

How Nicole K. Lost 94 Pounds After Learning to Love Her Body

by TIFFANY LIN March 17, 2018

Tiffany Lin

Tiffany Lin has been a writer and editor since 2008. Her book reviews, news pieces and features have appeared in Cat Fancy, Dog World, Romantic Homes, Cottages & Bungalows, Chickens, Kittens USA and Urban Farm magazines. Lin is currently the Food & Drink and Nutrition Editor for LIVESTRONG.COM.



Scroll down to see Nicole now! Photo Credit: Nicole K./LIVESTRONG.COM

Name: Nicole K.

Age: 38 **Height:** 5'2"

BEFORE Weight: 244 pounds **Dress/Pant Size:** 18-20

AFTER Weight: 150 pounds **Dress/Pant Size:** 8-10



Nicole lost 94 pounds. Photo Credit: Nicole K./LIVESTRONG.COM

LIVESTRONG.COM: What was your life like before joining LIVESTRONG.COM?

I've struggled with binge eating my entire life. When I was young my mother was a terrible example of health and fitness, while my father was the ideal. Without diving too deeply into the

psychology of the matter, it led me to be a secret binge eater — hiding wrappers, scarfing down sugary treats in the dead of night or behind closed doors. It got so bad I would eat with the lights off because I didn't want to see myself.

More than once I've ordered a meal from a fast-food place and eaten it on the way to another fast-food place and ordered another meal. I think it's safe to say my unhealthy body was a manifestation of my unhealthy psyche.



Nicole's true turning point occurred when she decided to set a good example for her 1-year-old son. Photo Credit: Matt Dutile

LIVESTRONG.COM: What was your inspiration to make a change?

My desire to lose weight came in shifts and, most embarrassingly, usually came at the desire to couple with someone that I hoped would like me more if I were thin.

I went from 244 pounds at the age of 20 to 140 pounds at the age 25 through extreme restriction and sustained cardio with a fair amount of surges of loss and gain due to intermittent binge episodes.

But in late 2009 I became pregnant with my son, and for the first time in my adult life I felt entitled to eat with reckless abandon. I went from a very fit 160 pounds to a very soft 225 pounds — after my 10 pound son was delivered. I was crushed. I was almost back to my highest weight. Then in 2011, when my son was about a year old, I decided to dedicate myself to fitness instead of thinness. It was, I suppose, my truest turning point.

I didn't want my son to inherit my demons. So I decided to change. Not that it's been consistent. I backslide, recently even, but I haven't lost sight of the goal: to be a good example for my son. And in the process I think I've become inspirational to more than just him. For that, I feel like I'm doing good, even if I'm not always doing well.



Nicole uses LIVESTRONG.COM's calorie tracker to help keep tabs on her daily intake. Photo Credit: Matt Dutile

LIVESTRONG.COM: How did LIVESTRONG.COM help you lose weight?

LIVESTRONG.COM has been instrumental to this life change. I use the calorie tracker to help me keep tabs on my daily intake. The community also helps me make good decisions when I'm feeling weak. Not everyone in real life is supportive; sometimes friends like me better when I'm heavy because manic, indulgent Niki is the more fun Niki. But there's always a network of support on the LIVESTRONG.COM app.

People I've grown close to — those whose struggles have been similar as well as those whose struggles were just the opposite — have helped. It had literally never occurred to me that there were women out there struggling to gain weight and that, in their own way, they were just as unhappy as me.

Sometimes you just need another person to say “stop.” Because that voice in my head always says “don't stop.”



Nicole takes a stroll with her dog. Photo Credit: Matt Dutile

LIVESTRONG.COM: What was your support system like?

I met my husband at my lowest weight. But between the two of us, we gained 50 pounds together with date-night chocolate lava cakes, hoppy beers, lazy Sunday brunches and barbecue goodness. When we moved to New York City, we both decided to get a handle on our weight gain. He lost his weight in the same amount of time it took him to gain the weight, but mine was slower.

He is extremely supportive — if not always helpful.

Nicole loves to run regularly. Photo Credit: Nicole K./LIVESTRONG.COM



LIVESTRONG.COM: What's your favorite way to work out?

I like running. It's easy to calculate how many calories you burn, and it's a very inexpensive sport. I also like the silence that comes from running.

The first mile or two is always a struggle. But if I hang in there and time my steps with my breathing, a kind of Zen washes over me, allowing me to communicate with myself on a new level. It's a silence that is hard to come by, and it's beautiful.

I also fell in love with bike commuting after my son was born. I never learned to ride a bike as a kid, so it was a kind of reclamation of childhood when I was 32.

I would pop him in the baby seat and run errands. My rule was "less than five (miles), best not drive." I gave him his own bell, and we would tool around town bell-ringing and waving at cars. It was fun! But when we moved to the granite hills of Connecticut, bike commuting was, unfortunately, no longer an option.

I also enjoyed pole-dancing classes (which puts you in amazing shape), Zumba and Body Pump. Recently, I've started training Brazilian jiu-jitsu (BJJ), which is the most extreme body conditioning I've ever experienced. It's nice to know I'm learning the useful skill of self-protection at the same time as getting in better shape. I absolutely cannot recommend BJJ highly enough.



Nicole attends Brazilian jiu-jitsu classes three days a week. Photo Credit: Matt Dutile

LIVESTRONG.COM: What's your weekly exercise schedule?

I attend 75 minutes of BJJ lessons Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On Tuesday and Thursday I take my dog on at least a one-hour hike in a very hilly area. On the weekends I like to stay active

with my family. And once a week I like to take Body Pump, paying special attention to building my back muscles because they are my weakest part. I run two to four miles once or twice a week, outdoors if possible.

When I'm concentrating on fat loss, I will also walk on the treadmill for any TV-time indulgences.



For lunch, Nicole typically enjoys an egg scramble with a side of veggies. Photo Credit: Matt Dutile

LIVESTRONG.COM: What's a typical day of meals and snacks?

Breakfast is usually a protein-filled oatmeal with banana and nuts or a Greek yogurt with the same fixings. Lunch consists of an egg scramble with veggies or a small salad with yogurt dressing, loads of veggies and nuts. Dinner is typically a large salad with a significant amount of protein, such as a serving-and-a-half of chicken, falafel or fish.

For snacks, I'll have a hard-boiled egg, yogurt or a handful of nuts. I keep raw almonds in my purse, car and desk for emergencies. If I want a treat without calories, I'll have seltzer water with lemon or lime or a few drops of natural mint or orange extract.

Sometimes if my family is having something particularly yummy, I'll have a smaller portion of the same and pair it with a small salad or large amount of veggies.

I still eat burgers, pizza and desserts, only with moderation both in size of serving and frequency of indulgence. I try to abstain from alcohol most days because I get the munchies after a few drinks and my resolve weakens.

LIVESTRONG.COM: What's the range of calories you eat per day?

On average, I like to stay at about 1,750 per day. I always eat back my exercise calories. When I need a "jump-start," I will eat 1,300 a day for a week or two and before going back to 1,750.



Nicole enjoying her lunch. Photo Credit: Matt Dutile

LIVESTRONG.COM: What are the healthy staples that are always in your kitchen?

Raw almonds, yogurt, frozen broccoli, falafel, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, diced onions, eggs, oatmeal, light salad dressings, seltzer water and frozen kefir for my sweet tooth.

LIVESTRONG.COM: How do you strategize for meals?

I do a big shopping trip on Sunday afternoons right after I eat lunch and a smaller midweek trip as needed. I plan ahead to some extent. I cook for my family every night, so I think, “How can I make their dinner into a healthy, filling alternative?” (Hint: Veggies are always the answer.)

I don’t have a lot of variety for my breakfast and lunch, but after a vigorous workout, variety is the least of my concerns.



The biggest challenge Nicole faced with self-sabotage, but she overcame that by learning to love her body. Photo Credit: Matt Dutile

LIVESTRONG.COM: What’s the biggest challenge you faced?

My biggest challenge is my own self-sabotage. Sometimes I find comfort in the anonymity of low self-image. If I feel like I stand out too much or am “too sexy” I will backslide. In a way, I’m more comfortable being uncomfortable in my own skin.

I guess my biggest suggestion is to treat your body like that of someone you love dearly, and do your best to make that your reality. I’m learning to love myself a little bit at a time. Some days are easy. Some are harder.



Nicole loves Brazilian jiu-jitsu because it she can learn self-protection while also getting into better shape. Photo Credit: Matt Dutile

LIVESTRONG.COM: What's your biggest secret to success that you want to share with others?

As far as exercise goes, find something fun and do it. Try different classes. Our bodies are meant to move, so if you try enough things, eventually something is going to click. And once you find your passion, feed that.

Also, fake it until you make it in the kitchen. At first, all the weighing and measuring seems tedious, but within even a week it becomes easier and more natural.

Also, I'll point out that after a killer session in the gym, one bite of natural, healthy food tastes better than all the ice cream in the world.



Nicole invested in herself, and it paid off. Photo Credit: Matt Dutile

LIVESTRONG.COM: What's your life like now?

I still use LIVESTRONG.COM's calorie counter and the community. I am not yet to my goal of 135, but I'm on course, despite a recent backslide.

I learned to enjoy exercise and have made some real connections with other people with similar struggles both at the gym and through LIVESTRONG.COM. One thing I've noticed that has helped monumentally is that because of the candidness of the users in the LIVESTRONG.COM community, I'm able to better speak frankly about my struggles in real life.

I used to feel shame about my struggle, but now I feel the pride of survival because of the connections I've made with other LIVESTRONG.COM members. I owed it to me, and I'm glad I invested in myself.