an average size 8 and still maintaining her weight around 140 lbs., I felt like I was still the fat girl I always was. I had a hard time adjusting to the extra

attention I was getting from people, and saw myself becoming extremely shy towards others as time went by. It was and still is really hard for me to take any compliments, even though I am now able to wear the same size clothes as my sister."

Maggie shared with me the challenging, yet rewarding journey that has been the last

18 years post bariatric surgery, and how much of an impact Dr. Marema has made on her life. Since she was full-on committed to change, she abided by the rules, and explained how she can still hear Dr. Marema's voice 18 years later warning her "not to graze or snack too much." She also remembers how genuine, honest, and caring he was throughout the whole process. "I am so thankful for Dr. Marema, he truly changed my life. I wanted to also extend my support to those who are going through a similar journey, and express how important it is to follow the doctor's instructions after surgery to make sure you're able to keep the weight off for good. Food is still the center of everything I do, but I just had to figure out what the new normal was."

