

Reasons to lose weight . . . Running

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On their way to the Los Angeles Marathon, two stories of hard work and discipline that inspire perseverance and triumph.

Ledys finally looked at the scale and . . . Was it true? She weighed 289 pounds.

She was 22 and had a life to live, but for far too long she had lost control of her diet and now she was facing a challenge. The only way to take her life back and bring her dreams to life was to take a crucial decision by making a drastic change to the lifestyle she had been living for too long.

One goal, one challenge to conquer, and the need for change to save her lost self-esteem.

Today she prepares, determined to face the challenge of the Los Angeles Marathon. Behind her is a story filled with personal endeavors that make her the resilient individual she is today. To right her wrong, she used her faltering moments to light the fire of determination, there is no better prize. Goal achieved.

“I was an overweight adolescent, with acne and braces,” she recounts with a chuckle, reproaching her Caribbean background. Ledys is now 34 years old, the daughter of a Cuban father and a Costa Rican mother. She was casualty to a society that had little emphasis on spending time with your children.

“To be almost 289 pounds at such a young age is an experience you can only understand if you live it yourself.” How does such a careless approach to diet lead to personal chaos?

“You feel alone, even with your family close by, you are alone. I would get some of that ‘*fast food*’, with little self-restriction. Of course [your family says] something, but no one takes action until it’s too late.” Right when the fight is almost lost, when only crude determination and with a little help from the higher power, can such an unfairly matched battle be won. The odds were not in Ledys’ favor, her self-esteem was nowhere to be found, but despite it all, she had a plan.

Alex, his Story

Perhaps the first Chapter to Ladys’ story may be Alex’s story. Born to Mexican parents, Alex was nearing his 15 years of life with 190 pounds. Alex Yarza attends Hollywood High School, located in the mecca of the film industry. Again, we see the result of the negligence of a society that feeds the beast of chaos.

“I ate everything. All the trash you find in *fast food restaurants*, and I suddenly realized that this wasn’t normal and it wasn’t what I wanted in my life.” How do you reach this turning point?

“You think it’s normal because you see it all around you in school, so you don’t worry about it. At home though, I was the only fat one. I have two brothers and they don’t have to worry about their weight. Neither does my dad or my mom. I was the problem.” This was his turning point, he saw the problem. Alex made serious decisions.

When I was Fat

Ledys and a story you can hardly believe because today she laughs with confidence while she shows off photographs of those years. The before and after. When she was overweight!

Plagued by the worse circumstances, she decided to undergo the disputed surgery, gastric bypass. “I overcame my anxiety and fear and did the surgery, I immediately lost 95 pounds”. She recounts as if she had simply gone to the esthetician. “It was something I wanted and I wasn’t going to delay it any longer”, she adds. She knew the most difficult part of undergoing gastric bypass came after the procedure, when you have to make drastic habitual changes, a new diet and consistent rigorous exercise. And that’s exactly what she did.

“You do it for your own well-being, your life. It is simple you just have to convince yourself that you can do it”. That is why she started running.

Since then she has remained religiously committed with her goal to run six days a week. “I used to wear a size 16 and 18, now I’m a size 10”. She now runs with a smile of victory that exuberates with self-fulfillment. She has gained an air of confidence that feeds her dedication and agility in her workout regimen. “I weigh 185 and I can lose a bit more”, she insists.

She was serious. She participates in local races, she has already ran the Pasadena Marathon and is ready for her second race at the LA Marathon. She was so serious that she partnered with SOS Mentor (a non-profit organization focused on Nutrition and fighting childhood obesity). Among all those concerned with the obesity epidemic, she met Alex Yarza, an adolescent who celebrated having lost almost 40 pounds in three months.

“It has been more than a year since I managed that weight loss, eating healthy and with discipline. I’ve maintained my weight at 155 pounds”.

Ledys Lopez and Alex Yarza, journeys on the same path to fight obesity, determined to attend to the last few details, to represent SOSMentor, at the starting line this March 18 among the 30 million athletes that will run the LA Marathon.

They will leave the starting line, and finish – or not – it will later be a good story to share, either way they have already won.