

## MEET THE BOSS: PAULA GALVAO

*Paula Galvão gives NOWinSA a lowdown on what it takes to manage and successfully run one of South Africa's leading wellness companies, now a hotspot for celebrity clientele*

By **Tankiso Komane** - November 30, 2018



### **WHEN YOU PRAY, ASK GOD TO GIVE YOU AN INVENTION THAT WILL IMPACT THE REST OF THE WORLD AND CHANGE HUNDREDS OF LIVES**

**Paula Galvão** is a registered pharmacist who turned her life around when she overcame her lifelong battle with obesity, before ultimately losing a whopping 58kg in just eight months. Her unbelievable, yet inspiring weight loss journey is what laid the foundation of [Eden Life Wellness Clinic](#) in Sandton, which she founded in 1995 with one goal in mind: to provide a personalized approach to weight loss with measurable, lasting outcomes.

As someone coming from an Italian-headed household where food was the focus of their family life, Galvão has dedicated her career life to researching how food could be used as medicine, and “combined with clinically tested herbal ingredients, how it can be best used to activate weight loss,” she says.

Her unique approach has not only made Eden Life Wellness Clinic a go-to place for those who have been battling with obesity, especially from childhood. Her 20 year plus experience in weight management holds the answer to the effectiveness of her programmes, which works by “addressing underlying biochemical reasons which cause people to either overeat or store every food they eat as fat.”

#### **FACT FILE**

- **Galvao battled with excess weight from the age of 5, eventually becoming an obese teenager obsessed with food.**
- **After graduating from high school, she enrolled for BSc studies at Wits University in 1989 with one thing in mind; to find a solution to her obesity.**
- **Her fate in weight loss management journey was sealed when she outshone her fellow students in her final year in 1992, which saw her being awarded the Adcock Ingram national award in excellence in pharmacy practice.**
- **A look into her jaw-dropping weight loss journey, which saw her go from a staggering 113kg to 55kg in just eight months is indicative of Eden Life’s weight loss programme efficacy, which has touched as many lives as far as London, America and several other parts of Europe.**

Galvão gives NOWinSA a lowdown on what it takes to manage and successfully run one of South Africa’s leading wellness companies, now a hotspot for [celebrity clientele](#), among them actor Tumisho Masha, TV personality Sandy Ehrenreich (previously Ngema) and Isidingo actor Robert Whitehead.

## **MEET THE BOSS**

### **Q. What drives you to do what you do?**

**A.** Let’s say you meet someone who happens to be an alcoholic or a drug addict, what human nature taught us is to immediately judge them. The same thing happens when you meet people that are overweight or bulimic. When you meet them, you know that they have a problem and they too assume that you know that they are likely impulsive eaters or there’s something that they are not doing right. So

they put up a front...well I know for myself. When I was overweight, not only was I aggressive, I was also an overachiever because I had to prove myself to people beyond what they were seeing.

It comes with a territory because people are forever judging you. And it's only after I lost the weight that I could be myself. The aggression, the anger just vanished because I was in a good place.

So losing weight is truly a life-changing experience for everyone. I think of many of my patients and how when they lose the weight, everything changes. Their careers, their social life, it all dramatically changes. It's a 180 turn you know and it's fulfilling to wake up every day and know that I have the opportunity to transform lives.

**Q. How has being overweight personally affected you?**

**A.** Overweight people face a lot of battles on a daily basis. For an example, [people that are overweight have a tough time getting hired](#) or even a simple thing as getting approved for a property rental. I recently saw a study which says [people who are overweight earn way less](#) than people who are just as qualified but are not overweight. When I graduated with a cum laude in BSc, I was weighing 130kg and I was turned down for a job because I did not fit the so-called corporate image. But as bad as that was, I am glad that it happened because I would not be doing what I do today.

**Q. What exactly was your turning point?**

**A.** Strangely, when I was overweight, I did not realize how bad it affected me or rather that I was actually overweight. It was only later when my husband showed me a picture of myself that I realized how big I actually was and said to him; 'why didn't you tell me that I was that overweight, what's wrong with you,' and he laughed. When people have these major body issues, they develop what is called body dysmorphic disorder. They don't see their body as it really is, but once they do, everything dramatically changes.





**Q. How did you find out that this is your calling?**

**A.** I remember when I was a little girl in church, my pastor once said, 'one thing you must ask God to do is to give you an invention that will impact lives.'

That was the message and I was 9 years old at the time. And when I got home, I said to God 'please give me something that will impact thousands of lives, something that will help people.' And now look what I'm doing today. People order my products from all over the world and I get testimonies of how it changed their lives every day of my life. Just the other day, I received an email from London from a lady who said her cousin bought her products from my clinic and that she lost about 45kg. In America alone, I have quite a few patients who have lost incredible amounts of weight using my products and it's an encouraging thing to hear.

**Q. In terms of product offering, what are some of the changes you've had to introduce over the years to remain competitive?**

**A.** As you know, a lot of our products come from China, but they are purified in the US, before coming to South Africa where we compound them. This, however, was becoming a problem due to the continuous depreciation of the Rand over the years, which resulted in our prizes getting higher and higher.

With this kind of pattern, you are bound to lose a big part of your market. To counteract that, we had to cut out the purification in the UK and do it locally.

So about a good 50% of our products have been able to bypass that purification process, which is good as it empowers South Africans with jobs. So our next goal will be to make the technology to purify all of our products, which is quite expensive available locally.

Besides, we are constantly on the edge of research to stay ahead of the competition. Remember, this for me is a passion, and so every night, when my daughter goes to bed,

I'm busy researching. You know, you can never really get 100% of the market exactly right. For an example, at one stage, we had an 80% success rate after having started at 75%. At the moment we are at 85%, which means there's 15% of people we are not helping, that we still have to research and find solutions for.

**Q. The South Africa's Medicine Control Council – now the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority – recently issued a stern warning to weight loss companies not complying with the guidelines. Where do you stand as a company in this instance?**

**A.** The new laws have completely changed which has been challenging, but we have now re-applied. Just last week, I received good news from the Medicine Control Council that by January next year, we should have a full approval like we did before. As an industry, it is essential that we are properly regulated in order to avoid chancers. As we speak, we have a lot of herbal products in the market that are rubbish. They say it's herbal but it's not, it's scheduled. As a wellness company, we take our job seriously and as such, ensuring complete safety for our patients comes first. You'll remember years back, when we were about 3 years in the business, we were part of an extensive investigation by Carte Blanche (a South African investigative TV series that airs on M-Net). They went through everything and we came back squeaky clean. Not only was this comforting for us, but also for our clients to know that we comply with clinical practice guidelines.

**Q: Your future goal as a wellness company?**

**A:** I see Eden Life with products manufactured completely in South Africa. I see our herbs produced and grown locally and then exported worldwide, resulting in total job creation turnaround. Product exportation is huge worldwide and South Africa has everything it needs to become market leaders, and completely revitalize our economy. As a company, I believe that we have a bigger role to play in that regard.

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**Tankiso Komane**

A Journalism graduate from the Tshwane University of Technology, Tankiso Komane has a vast experience in print & broadcast media business and has worked for some of the country's biggest daily newspapers, including The Sowetan, The Citizen, The Times, and The New Age. Through her varied work as a journalist, notably as a copywriter for SABC1 (On-Air promotions) and as a publicist for Onyx Communications, she has developed an in-depth understanding of the nature of the media business and how to use it for the purpose of exposure. Her expertise in journalism, coupled with a good reputation, is what laid the foundation of the business philosophy adapted by NowInSA, a subsidiary of LeisureNews Networks.

