

Top » Tara Martin proposing to Meegan Dowe in July 2011 during the Washington Warrior Dash in North Bend, Wash.

Centre » Dowe in September 2009 before her weight loss

Bottom » Martin and Dowe on July 26, 2011, the day they eloped

A WEIGHT-LOSS LOVE STORY

In February 2010, Tara Martin began blogging about her battle with obesity. Little did she know it would lead her to the love of her life. "If you'd told me that less than two years later I'd be living in Halifax and that I was going to fall in love, I would have said, 'Not a chance,'" recalls the 42-year-old runner, who was once 270 pounds. Also unexpected was that Martin would end a 10-year relationship with a man she'd been living with in Seattle for a fellow weight-loss blogger, a woman, 4,430 km away in Nova Scotia. But that's exactly what happened.

Martin started her blog, *Alifechangingjourney.com*, after following someone else's weight-loss journey online. "I thought, 'If he inspired me, someday, someone will look at my blog, and maybe I can inspire them too,'" she said. That winter, a comment on her site led her to the blog of a 33-year-old woman in Halifax, Meegan Dowe. At five-foot-six, 290 pounds, Dowe had also turned to running and working out in hopes of shedding weight. Like Martin, she was documenting her experience online. "It was funny, we almost simultaneously talked about the same thing on same day and used the same [type of] picture," Martin says. The two women connected on nearly everything. "A deep friendship began instantaneously," Martin recalls. "Because our blogs were so open, we were right there with each other. She was right there the first time I ran my first race, the first time I put on a size 12 pair of pants." A year went by, along with a flurry of Skype conversations and instant messages, bonding over the ups and downs of calorie counting and pushes to the finish line.

In April 2011, Dowe, who works at Dalhousie University, flew to Vancouver for a conference. Martin made the trip from Seattle so the two could finally meet. "We were just excited to high-five and work out together, it was going to be awesome," Martin says. They shared exercise tips and stories from their respective weight-loss journeys. "I said goodbye two days later and was like, 'Crap, I fell in love,'" Martin says. "I didn't have any expectations. But, it was just really important to me that she knew she was loved. When you've been overweight your whole life, you feel like no one is ever going to love you," Martin says, adding that when she told Dowe how she felt, she immediately ended the relationship she'd been in. As for Dowe, who'd always considered herself straight, meeting Tara raised a few questions in her mind. A trip to Seattle in July 2011 answered some of those questions.

"I just thought, 'If you get there and it doesn't feel right, don't do it,'" Dowe says. "But when I got there, all of the feelings just got bigger." During her visit, they did a Mud Run as part of the Ragnar Relay Series. "I had tied a ring inside my shorts, and I thought, 'If this ring is still there after this crazy race, then it's meant to be,'" Martin explains. At the end of the race, she scrambled to untie the ring, then, dropped to one knee and proposed. Dowe was shocked, but said 'Yes.' Two days later, the couple eloped and married in Vancouver. Now they're living together in Halifax – still running and blogging. "It all happened because we both made a decision to change our lives, get fitter and talk about it on the Internet," Dowe says. "It's been incredible. Completely unexpected, but in the best way."

