

If you listen to syndicated morning show JohnJay & Rich on 104.7 KSS FM, you know that JohnJay Van Es is a little obsessed with health and fitness lately. This is not a new focus for the 43-year-old Valley native, who started a weight loss journey five years ago after his father died of a heart attack. Van Es' weight had climbed to 315 lbs. and he says, "When I was 300 lbs. I would lay on the floor—I was just a fat slob and I would try to get my kids to play on me so I didn't have to do anything."

BY WENDY RUBICAM  
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# Lossi

To 104.7 KSS FM's JohnJay Van Es, good health is no laughing matter. He talks about his weight loss, being in the public eye, and staying on top of his healthy lifestyle



# JohnJay Van Es

Syndicated Radio  
Show Host—  
JohnJay & Rich—  
104.7 KISS FM



**Status:** Married with 3 sons

**Age:** 43

**Height:** 6'4"

**Previous Weight:** 315 lbs.

**Current Weight:** 230 lbs.

**Typical Day of Food:** Breakfast—eggs or egg whites with salsa, veggie juice. Lunch—Starbuck's unsweetened iced green tea and protein box. After working out—all-natural protein shake, a handful of almonds. Dinner—healthy dinner cooked at home by his wife, or dinner out.

**Workouts:** Regular yoga sessions at Bikram Yoga Paradise Valley; Weight-lifting workout 3 times per week with Mitch Lewallen at Urban Garage Gym; sprints on the track and running the bleachers with his nephew who plays football for Brophy Prep.; cardio at the gym.

**Food Weakness:** "Oh my God. That could take up the whole magazine. I love Mexican food. I love Cuban food. I love kids' leftovers—macaroni & cheese, pizza. I tend to binge on healthy/unhealthy snacks like So Delicious Coconut Ice Cream. It's way better for you than anything else out there, but I could kill that by the gallon."

**Best Healthy Restaurant Food:** Zoe's Kitchen Protein Platter, Vietnamese wraps at Pei Wei, and anything at True Food Kitchen.

**Current Fitness Obsession:** Nike+ FuelBand. "It measures your fuel points—all of the energy, all of the exercise, anything you do, so it keeps me motivated." Tries for a crazy 5,000 points per day.

**What he listens to while working out:** His own radio show and KISS FM. "I get to critique and every time I hear my voice I cringe. Sometimes I'm so insecure when I listen and I'm like, 'How am I on the radio?'"

**Biggest Inspiration:** "It's all about my family. I'm tired by 5 o'clock in the afternoon, but I still have the energy to do what I have to do with these kids and it's a blast. They're having memories of their dad playing with them."

“I’m like, why **am I here?** I’m going to be the **first guy to die** in yoga. They’re going to **cart me away**, someone’s going to **have to call 911.**”

It was the thought of his three boys growing up without a father that gave Van Es the drive to lose 115 lbs. in a year and keep that weight off through various diet programs and consistent exercise. After his father’s death, Van Es had a thorough health check and then began Bikram yoga and working on his diet.

Because his life experiences play out in public every day, his use of the Smart for Life program and other diet and fitness trends has been shared with listeners across the country, and he says the constant exposure keeps him honest when it comes to his health. “Between the audience, seeing ourselves on TV, and all the stuff with social media right now—Twitter and Facebook—you’re definitely, definitely self-aware and want to make sure we are looking good and are in shape,” he explains.

When asked if he considers himself a health role model, Van Es says, “Wow, I never thought of it like that, but I know that I’ve met people who have changed their lifestyle because of listening to the radio.” He recalls meeting a listener at a Diamondbacks game who tearfully credited Van Es with inspiring him to beat a heroin addiction, and others who have become Bikram yoga instructors because they listened and tried it.

Over the past five years, Bikram yoga has been the one consistent thing in Van Es’ quest for a healthy body. He is incredibly enthusiastic about the practice, explaining, “It’s 120 degrees outside and I jump into this hot yoga room for an hour and a half and kind of have some peace and stretch and do these incredible things for the inside of my body. These poses clean out your liver, your kidneys—it’s like a car wash for your organs, you know?”

He is so positive about the benefits of Bikram yoga that he would tell anyone looking to take the first step toward health to give it a try. Strangely enough, he confides that when he was at his heaviest, he often hoped for a catalyst like a hospital stay that would jumpstart weight loss. “If I lose my appendix and I get out of the hospital in a week, I won’t be able to eat solid food, so I’ll probably be down 15 or 20 lbs. Then I can start to lose weight and get in shape,” he would speculate.

Today, he says that Bikram yoga provides that catalyst. “What Bikram yoga does is it gives you that feeling after an hour and a half. You feel like you’ve done that in a healthy way. It gives you the healthy version of the appendix surgery,” he explains.

That said, Van Es’ endorsement of Bikram yoga includes admit-

ting that he feels like he’s going to die during every session. “I’m like, why am I here? I’m going to be the first guy to die in yoga. They’re going to cart me away, someone’s going to have to call 911,” he says, on a roll. “There are many times when you start thinking about the last thing you said to your kids, what are they going to remember me by? I mean, you literally think you’re going to die,” he insists, adding, “Can I sell it or what?”

Van Es added weight-lifting to his exercise routine after feeling that he was “just plain skinny” after his weight loss. After being referred to trainer Mitch Lewallen at Urban Garage Gym, Van Es began to see a difference. “I totally started seeing definition and muscle mass, and I got obsessed. This is the hard thing about losing weight—you get obsessed with the scale and you’ve got to get over that. I started measuring body fat and measuring how my clothes fit instead. I was a tight 42 in jeans, I’ve been a baggy 36 or 34 since then,” he says, comfortable at his current weight of 230 lbs. (he had originally been down to 200 lbs.)

He now only weighs himself every four or five weeks, and always on the same scale. “I will only weigh myself on the exact same scale—like when you’re at the mall or something and it’s like, come get on the scale. ... HELL NO, because that could get depressing,” he jokes.

Always looking for something new to add to his repertoire, Van Es engages the audience daily in his quest for a healthy body. He secretly admits to enjoying the “lazy man’s workout,” saying, “I do yoga, I lay on the floor doing stretches, and then I like to go lay on a bench and lift weights. I liked doing that— then I realized that I needed to do some cardio.”

Always on the lookout for a new fitness trend, he is always up for a new challenge, considering listeners’ suggestions on everything from Zumba to ballet barre classes and other alternatives to the treadmill.

Van Es is thankful for the support of his co-workers and management, and for a career that allows him to constantly experiment. “I go and I’m experiencing life and I’m always trying new things, which brings back more bizarre show material,” he says.

Committed to staying in the Valley as the show continues to be picked up in cities across the country, Van Es is off and running by 3 a.m. every day, and wouldn’t have it any other way. “It’s just so weird to feel so good,” he says as he remembers his less healthy past. “At this moment, I feel better than I have ever felt in my entire life.”

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