



Lisa Callihan has been through pregnancy, labor, and birthing before. This will be the first time since having her weight loss surgery.

Labor of Love

by Amy Morton

the Lisa Callihan story

"I gained 58 pounds with my first pregnancy," says the 35-year-old technical support center supervisor from Ypsilanti, Michigan. "My LAP-BAND® will be unfilled for the first trimester, in case of nausea and vomiting, and then get a partial fill to help me stay within a normal range of weight gain. I love the aspect of being able to control how much you put on with the band."

For Lisa, having control over her weight and her health is still a joyous concept. Prior to surgery in October 2002, her weight had climbed to 331 pounds (BMI 53), and she felt powerless to stop it. Like many people with similar stats, she had tried every weight loss method available with only temporary results. Eventually she gave up and gave in. "I was allowing myself to eat anything because I had tried every diet and medication," she says. "I was very unhappy, and I just couldn't do anything because I was always tired. I'd take care of my daughter, the day in, day out, sort of thing, but not much more. And I started to get scared because I was still very young."

Lisa's fatigue was daily, but it was exacerbated by her lifetime history of being heavy. "The struggle began when I was a child, about four or five," she recalls. "For a while I was able to control it because I was a ballet dancer," says Lisa. "Then I stopped dancing when I was 16, and the pounds started piling on because I wasn't exercising anymore."

Things only got worse when she enrolled at Wayne State University. "By the time I was in college, I was over 200 pounds and the weight just kept on creeping up," she recalls. "It started affecting



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my health because I was borderline diabetic, borderline high blood pressure, and I was having back and hip pain."

During this time, Lisa was in a sorority, a generally acknowledged badge of acceptance and social approval. But that distinction was offset by the hurtful remarks she would occasionally hear. "They would say, 'Oh, you know, she's a Kappa Cow,'" she recalls. "It was embarrassing. I never felt like I really fit in."

Social outings were especially a challenge. "The first thing I would think about is where we were going to sit," Lisa says. "Are we sitting in chairs or at a booth? Because if it's a booth, I'm not going to be able to fit. And when people would go out dancing, I would be the one sitting and watching...you know, watching the table."

Lisa eventually graduated and married her college sweetheart, and those uncomfortable situations faded away for a while. But then a *déjà vu* experience as a young mother made her acutely self-conscious again.

"My daughter was four at the time," Lisa recalls. "At that age they're starting to be more physically active—going to the playground, riding bikes, learning to swim. She was BIG into swimming."

But Lisa wasn't able to participate in these activities. "I was 'the fat mom,'" she says. "I wasn't putting on a bathing suit and hopping in the pool with her. I would never ride around the block with her. I just couldn't do it."

At this stage, Lisa's memories of her own childhood began to hit home.

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seemed like it was my life starting all over again, and I didn't want to see that happen to her. I knew I had to do something so that I could be physically active with her. And that's why I finally decided to do it."

The surgery turned out to be a family affair. Two days after Lisa had LAP-BAND surgery, her sister did the same. Thanks to their sibling buddy system, they've taken off an impressive 341 pounds collectively.

Not that it's all been easy. Lisa left the hospital without the liquid pain medicine that had been prescribed, and she couldn't find it in the area where she lived. Then a day after Thanksgiving, the band slipped, leaving her to speculate that she overdid it during the holiday. The problem was corrected, however, and she was back on the losing trail.

Today, Lisa has lost 140 pounds and gained back the life she planned. Her blood work is normal, and her mobility is restored. Even better, she can eagerly await the arrival of her second child without the fear of a setback due to excessive baby weight.

As for those formerly dreaded swim outings? "I just took my daughter to a water park," she says. "And it wasn't just me watching her. I was going down the slide too, and that was a lot of fun." **For both of them.** ■

Amy Morton is a writer and marketing communications professional based in Los Angeles. She holds a BA in English from the University of Virginia. This article has been reprinted courtesy of Spotlight Health. Visit www.spotlighthealth.com for more success stories like this one, and to connect with other pre-op and post-op WLS patients.