



## A JOURNEY TO BETTER HEALTH

**Vontressa Counts**, Benefits Specialist at Southeastern, believes in the power of positive thinking. When things don't work out the way she'd like, instead of dwelling in negativity, she searches for a lesson she can take away from the experience.

That's why, after a doctor visit in May 2020 revealed her weight had reached an alarming number, she turned the bad news into motivation to make a change. Since then, she has lost more than

50 pounds and has shared her weight-loss journey, along with many other personal stories, on a blog she hopes will inspire others.

### Sharing Her Story

Vontressa launched her blog, "Broken to Beautiful," in July 2018 in the wake of some difficult times. Within the span of a few years, she had lost her father, her younger brother, and her job. She decided to start the blog because she felt a call to relate the stories of the Bible to things that had happened in her own life. It required her to move far outside her comfort zone.

"It took a lot of transparency and a lot of vulnerability, and that's something that I never really had. It was really, really big for me,"

Vontressa said. It was so nerve-wracking to share her innermost thoughts and feelings, that she spent many sleepless nights before publishing new blog posts.

"At the beginning, when they were coming out, I would be so anxious," she said. "My thoughts were, 'What are they going to think of me? Did I put too much of myself into it?'" But by using those things I've endured, the feelings I've felt, I truly have overcome a lot because I use my story to share with others."

### Weight-Loss Journey

Since those early days, Vontressa has pushed through her anxiety to publish one blog post a month. Among many other topics, she opens up about her weight-loss journey. After that visit to the doctor last spring, she recognized it was time to make a serious change for her health and well-being.

"I saw the number on the scale, and I was like, 'Oh my gosh! I didn't realize it was like this.'" She resolved to make changes in her diet and start exercising more. The Monday after her appointment, she started following the ketogenic, or keto, diet plan, which emphasizes eating proteins and fats and limiting carbohydrates. Vontressa is a talented cook, and her favorite meal is keto lasagna with noodles that she makes herself using cheeses and seasonings. She also eats a lot of avocado, a healthy fat.

"Different things work for different people, and that just happened to work for me," Vontressa said. One downside of the keto plan is that she's had to cut down on one of her favorite hobbies — baking. On the other hand, she's added a new activity — exercise. She usually opts for a fun cardio workout or Zumba® routine on YouTube™.

"I still only work out maybe three times a week, but I'm a little more active because I can move better and I have more stamina," she said.

In total, Vontressa has lost more than 100 pounds from her heaviest point back in 2013, but she's lost 56 pounds through her current efforts. Her energy levels have increased, and she feels more motivated to work out.

"It is easier to exercise even when I don't really want to because I am actually seeing results," Vontressa said.



Before



After

## Self-Love and Positivity

Other themes of “Broken to Beautiful” include learning to love yourself, positivity, the benefits of counseling, and more. Vontressa shares lessons she’s learned along the way in hopes that her words will help others. For example, she writes about the power of “thought stopping,” or replacing negative thoughts with positive ones.

“It’s about trying to look at it through a different lens, not allowing those thoughts to hold me captive but focusing on the positives of them,” she said. “Even in negative situations, I think, ‘What did I learn from this?’”

What can I take from what happened, even though it didn’t work out the way I wanted it to?”

She encourages others to seek counseling if they need it. It has been beneficial for her.

“I openly talk about the fact that I use counseling because it is helpful. I’m a big advocate for it,” Vontressa said. “It helps to dig deep into things you thought were not an issue. Sometimes you just need someone to ask those hard questions to bring you out of the dark spaces.”

## Faith-Based Lessons

Above all, the blog focuses on faith-based lessons told from Vontressa’s open and honest perspective. It taps into the common human experience, letting readers know they’re not alone and it’s OK to feel a certain way, even if they’re struggling with doubts about their faith.

“Ultimately, it just comes down to this — you have to trust in the promises He’s given you.”

She hopes her words will help her readers grow in their faith and flourish in their lives.

“I don’t want them just to look at the blog posts over the years and see how I’ve grown. I want them to be able to answer some hard questions. The ultimate goal is not to lead them to me, but to lead them to God.”

## Beyond the Blog

Vontressa has worked as a Benefits Specialist at Southeastern since 2018. The position is a great fit for her because she loves getting to know her coworkers and their families.

“I enjoy helping people and building relationships,” she said. She also appreciates the people-first mindset at Southeastern Freight Lines. “It’s a culture of doing the right thing and treating people fairly.”

When she’s not working, exercising, or blogging, Vontressa enjoys arts and crafts, and spending time with her family.

She’s especially close to her mom and her aunt. She looks forward to continuing to inspire people by sharing her thoughts online in new ways. In October, she launched a monthly podcast to accompany the blog.

“When I came out with the podcast, there was such a positive acceptance from that. It just goes to show you never know who you’re reaching.”

Readers can find Vontressa’s blog and podcast at [www.mybrokentobeautiful.com](http://www.mybrokentobeautiful.com).

**We have teamed up with BlueCross® BlueShield® of South Carolina for associates to share their stories of how they live Southeastern Strong. If you want to share your story, email us at [seflstrong@sefl.com](mailto:seflstrong@sefl.com).**