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WLSFA Book Contribution form.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this book of your stories! This book will be a compilation of the experiences that you, the weight loss surgery patients, have experienced along the road to having WLS. The purpose of the book is to encourage others to talk about their stories; both the good parts *and* the unpleasant parts of the journey that led to being obese, as well as the decision to have weight loss surgery. It was suggested to me by a wonderful and wise woman (named Laura Lee Preston) that perhaps a form might serve as a helpful guide for those of you who wish to contribute to the book, but don't know how or where to begin – hence, the creation of this form.

Before I list some thought-inspiring questions, to help you share your story, let me remind you of how the idea for this book came into being. Antonia Namnath, founder of the WLSFA, along with the great people at Bariatric TV, created a documentary about the struggle of twin sisters, Rosemary and Connie, both suffering from obesity. Rosemary's insurance paid for her to have WLS but Connie's did not. In the documentary, both women candidly share their history of sexual abuse during their childhood years and the connection between that abuse and their obesity. After watching the documentary, I contacted Antonia and asked if I could write a book where others would share the "underlying issues" related to their obesity.

My hope is that people will be willing to talk about the painful experiences from their past – most especially, how they dealt with those issues (in part) by using food as a salve for their emotional pain.

100% of the profits from this book will go to the WLSFA so that others, like Connie, can receive the gift of weight loss surgery, paid for by contributions to the WLSFA.

You can contribute to this project by answering the following questions or by sharing in whatever way you feel comfortable doing so. Parts of your stories will be included in the book. However, people will not be named specifically. If you wish to have your information "disguised" in such a way that you cannot be identified, we will honor that wish. I will contact each person, if they give me permission to do so, to verify their preference in terms of level of anonymity.

Your contribution will be inspirational to others. I am always telling people that "you can't keep it if you don't give it away," meaning you will maintain greater joy in life by sharing with others! Here's one way you can do that. It will likely be good for your heart to write this out, as well!

On the next page, I will list a number of questions. Please answer some or all of them. I will select the information I would like to use in the will put it all together in a great story that will reach and inspire many in a number of different ways. Thank you for your help!

Please answer any or all of the following questions in complete sentences or paragraphs. Skip the ones that don't pertain to you, or answer them all. You may do so on this form, use it as a guide, or you can simply create your own document and write your story in whatever format you are most comfortable with. Please limit your story to approximately 5 typed pages. Thanks.

You do not have to include your name on this form if you do not wish to do so. You do not need to include an email address (if you do not want your email address known, you will have to mail your story to me). If you do email it or include your name, rest assured, NO information about you will be shared with anyone, NO specific identifying information about you will be provided, and you WILL remain anonymous, (except to me.)

If you have any questions, please contact me at cstapletonphd@gmail.com.

1. **Were you heavy, overweight, or obese as a child? Please talk about what it was like for you?**
 - a. Were you teased by friends?
 - b. Do you have any specific stories you remember that were emotionally painful in relation to being heavy?
 - c. How did your family deal with your weight (ignore it, tease you, put you on diets, take you to Weight Watchers, etc.)?
 - d. How did you feel being a heavy child?
 - e. What did you do with your time when you were not at school?
 - i. Did you have friends?
 - ii. Were you a loner?
 - iii. Did you participate in extra-curricular activities?
 - f. What DIDN'T you do as a result of your weight?
 - i. Did you have limitations, which kept you from participating in physical activities? If so, what types of activities did you avoid?
 - ii. Did you exclude yourself from social activities? If so, how?
 - iii. Did you use your weight as an excuse NOT to accomplish things? If so, in what way?

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- g. Anything you want to say about being a heavy child...
- 2. What were the messages you got at home about eating and food?**
- a. Were you allowed to eat anything you wanted at any time?
 - b. Were you forced to diet or limit what you ate? Were you singled out or was everyone in your family restricted from certain foods?
 - c. Were you told about “starving children in some foreign country” who would be happy to have your food?
 - d. Were you members of “the clean plate club?”
 - e. Were you taught by example that food was love? That food was how you celebrated? That food was how you dealt with emotions – grief, sadness, joy, etc.?
 - f. Other...
- 3. What were the messages you got about yourself from your parents?**
- a. That you were wonderful and loved and could do anything you wanted to do in life?
 - b. That you were no good and would amount to nothing?
 - c. That you were going to be fat when you grew up?
 - d. How did you feel about yourself as a heavy child?
 - i. Embarrassed?
 - ii. Ashamed?
 - iii. Angry?
 - iv. Unaware that you were heavy?
 - e. Other...
- 4. What was the status of your family?**
- a. Did your parents remain married throughout your entire life?
 - b. Were your parents divorced? If so, how old were you and who did you live with after the divorce? Did you continue to see the other parent? How did you feel about the divorce? How involved were you made to be in the process of the divorce?
 - c. Did you have stepparents? How was your relationship with them? How did they deal with your being a heavy child? Did you like them? How involved were they in your life?
 - d. Did you/do you have siblings? What order are you in the line of children? What was your relationship like with each of your parents? What was your relationship like with each of your siblings?
 - e. Are the other people in your family overweight/obese? Were they in the past?
- 5. Family issues...**
- a. Are/were there people in your immediate and/or extended family who struggled with addiction(s)? To alcohol, other drugs, gambling, pornography, sex, shopping, food, video games, etc?
 - b. Are there numerous divorces throughout your family system? Aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents?
 - c. Did anyone in your immediate family have a chronic illness that affected their ability to interact with the family? If so, how did that affect you?
 - d. Did either of your parents pass away during your childhood? How old were you? How did their death affect you? Did you “act out” in any negative ways afterward (drinking, getting in trouble at school, shoplifting, gaining weight, etc.)? Did others talk with you about the loss of your parent? Did you attend the funeral/memorial?
 - e. What were the religious/spiritual practices in your home?
 - f. Did your parents/stepparents, etc. fight a lot? Did you see/hear them? How did you respond/react?
- 6. Trauma History**
- a. Were you abused in any way during your childhood?
 - i. Physically – were you “spanked” with anything other than a hand?
 - ii. Sexually (verbally, touching, fondling, etc.)
 - iii. Verbal/Emotionally (name calling, harsh criticism)
 - iv. Vicariously (saw someone else being abused)
 - b. If so – how old were you when the abuse took place? For how long a period of time did it continue?
 - c. If you experienced any sort of abuse, how did/does your eating/obesity relate to it? Did you eat to comfort yourself? Do you now eat when you are emotional? Do you now eat to avoid emotion?
 - d. If you experienced abuse, did you talk with anyone about it? When? Who? For how long?
 - e. Have you been in counseling? At what age? For how long?

Please add how you felt throughout your childhood and how this related to your eating/weight issues. For example, one woman shared this, “A big thing for me throughout my childhood was not feeling safe or protected. I felt physically threatened and defenseless. This lack of protection led to feelings of insecurity and unworthiness. Food was a great source of comfort to me.”

Thank you so much for your help in this project! Toni and all the great folks at WLSFA and I are excited about assisting you in encouraging others to take the positive steps toward health by having weight loss surgery. Again, 100% of the profits from this book will go to WLSFA so those unable to pay for the surgery may have the opportunity to have the procedure done and get on with healthy living