

Dear Lawrence Taylor,

I am writing this letter to thank you for your book Taylor because it has inspired me in a very personal way. Like you, I am a young African American male. I am the youngest of seven kids with five brothers and a sister. I have always been a big kid and at eleven years old I am five foot eleven and weigh 220 pounds. The kids at school would torment me for being overweight so I would avoid playing sports or any outdoor activities. My weight caused me to be slow and clumsy and was the excuse I used to remain indoors on the couch.

My father was recently diagnosed with diabetes which I learned runs in our family. He became very concerned that my weight and inactivity would increase my risk for diabetes. He told me to ignore what other people said about my weight and abilities. He knew that sports would help me to grow into my weight and become more athletic and healthy.

Your father, like mine, played with you, encouraged you and was your biggest fan. I decided to read your book because my father believed I would understand how dedication, confidence and hard work could change my life. When I read your book, I saw that you struggled with many of the same problems I had.

You wrote that you resisted instruction and always felt angry. In time you learned to ignore criticism and rely on yourself with a, "Win at all cost attitude!" I decided that I could be a winner too.

I began playing basketball on YMCA teams and with the kids at school. I would just laugh and work even harder to if someone called me names or made fun of me. This year I played tackle football for the first time and found that I am more athletic than I ever thought I could be. My coaches and teammates praised me for my skills and hard work. No one insults me anymore. I just made the Amateur Athletic Union Quad A basketball team. Over 60 kids tried out but only ten were chosen!

My weight has not increased since I began being more active. The more active I am the easier it is to be more active. I now love sports and cannot ever imagine going back to sitting on the couch and watching other kids have fun outside.

Thank you for sharing your story, which inspired me to change my view of myself and what I can accomplish. I wrote down a sentence from your book and keep it on my desk. You said, "Life, like anything else, can knock you down. You will have problems every day in your life. But sometimes...sometimes you just got to go play. The crime is not being knocked down, the crime is not getting up again."

Thank you,  
Hunter Hastings

