

We changed our

FOR THE BETTER

Whether it's a new job, a new body or a whole new life, three readers reveal how to achieve your dreams

'I've moved 3,000 miles to get married'

Karen Caspian, 40, moved from London to New York after meeting her fiancé Neil online

This time last year, if someone had told me I'd be engaged to the love of my life I would have said you were mad.

Just before Christmas 2009 I'd split up with my boyfriend of seven years. At 40, I wanted to get married and have a baby but my partner didn't so I made the painful decision to call it a day.

A few weeks later, I was having lunch with a friend. 'I need a change of scenery,' I said. She

told me about a dating website called www.iloveyouraccent.com, where I could meet single men in America. I logged on last May and never looked back.

The first person to reply was Neil, a divorcee from New York. Soon we were emailing up to 10 times a day. We'd talk about his new restaurant business and I told him how I was looking forward to time off from my management consultancy job the following week. On my week off, my phone rang and it was Neil. 'I'm in London and I'd love



Karen and Neil are now planning their wedding

to see you,' he said. I couldn't believe it! He'd needed to come to the UK for work but had timed it so he could see me. We arranged to meet for lunch.

I was so nervous but I needn't have worried. I really fancied him and discovered we liked the same kinds of food and laughed at the same things. When he had to leave for his meeting, he

kissed me goodbye and we arranged to meet the next day.

On our third day together, Neil said, 'I think I'm falling in love with you.' I was also smitten, but didn't know if I was on the rebound. Yet when Neil flew back to the US a few days later, I cried. He called me and said, 'Why don't you come to



Claire and baby Grace

'I swapped careers and never looked back'

Claire Wood, 45, lives in London with her partner, Kim Hamson, 46, and daughters Alice, 16, and Olivia, 14

Grabbing my hand, my best friend Jo whispered, 'I couldn't have coped without you.'

As I glanced at the baby she was cradling – the tiny person I'd helped bring into this world – it was also a special moment for me.

Had I not given up my advertising career and retrained as a midwife

four years before, I wouldn't have been able to deliver Grace.

I was heavily pregnant myself when I decided on a career switch. Sitting in a business meeting listening to the men around me argue over something trivial, I realised I wanted to do something more meaningful with my life.



Claire now has her dream job

I carried on working part-time in advertising until my daughters Alice and Olivia were both at school. Then, aged 38, I enrolled at Thames Valley University.

It was nerve-wracking at first because it was such a far cry from the world I had come from. In my old job nobody died if I got something wrong. In my new role there was

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America?' It sounded crazy but the more I thought about it, the more I realised I had nothing to lose. So three days later, I resigned.

When I arrived at JFK airport in August I ran straight into Neil's arms.

Two weeks later we went for lunch and at the bottom of my glass was a diamond ring. I said yes immediately. We're now getting married in California on Valentine's Day.

There are days when I miss home and worry things have moved too quickly, but I love Neil and know this is where I'm meant to be.

● Go to www.iloveyouraccent.com for more details

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a very real chance that somebody could. Yet when I became a qualified midwife, I knew there was no other job for me. Although I regularly share this special moment with women, each one feels like a great privilege.

Every time I see Grace, I remember the moment I delivered her. It reminds me that all the hard work retraining was worth it.

NOW
She loves her new size 10 figure

'I've transformed my body forever'

Jan Smith, 42, was devastated when her husband and father of her three children walked out at the end of 2009, but she has now transformed herself

Last New Year's Eve my husband Stuart* and I were going to a friend's party. Then he dropped a bombshell - he was leaving me. Like most couples we argued about trivial things. But I never expected him to walk away.

I met Stuart when I was 17 and we have three children, Danielle, now 21, Lee, 20, and Jamie, 18.

I'd always been a size 12, which suited my 5ft 2in height. Then in November 1999, after suffering from painful endometriosis, I had a hysterectomy which went terribly wrong when the surgeon punctured my bladder. I had to have corrective surgery and was sofa-bound for seven months. I went up to a size 20 and 13st. Over the next few years I continued to gain weight and lost my self-esteem. Stuart never mentioned my weight. I thought he loved me no matter how big I was.

Then during Christmas last year, he started going to lots of parties without me. It wasn't like him to leave me out. On Christmas Eve, he said he'd been called into work and didn't get home until 3.30am the next day. I put on a brave face for the children on Christmas Day but I knew something was wrong.

Then, on New Year's Eve, he began telling me how unhappy he was. I was shocked. We'd been together for 26 years. 'I can't live like this any more,' Stuart said. 'I think it's best I go.'

As I watched him pack, I couldn't stop crying. Telling the children was the hardest



BEFORE
Jan was a size 20 last year

thing I've ever done. But realising my marriage was over, I decided to make some changes.

My daughter Danielle and I had discussed doing the Cambridge Weight Plan and now Stuart had left, I knew I had to sort my life out.

When I joined in January 2010 I was a size 20 and weighed 13st 12lb. I quickly replaced my breakfast, lunch and dinner with a Cambridge porridge, soup, shake or snack bar and made sure I drank at least two litres of water a day. In the first week I lost 7lb and then around 3lb a week.

After just six months I achieved my goal weight of 9½st and a size 10. It's too early to think about love but I've got much more confidence now and I'm in great shape to face the year ahead.

● Go to www.cambridgeweightplan.com for more information

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