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Galloway Township, New Jersey

Overcoming Obesity

When I was 20, I went to Miami on vacation with some friends. I thought about life in general and how young I was to be so overweight. At my heaviest, I weighed 315 pounds. When I returned home, I gave myself two weeks, and then I hit the gym. I lost 70 pounds in three months.

Then, I lost an additional 20 pounds during another year. But after three years, my weight went back up to 230 pounds. I vowed to get rid of the extra weight once and for all and do something to help other people who were trying to lose weight.

Initially, I was motivated to lose weight because certain illnesses run in my family. Some of my relatives suffered from heart disease, and a few folks died of other illnesses. I experienced these things firsthand, so that's what pushed me to take my health into my hands.

Once I was able to get past the whole psychological part of losing weight, dropping pounds was easy. But doing so took a lot of time. I tell everyone who asks me how long it took to lose all my unwanted weight that you must prepare your mind for what you want to accomplish.

When I got finished changing my diet, I plugged everything I'd learned into my lifestyle. Then, losing weight became effortless. I think that in the last three years, working out and eating healthy became a lifestyle for me. The weight came off because I'd made lifestyle changes and mentally prepared myself so I wasn't that 315-pound guy anymore.

Today, I'm much more confident. In total, I lost 150 pounds. Before I lost the weight, the clothes I wear now were just a dream for me. Currently, I can pretty much wear anything I want without feeling that other people are going to look at me and think all the wrong things. Honestly, I still suffer from some insecurities. But for the most part, I know that anything I want to do just requires I put my mind to it.

I found that most people were very positive about my weight loss. But there were others who couldn't believe I'd lost all that weight without doing something extraordinary or because something was wrong. Some people began to spread rumors that I'd had surgery or I had AIDS. Most of these folks had their own personal problems, so I guess the rumors they started were to help them better cope with their situation.

But I’m not a negative person, so I just focus on inspiring other people, even some of the ones who made fun of me. A lot of them actually come to me asking for advice, and I’m happy to give it. I’m very forgiving. I tell people that we’re all human beings, and we’re all capable of great things. It’s just up to us to decide if we’re going to take action to achieve our goals.

To help motivate other people, I wrote about my story in a book, Lonnie Fresh: The Lionell Dixon Story “Out of the Shadows,” published by Hollis Media. The same company is also going to publish a couple of cookbooks I wrote. Online, I post videos of my workouts and inspirational chats so this might help other people. I also go to schools and speak to kids about my story as a way to show them that if you put your mind to something, you can do anything.

During this weight loss journey, I learned one thing I think is the key to success: Visualize yourself achieving your goal. That’s what helped me successfully lose all that weight and improve my health overall.

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Author of Lonnie Fresh: The Lionell Dixon Story “Out of the Shadows”

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