

# RELEASE THE POUNDS BLOCKING YOUR PURPOSE



LIFE COACH AND BEST-SELLING AUTHOR **LISA NICHOLS** WAS WRITING HER UPCOMING BOOK, *ABUNDANCE NOW*, WHEN SHE REALIZED HER WEIGHT WAS KEEPING HER FROM HER BEST LIFE. SHE REVEALS THE EMOTIONAL HEALING SHE NEEDED TO DO BEFORE DROPPING MORE THAN 50 POUNDS **AS TOLD TO CHARREAH K. JACKSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZYAIR PORTER**

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**I, LISA NICHOLS, HAVE A CLAVICLE, THAT BONE UP BY THE NECK WE SOMETIMES CALL THE COLLAR-BONE. AND FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS, I DID NOT EVEN KNOW A CLAVICLE EXISTED.**

I've shared freely my journey of wrapping my son in a towel when I couldn't afford diapers. I've told my story of coming out of an abusive relationship, becoming a contributor to *The Secret* and earning my first million dollars. I've confessed to failing English class before becoming a best-selling author. But my weight, something you could easily see, wasn't something I ever talked about—even as God whispered to me, I would help Black women lose weight despite not yet letting go of my own.

Last December I sat on the stage of *The Steve Harvey Show* helping others prepare for their New Year's resolutions. One woman stood up and talked about her battle with her weight. I felt like I would be a fraud if I didn't meet her where she was. I was not ready to share my scale numbers and just said, "I'm committed to losing 45 pounds by my next birthday in May." I had declared to the world something I wrestled with in private.

#### ■ PINPOINTING THE POUNDS

I've been over 210 pounds much of my adult life. And when you carry weight "well," you can fool yourself into believing you don't mind carrying it. I realized last year that I didn't want to carry it anymore.

I wasn't always a big girl. In school, I ran track and was a state champion hurdler. Until my early twenties, I had a body like Serena Williams's. I was booty, a small waist and C cups. Two things

occurred with that body. First I had a lot of sex looking for a little love. I thought that sex led to love and marriage. After a few times of love not showing up following sex, I put on a jacket to protect myself, which was one layer of weight. I wasn't emotionally mature enough to set a healthy boundary with sex, and it was so painful to feel used. With my thicker body, my booty wasn't stopping traffic. Guys began to tell me, "You have a pretty smile." It's because my ass was spread from east to west. They had just my smile to look at, but it felt like it worked—they could finally see my personality.

The second thing that came with that body was awkward relationships with some women. With my body and charisma, I was sometimes viewed as a threat. So I put on more weight and a false solution occurred. No one gave me a manual for that body, so I traded it in for a jacket I could manage.

#### ■ FACING THE FACTS

With more to love, I achieved great success. But if I was a superwoman, weight was my kryptonite. More than 57 percent of African-American women are obese, yet we don't consider ourselves to be. When I was ready to get in better shape, I went to a holistic doctor and paid \$2,000 for an entire body analysis. She sat me down on Skype and said, "I need you to flip to page ten in this 27-page document." The chart gave a range of numbers for being overweight, obese or morbidly

obese. The range for morbidly obese started at 35. I looked at my number. It was 38. I looked down at my body; I had felt pretty sexy that day. But then the reality of my health slowly hit me and I cried. I was mad at myself for letting this happen.

My weight also was leading to other health issues. I was diagnosed with sleep apnea more than ten years ago. Those who suffer from this condition stop breathing or take shallow breaths while asleep and either wake up completely or go to a lighter level of sleep. They are at risk for heart attack, stroke and high blood pressure. I was 225 pounds during my first test and woke up 62 times in an hour. Every night for ten years, I was in danger of dying, and I never rested. In tears last year I cried out, "God, I just want a full night's sleep." The clunky sleep machine also minimized letting men in my space—another layer of the jacket that was creating barriers for people to get close to me.

I started praying for guidance. I said, "God, how can I be more responsible and lead in a better way?" I felt the spirit whisper to me, "Design your body so it lives out your life's purpose." It was clear I had to drop the pounds so my body could be the tool to live out my purpose. I had never connected them that closely.

The second question I asked was, "God, what would prevent me?" I'm hardheaded, so I need to know how I might get in my own way. The response I heard was, "Your life won't be long enough because you didn't take care of your health." I was riveted.

Once you have an awakening, you can't un-know what is revealed. I realized I was in a position to lead others but had been silently condoning a dangerous idea of "carrying your weight well." In December I knew it was time for a change. I didn't want to disappoint God.

#### ■ THE INNER WORKOUT

We all know the prescription for weight loss: Eat better and sweat. What we are unconsciously looking for is the healing we have to do that will inspire lasting change.

When I began to consider losing weight as an emotional journey, I had to go to the core of what my weight protected me from. It's not all agony. The weight gave me something! I could show up in a room and I knew I was going to be liked by the women because I represented Mother Earth. I had personality, and they knew their men didn't want me. If a guy chose me, he chose me beyond my body.

I had on a 50-pound emotional jacket that I thought made it easy for others to accept me. The cost of that jacket was my

**WE ALL KNOW THE PRESCRIPTION FOR WEIGHT LOSS. WHAT WE ARE UNCONSCIOUSLY LOOKING FOR IS THE HEALING THAT WILL INSPIRE LASTING CHANGE.**



(Above) Nichols knew she had to make a change. (Right) She loves her lighter frame.



As I began to move my body, my emotions moved as well. Digging deeper into other causes of my weight gain and why I had kept on the pounds, I finally faced my biggest fear: abandonment. About ten years ago, a friend of a friend offered to give me a body reading, which assessed my life thus far by studying my features. She asked, "What happened at 28?" I was shocked. She added, "Your body is healthy. Your weight is all emotional. Something happened at 28 and you shut down." I said, "I don't know. I'll think about it." I knew the whole time what happened.

I was 28 when my son's father went to prison. That was the biggest form of abandonment to me. My son is 20. I've said a thousand times, "I'm over it." Every time I said it, I was hoping to will

I'm going to get up. The pain has been sitting with me for 20 years." He said, "Trust yourself." I did. I lay down with it and cried it out, and on January 12 of this year I got on the phone with my son's father and finally shared my feelings. We cried, and it was the most healing and beautiful thing. I shocked him and freed me!

I never took time to address my pains. I wrote the book *No Matter What* and never stopped. What I realized was that inside of a "no matter what," there's permission not to heal. You don't get extra credit for bouncing back with an internal shatter no one can see. Because you manage to cover up or produce masterfully with pain in your space doesn't mean it doesn't deserve to be healed. My sister, don't be afraid to seek healing. Heal the emotions and take the power from your stories. You will be stronger.

#### ■ A NEW DAY

I didn't "lose weight" because I don't plan to find it. Releasing the weight was internal and external. I worked out every day for at least 15 minutes, often right in my bedroom. By February I had lost my first 30 pounds. I woke up one morning and felt different. I said, "I think I slept last night." I felt as if I had landed back on earth. That month something else also happened—my clavicle emerged. My neck had a necklace of its own. It's my favorite new jewelry.

I was sure there was the woman I know myself to be inside of the woman I had become. My ancestors didn't go through what they did for me to live in protection. I'm supposed to play as big as I can. It wasn't until I admitted what the weight

gave me that I could let it go.

No woman wants to get to the end of her days, sitting in her rocking chair and saying, "I didn't give it my all." I didn't want to die having something left in me because I didn't confront my pain. You're not afraid of dying if you live right. I released the weight so I could live out my assignment.

It took courage to say to my hurts, *I've addressed you and set you free*. My healing today looks like 53 pounds gone, a gorgeous clavicle and a good night's sleep. □

## JUMP-START YOUR WEIGHT RELEASE

AFTER HEALING YOUR EMOTIONAL PAIN, GO DIGITAL FOR LASTING WEIGHT LOSS. CHECK OUT THESE FREE AND EFFECTIVE RESOURCES BY CHRISTEN A. JOHNSON

#### 1. KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Body Mass Index (BMI) mobile calculator apps, like BMI Calculator, help you see the benchmark, understand your current weight and set realistic targets.

#### 2. LOG YOUR MEALS

A food diary can double your weight loss. The MyFitnessPal app makes that easy, with nutrition information for most foods. The service keeps a total of calorie intake and exercise.

#### 3. RECRUIT CHEERLEADERS

Whether you join Weight Watchers, search Black Women Losing Weight on Pinterest or log on to blackweightlosssuccess.com, finding a community will assist on the tough days.

#### 4. GET MOVING

If the gym or ClassPass isn't your style, work out wherever with videos on Hot5 or Nike+ Training Club phone apps.

#### 5. TRACK PROGRESS

Buy a Fitbit, Nike+ Fuelband or Jawbone wristband to monitor movement. Get in shape with friends through its fitness challenges.

BEFORE PHOTO: CHAD OUBRE

personal joy and a good night's sleep. I decided to begin shedding the jacket and take back all my power.

In December I started working out daily and in January I helped launch Non-Negotiable 90 (nn90.net), my commitment to fitness, with my coach, Anthony Elfonzia. I scaled back on indulgent foods like bread and ate significantly smaller meals. I would take a meal I used to eat and cut it into three servings and eat six times a day. My stomach started to shrink.

myself to that. I never let myself feel abandoned. I never said, "I'm afraid of our son being a Black boy in South Central without you." I never said, "I saw a future for us and I'm angry you tried to get around the system." I never said, "I loved you." Never.

It was time to deal with abandonment and other issues that kept my weight on.

When a dear friend asked me, "Why don't you want to address this pain?" I said, "If I lie down and cry, I don't know if