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Paying It Forward

As a physician, a community leader, and an entrepreneur, **Dr. Janine Darby** strives to “leave this world better than when I met it.”

by **BILL DONAHUE**

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The pandemic has hit most Americans hard, even if the virus has not affected them directly. Many find themselves struggling with unwanted health issues—an increase in body weight, perhaps—brought on by stress, altered routines, and shifts in diet and exercise levels.

For anyone contending with similar struggles, Janine Darby, M.D., has a message: Positive change is within reach, even in a world beset by unprecedented disruption. Dr. Darby would know. Not only has she made a career out of prescribing positive change for others, but she also transformed her own life, both personally and professionally, by embracing the principles of reinvention.

Dr. Darby has earned the “superwoman” label, though she’s too modest to admit it. She is a family woman, first and foremost, the mother of four children and a wife who recently celebrated 25 years of marriage to her husband. As the owner and founder of Lifestyle Changes LLC, she helps patients improve their health through tailored weight management and concierge medical services. She is a tireless community leader and an advocate for underrepresented groups in need of having their voices heard. Most recently, she entered the political arena; her name is on the ballot this November, when she will vie for the position of township supervisor in Lower Providence.

“I’ve been busy,” says Dr. Darby matter-of-factly.

Winning and Losing

Prior to setting out on her own, Dr. Darby worked as a physician for some of the Philadelphia area's best-known healthcare organizations. When medicine began to feel "less about the quality of patient care and more about the quantity of patients," she realized it was time for a course correction.

Now, through Lifestyle Changes, she offers a personalized approach to helping patients, taking as much time as she needs to answer questions, provide guidance, and formulate treatment plans. She also helps people take an active role in optimizing their health by providing 24/7 access via a secure web portal. This feature enables patients to review their health history, schedule appointments, and request refills of medications, among other essential tasks.

Weight management is the beating heart of Lifestyle Changes. Dr. Darby's weight-management program empowers patients to choose from different tiers of service, depending on their unique needs and goals for the future. Her approach revolves around the so-called 3M's: mindset, meal planning, and movement.

"Mindset comes back to changing your relationship with food—mindful eating," she adds. "People need to have the right mindset so they can lose weight and maintain their results even when they leave my direct care. Meal planning means you're providing your body with the proper fuel it needs, while taking into consideration any underlying health issues. Movement refers to exercise, which is the engine behind weight loss. These are things we have to put into practice every day."

Dr. Darby's dual board certifications—family medicine and obesity medicine—equip her with a unique perspective. She also brings personal experience to the table. Her 2020 book, *Get Your Sexy Back: A Guide to Bouncing Back After Pregnancy*, details her own health struggles.

"After the birth of my fourth child, I gained a lot of weight and was depressed with how I looked," she says. "I'm 4'11", and I weighed almost as much as my husband, who is much taller. I needed to lose weight, but I also needed to regain my happiness. Within three to four months, I lost 30 pounds and regained the happiness I had lost. That experience helps me guide my patients on their weight-loss journey."

Under Dr. Darby's supervision, which combines comprehensive medical care with individualized attention, some patients have lost up to 50 pounds in less than six months, and more than 100 pounds within a year. Her patient base includes people of all ages and backgrounds, though most of her patients are women.

"In many families, women are the primary

In August 2020, Dr. Darby and her eldest daughter created the DEI Task Force for Methacton School District. Their goal: to eliminate discrimination and inequity in Methacton schools and the surrounding community. Dr. Darby now has her sights set on political office; she's on the ballot this November for township supervisor of Lower Providence.

caregivers," she says. "If you don't feel good about yourself or you don't have the energy, how can you take care of the rest of your life, including your family? That's why self-care is so important."

Unifier, Healer, Problem Solver

In her limited free time, Dr. Darby enjoys being with her family and honing her skills in the fine arts. She works in a variety of media—chalk, pencil, acrylics—though she prefers oil painting over all others. Another passion is DEI, an acronym for diversity, equity, and inclusion, referring to programs and policies designed to represent diverse groups in all aspects of life.

In August 2020, Dr. Darby and her eldest daughter, Chadé, were inspired by the ongoing unrest across the country, as well as their own personal experiences with racial prejudice. They promptly created the DEI Task Force for Methacton School District. Their goal: to address injustice by fostering acceptance, respect, and dignity, with particular focus on eliminating discrimination and inequity in Methacton schools and the surrounding community.

"For me, DEI is about solving a problem," she says. "We found a problem, so now how do we solve it? My vision is to live in a community that respects and encourages the capabilities of all individuals. The people who live here, work here, and go to school here—everyone—should have a sense of belonging."

The DEI Task Force has accomplished a great deal in a short time. For example, it raised enough money to fund two scholarships

for graduating seniors. It also compelled the school district to create the opportunity for a DEI director to ensure that all students have a voice.

Dr. Darby's work with the DEI Task Force drew the notice of State Rep. Joe Webster and Dr. Ashley Wilkerson of the Montgomery County Democratic Committee, both of whom encouraged Dr. Darby to run for office. She says she tried many ways to say no, "because there's always a thousand reasons not to do something." In the end, she saw it as a matter of personal responsibility.

"If not me, who?" she asks. "I am a unifier, a healer, a problem solver. I want to leave this world better than when I met it. If I can do one small thing to make my community better, I'm going to do it."

Dr. Darby credits her mother, an immigrant who was born in Liberia, Africa, for instilling in her "a superwoman mentality." She admits that at times her responsibilities and obligations seem almost overwhelming. With the support of her family and others close to her, she's confident she will not only accomplish her goals but also find new ways to "get in good trouble," in the words of the late U.S. Congressman John Lewis.

"When life seems overwhelming," she says, "I follow the same advice I give my patients: 'Listen to your body, get some rest, eat well.' Going forward, I want to continue growing my business, I want to help more patients lose weight and live more healthfully, and I want to help my community any way I can. Everything I do is about paying it forward." ■



To learn more about Dr. Darby and her comprehensive approach to weight management and concierge medical services, visit lifestylechangesllc.com, email info@lifestylechangesllc.com, or call (484) 685-0033.