Get Lifted!

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Spring and summer have always infused me with renewed energy. Perhaps it's the excitement of replacing bulky winter coats with tank tops and sandals or the fact that I can enjoy jogging and playing tennis outdoors again. When I was a teenager, the longer days meant more time for jumping Double Dutch. Flossing my rope-a-dope skills had nothing to do with watching my waistline or relieving stress, but it left a deep impression of how good it felt to be confident about my body and fitness level. It's a feeling I want to preserve for a lifetime.

Seventy-seven percent of black women are overweight, a risk factor for so many of the health issues we face, including diabetes, heart disease and hypertension. In this issue, we offer practical ideas for attaining a healthy weight ("Simple Strategies for Fighting Fat"). We can give some of our favorite fatty recipes a face-lift (see "More Better Barbecue"). We can begin an exercise program in the privacy of our home or in the company of our church congregation ("Sweat Inspiration"). We have more and more role models to inspire us. After three kids and years of yo-yo dieting, our cover girl, R&B chanteuse Faith Evans ("Faith and Strength"), began to work out and watch what she ate, dropping 65 pounds and four dress sizes.

Many folks eat to boost their mood, but rarely do we talk about tending to our mental and emotional health. Recently, a friend of mine revealed that she has been clinically depressed since college and was once on medication. For 12 years, we've laughed and shared secrets like sisters, but she hid her diagnosis out of shame that her illness would be viewed as a "weakness." Historically, our elders endured emotional strife in silence. As a result, we've inherited a "just deal and get over it" attitude that can morph into repression (which we pass on to our children) and physical illness (see "A Deeper Shade of Blue").

We must gain the courage to speak up and shape up. There's nothing wrong with working to feel and look good for the warm-weather months. But we've got to be on our main job—tending to our health—365 days a year. I've gained back 10 of the 50 pounds I lost last year, but I'm going to keep it movin' and improvin'. You do the same.

Strength, courage and wisdom,

Kenya N. Byrd

Executive Editor

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