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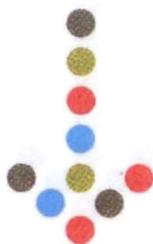
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“LIFE AFTER  
40—IT’S  
BEAUTIFUL,  
PEOPLE!”

REINVENT  
YOUR  
MIDDLE

# BORN-AGAIN BELLIES

Think you'll never get rid of your supersize tummy? Each of these five California women succeeded in reshaping her shape ▶ by Shelley Levitt



**MIMI FLEISCHMAN**  
AGE 60

LOS ANGELES // Exercise studio owner

**What made the difference**  
TAKING, THEN TEACHING,  
EXERCISE CLASSES

IN 8 WEEKS

4 INCHES  
LOST FROM WAIST

6 DAYS A WEEK  
OF EXERCISE

**MIDRIFF HISTORY**

My waist was never tiny. My older sister, Burr, was the super-slim one, and when I wanted to borrow clothes from her as a teenager she'd yell, "No, you'll stretch them out!" Still, the size of my waist never got in the way of my feeling attractive.

At 29, I got married for the first time, to the late anti-war activist Jerry Rubin, and we started a business hosting parties at nightclubs. I never exercised; instead I wore high heels and drank at clubs like Studio 54, the Palladium, Limelight and Visage. That was my job: stilettos and cocktails.

**BELLY FLOP**

When I hit my fifties and went through menopause, I started putting on pounds. My waist was no longer just wide; now I was chunky in the middle, like my plump

little grandmother who I used to watch struggling to pull on a girdle.

What happens when you become thick in that post-menopausal way is that you look less elegant and less interesting, and eyeballs slide right past you. You stop getting the special things in life that come with being a feminine woman. I experienced that as a loss.

**TUMMY TURNAROUND**

In the summer of 2002, I stayed in San Francisco with my sister Burr. She had opened a fitness studio called the Bar Method, and I took classes there six days a week. The exercises are ballet-based, with lots of standing moves at a bar—tucks and pliés and crunches. You work until your legs are shaking, your muscles are completely fatigued and you are at your absolute edge.

Now, I've always loved dance—I'd tried jazz, ballet and modern—but I always dropped out after just a few classes. I'm a klutz when it comes to following choreography. But the movements in a Bar Method class are so teeny and precise I was able to follow them easily. I felt as graceful as a ballerina. Plus, the classes

require such intense focus they're like a meditation—but with an endorphin rush.

When I arrived in San Francisco, I weighed 165 pounds; by the time I left eight weeks later, I was down to 150. Back in Los Angeles, I opened up a Bar Method studio of my own in February 2003 and a second one two years after that. Now I teach three times a week, and I try to take classes on the days I'm not teaching.

**GUT CHECK**

My waist is 33 inches, which is still not so teeny, but my stomach has definition. I plan to stay this way; a lot of slender young women take Bar Method classes, including celebrities like Zooey Deschanel, Drew Barrymore and Denise Richards, and I need to have credibility when I teach. I go into that classroom as a 60-year-old, but a 60-year-old who feels really good about herself and who has reconnected with her femininity. »

REINVENT  
YOUR  
MIDDLE



**ROBERTA  
RICKS**  
AGE 57

GRANADA HILLS //  
Systems analyst

What made the difference  
BECOMING A DANCER AGAIN

IN 1 YEAR

4 PANT  
SIZES  
DROPPED



38 pounds lost

DANCE  
WORK-  
OUTS  
A WEEK  
ADDED » 3

**MIDRIFF HISTORY**

I had been dancing from the age of four. I went to New York's School of Performing Arts—the *Fame* school—and graduated with honors. I continued taking professional dance classes until I was 35, when I got completely wrapped up in work. Still, up until age 50 I maintained a typical dancer's body: tall and slender, with long arms and legs.

**BELLY FLOP**

Six years ago I took a new job in an office where people find many occasions to bring in tins of homemade macaroni and cheese, fudge brownies and the fixings for ice cream sundaes. My coworkers joke that everyone gains the freshman 15 pounds the first year they work here. I weighed 140 when I started, and four years later I woke up and I was 173 pounds and wearing size 18 pants with expandable waistlines. My awakening came when I walked into Wal-Mart one day and someone collecting donations asked me, "Are you pregnant?" I looked at him and said, "No, I'm just fat."

**TUMMY TURNAROUND**

One night around holiday time 2007, the E! channel showed a segment on

celebrity diets. They talked about a Los Angeles food delivery service called NutriFit. I thought, nothing ventured, nothing gained—or, in my case, no pounds lost—so I decided to call.

I ended up chatting with Jackie Keller, NutriFit's owner (and the author of *Body After Baby*), who really got what I was going through. I went over my budget, and it turned out that between buying groceries that I ended up tossing out because I'd been too tired to cook and the money I shelled out on last-minute fast food, I was spending almost as much as three meals a day from NutriFit would cost, about \$40 at the time. I loved the food—especially a tamale pie made with ground turkey—and I lost weight at a slow but steady clip of two to three pounds a month.

After six months on NutriFit, I'd hit a plateau. I weighed 160 pounds and my weight wasn't budging. I knew if I wanted to get past that plateau I needed to exercise. I've always hated gyms, so I went back to my first passion: dance. I'd go into my den, turn on some music and do the warm-up moves I did as a dancer and later as a dance teacher. They're called isolation exercises, and they're pretty rigorous. You stand still while you work only certain muscles, like moving the rib cage from side to side and back to back, and the same with the hips. It's a great way to slim the waist. After two to three months of doing the routine for an hour three times a week, I was down to 135 pounds.

These days I keep a small fridge under my desk, stocked with fruit, nuts and nonfat yogurt, and that's what I have as a snack, even when the rest of my office is celebrating with cake and cookies. And, happily, I'm not struggling. It was a real surprise to me, but after a few months of eating wholesome, healthy food, most other foods tasted too sweet, too salty or too fatty. My craving for sugary foods is completely gone.

**GUT CHECK**

Dance made such a big change in my life that I wanted to share it with other women, so I've begun teaching a weekly adult jazz class. My body is as toned as it was when I was 18. Best of all, I've reconnected with a part of me that was lost. Once a dancer always a dancer—I now know that this is who I am. 🍷



For "after" shots of these five success stories, go to [more.com/waist](http://more.com/waist).