

Darren hooked
'queen of excuses'
Sunny in for a
bootcamp



'MY BOYFRIEND CONTROLS WHAT I EAT'

Imagine if your partner asked you to step on the scales every night. Outrageous? Here, two women reveal what it's like to live with a 'weight watcher' who scrutinises every inch of their bodies

WORDS: ANNA MAGEE, CATHERINE GRAY PHOTOS: DANIEL WARD

SUNNY MORAN, 28, AN EVENTS MANAGER, HAS BEEN WITH DARREN BIRD, 34, A PROPERTY DEVELOPER, FOR FIVE YEARS.

'I wrestled with the zip, willing it to move. My friend's wedding was in an hour. I flopped on the bed and cried. "Go without me," I told my boyfriend. Darren sighed. "Sunny, I hate this, I can't take it any more. You used to show your curves; now you hide in smocks. You get undressed in the bathroom. I want the confident woman I met. You need to do something about your weight." He pushed an article about a weight-loss bootcamp towards me. "I'm paying for you to go here." He was clearly staging a weight intervention. 'Later, when I told my friends how relieved I was, they were sceptical. Surely I was offended? Surely I wanted Darren to whisk me away to Venice instead? No. Him taking control of my weight was just what I needed.

'When I met Darren, I was 11 and a half stone and 5ft 5in. He seemed happy with my curves. I was too. But soon decadent breakfasts and our ritual of "cooking date nights" led to an extra stone on my hips.

'I cherry-picked from several diets. Darren tried to get me to go running, but I was too embarrassed. I bought expensive workout gear, but refused to use it. I had countless exercise DVDs, but despite Darren's urging, they remained cellophaned. "You'll have no excuses at bootcamp," he said. He was right. I'm the queen of excuses.

'5.30am a fortnight later, one of the New You bootcamp staff was hammering on my door. My daily 10-hour exercise regime was beginning. I ran up almost vertical hills, crawled around in the mud, tackled an obstacle course and abseiled. Day three is nicknamed "tantrum" day – I couldn't get up ▶

stylist: Shaaron Luchnick. Hair and make-up: Marni Carter. Sunny wears: dress: Hobbs; coat: Miu Miu (both from Selfridges). Darren wears: shirt and trousers: both Daks; cardigan: Farah; shoes: Russell & Bromley.

"hell hill" so I got off my bike and chucked it on the floor. At night, when I phoned Darren, I was so tired I slurred my words, but the thought of dropping a dress size for him kept me going. I lost 10lb that week. When Darren saw me he gasped. The roundness had gone from my face and my jeans were now baggy.

'At home, I was greeted with a hamper. Darren had been noting down all the food I'd been eating at bootcamp and bought it all, chucking away all the temptation in our kitchen. He'd also bought me boxing gloves and a bike. I was touched he cared. 'Later, I got into a dress I hadn't worn for 18 months for a meal out. Darren said, "I'm really proud to be with you tonight." That made it all worthwhile.

'I'm now a size 10, and nine and a half stone. I've stuck to the eating plan and exercise six times a week. But Darren still has to be firm with me on the days when I just want to slob in front of the TV. And the whereabouts of the biscuit tin is a closely guarded secret. Some people might think he shouldn't have got involved, but if it wasn't for him, I'd still be miserable.'

For more details, see www.newyoubootcamp.com or call 0871 223 0066.

'OLIVER SAYS HE WOULD LOVE ME WHATEVER SHAPE I WAS, BUT I'M NOT SO SURE'

LOUISE VEALE, 42, AN ASSOCIATE COMPANY DIRECTOR, HAS BEEN WITH OLIVER, 41, AN IT CONSULTANT, FOR 14 YEARS. THEY HAVE TWO CHILDREN, CHARLIE, 10, AND ANNA, FOUR.

'About six months after Oliver and I met, I realised that his perception of my figure was more finely-tuned than any other man I'd dated. One night, when I was getting ready to go out he said, "You've got such a boyish figure and fewer curves than any of my exes – I find that a bit off-putting." It floored me. I'd never had a boyfriend comment so explicitly on my body before. But because Oli frequently complimented it too – my slim frame, my long legs – I told myself his honesty was positive. It showed how much he felt at ease with me. 'Over the years since, Oli's continued to keep tight tabs on my size. He notices when I put on weight before I do. I'm 5ft 10in and was a size 10 and 10 stone when we met and, although my weight

would fluctuate slightly, I'd never been much of a dieter (though I loved the gym). I'd like to think that first comment didn't affect me, but afterwards I made an effort to wear fewer "boyish" trousers and more dresses. It was often in the most intimate moments that Oliver commented on my weight – during sex or just as I got out of the shower. He'd say, "Ooh, you've put on a little weight." I'd step on the scales and he'd be right. Like most women, I gain weight after holidays or in winter when I've been overeating and not exercising. Like the time we spent Christmas with my sister in America, and did little more than eat and drink for two weeks. Back in London, I was putting on my jeans when Oliver said, "Your stomach's looser and your bum's bigger, isn't it?" Indeed, my usually flat belly was hanging over my jeans. Rather than be hurt, I thought, "If it's noticeable to him, it's probably noticeable to everyone. I need to do something about it." Oli's comments became my second conscience.

'We'd been together three years when I got pregnant – he noticed my weight gain after three weeks; before I even did a pregnancy test. Although Oli was supportive during the pregnancy, once I'd had our first child he told me that my baby-body wasn't appealing to him, especially my stretched belly. He was just being honest. Six years later, when I got pregnant with our second baby, I was almost 40 and put on weight quicker than the first time. I was much more self-conscious and didn't enjoy my blooming baby body at all. A yoga class a week was all I could manage and knowing I wasn't as attractive to my husband didn't help matters. I was so pleased when I could get back to the gym.

'Oliver says he would love me whatever shape I was, but I'm not sure I believe him. I often wonder what would happen if I actually got fat. It's ironic because, while we've been together, he's gradually put on about three stone. At times I wish he would scrutinise himself as hard as he does me, even though I still fancy him – after all, I fell for his fantastic sense of humour, not his waist size. That said, I worry about Oli's health. His doctor says he has raised cholesterol, but he still refuses to exercise or change his eating habits. 'You might think it's strange that I stay with someone who's so watchful of my weight but, on a good day, I'm flattered by it. The fact he's so attuned to my body means he cares. His comments are never meant maliciously. But it can get boring to hear Oli saying things out loud



Oliver watches Louise's weight despite gaining three stone himself

that I already feel guilty about. Sometimes I skip the gym without telling to rebel. 'I've thought about Oli's reasons for taking such an interest in my weight, especially as he isn't interested in his own. Pride in the mother of his children being in shape is a big reason. For men, an attractive partner is a reflection of their success. It might look like I've given him power over my body, but for me the benefits of being a healthy size outweigh that. My only worry is how this will affect my children. Even now, my son is aware that slim is "good". If Oli starts taking an interest in my little girl's shape before she hits puberty, that will be a step too far – then I'd definitely intervene.'

Are these women kidding themselves that they're not living with body fascists? Or are their men simply showing how much they care about their health? Let us know at Talking Point on Graziadaily.co.uk.