

Transcript for The Who's Dat Phat Girl Podcast - With Brooke Hoover **EPISODE 12 - Smokin'**

Hey y'all, I'm Brooke Hoover. A Louisiana native, actor, writer and comedian. I've lost 100 pounds through diet and exercise or shall I say "lifestyle changes". My twenty year and counting health journey has taught me that just like taking a diet pill for weight loss, body positivity doesn't magically happen overnight. I'm working on re-gaining my self esteem and re-kindling my love affair with Cajun and Southern comfort food in a healthier way all the while juggling eating as clean as I can, re-establishing myself in the entertainment industry which, as we know, is historically fat phobic all the while showing my inner phat girl some love - that's phat with a PH - pretty hot and tempting. Let me tell y'all a tale or two...

This is a warning for family members and/or other people out there who judge smokers (or even former smokers) You may not like what you're about to hear (or read for my transcript peeps) But, stay with me to the end, the ending is happy.

Well, newsflash, I smoked. I'm not proud of it. I'm not proud that I smoked for almost half of my life. But, I'm proud that I quit. Before I tell you how I did it and what worked and didn't work for me, let's get into the mind of a smoker...or at least a 15 year old - yes a 15 year old who just wants to feel cool and may have found the secret to weight loss (or so she thought).

[80s/90s inspirational throwback stock music]

Summer. Late 80s. Cashiers, North Carolina. We're on vacation. Therefore my dad Bob aka Hoover Bob whips out his alter ego, which is not much different than regular Bob except he smokes. Cigars. Swisher Sweets.

And I love sitting on the deck watching the cigar burn (down to his thick fingers before blowing and cursing them out. Sorry I had to throw in that Sheryl Crowe reference there) and while I'm not a fan of the cigar smell - I still am NOT, I love tapping the cigar to ash it into the ash tray for him.

Now, before y'all judge hard core, this was the 80's in the mountains of North Carolina before we had internet. Hell, we only had three television channels from a satellite. I'd burned through (pun intended) my summer reading cause I was a good girl like that - a good girl who loved watching cigars burn.

Flash forward a few years to the mid 1990s. The years of our French exchange student friends. Of course they all smoked. (Lucky Strikes) and they all looked tres cool (or so I thought) But they wouldn't give me one because [Brooke does a bad French accent] "It is a disgusting habit and you are too young." (We were all the same age - 15.)

Oh and of course Momma smoked too. She ended up quitting too - more on that

later. But, she always said just like the French friends [Momma's voice] "It's a disgusting habit, baby, don't ever do it. I wish I could quit." As she took a puff of her Carlton Menthol 100. But she did try to quit several times including a patch that the doctor gave her which made her super racy that she had to jump into a cold shower so I said, that's not good. the stuff that's supposed to help you is as bad as the stuff that got you there in the first place.

I think what enticed me to smoking the most wasn't that I was surrounded by it, surrounded by people telling me it was a bad habit as they took a drag - but I should say "surrounded" may not be the best word because Anne and Bob were polite smokers who smoked outside only or held their cigarette way far out of the car window. It wasn't the ads that made it look cool. It wasn't even the old wives tale that it keeps you skinny - makes you skinny is what my mind heard (more on that later, y'all) or the Virginia Slims points that got you cool stuff - it was the NC-17 rated movie KIDS.

One day I just was watching the movie in my room and they all smoked so of course I go and steal a pack of Momma's Carlton Menthol 100's and started smoking my heart out. My room must have smelled disgusting and I had the worst headache and dry mouth but I felt cool and I didn't want to eat !!!

But, I knew a girl couldn't exist on Carlton Menthol 100's alone so my mom's best friend - ex best friend - would leave Virginia Slims in her mail box for me.

Virginia Slims - We all know that there's a nick name for them but I'm too much of a lady to say that name [CUE BURP NOISE]

I did get a sweet Zebra director's chair and set of faux tortoise shell bracelets from smoking enough though. So, that was...cool ????

And, then one day, Momma caught me red handed - well more like yellow dried funky index finger - I Mean that's what happens if you smoke, y'all. And, all I remember her saying is, [Momma's voice] "Brooke Anne you better quit now because you'll never be able to quit if you keep going." But, that was poor timing because I had my driver's license and a 1992 Jeep Cherokee so I had freedom and I could smoke whenever I wanted - so long as I febreezed the hell out of myself before I saw Momma or Dad - because a smoker or a former smoker can always smell a smoker. Y'all with me?

So, I did a pretty stealthy job at hiding it from my momma, my dad, family members and school teachers. Basically, anyone of authority.

I really, really did NOT want my aunt to find out though. That'd be even worse than my mom or my dad finding out (since they were smokers or part time summer time cigar smokers) so they kind of "got it." One day I was driving down Drusilla Lane listening to the soundtrack from Pulp Fiction most likely and because this wasn't an

area where any friends or family lived, I thought I could have a cig. I'm rolling down listening to "Girl, You'll be a Woman Soon" and all of a sudden I see a white mercury SUV and a lady that looks like my mom - or well, looks like my aunt - because my momma and my aunt look alike and then I think it IS my aunt and I keep telling myself "No it's not Nanny. It's not Nanny. It's okay. Take another drag." See, my aunt not only is a big NON smoker, she's also a dental hygienist so she is REALLY REALLY REALLY against smoking. She turns and looks at me and does a double take - a double take better than I've ever seen in anyone in Hollywood do - and I told myself it wasn't her. But, I think it was. But, that still didn't stop me. It was almost like the secrecy of it kept me wanting more.

One day, my friends, Hoover Bob and I all went to eat at Outback. they have a long wait so we have to take one of those pager things and wait. we're killing time, I'm rolling around on the grass as usual and my purse falls and spills out all its contents. Including my Virginia Slims.

Hoover Bob comes up to me and I think he's going to make me eat the pack of cigarettes like his dad, Pa-Paw once made him and his little brother do when they were little to make them not smoke again (didn't work, Pa-Paw) and all Bob says to me is, [Hoover Bob's deep Southern drawl voice], "Brooke, saw those cigarettes...." And I am tasting the cigarettes in my mouth already and I'm really just wanting to eat some Alice Springs Chicken. Hoover Bob continues [Deep Southern drawl], "And, you better let me bum a couple. But, really, girl, you should stop that shit."

I get out of South Louisiana and high school almost unscathed and undiscovered in my smoking endeavors except for one time when I was driving down to New Orleans with my best friend and my mom's ex best friend and I was smoking out the car window and we drove by some people from my high school who stared at us in shock. Smoking had become like second nature to me so I didn't notice their looks of shock and judgment. A few months after that, on a school trip to Spain, the trip leader pulls me aside and he's not the type of guy you want to pull you aside because he is touchy feely and way more emotional than any one person ought to be on a trip to Spain and he says, "Brooke I'm actually surprised you turned out to be a good egg. I was warned by some school parents that you're a smoker and a bad seed. But, you're not." He opens his arms. "Hug it out?" I gave him a weird half ass hug then found my two bad seed friends and we went and smoked in an alley way.

Now it's college time and everyone in the theatre department smokes. It's just a ritual. We ALL smoke. Even right before we have to do Suzuki which isn't the Suzuki motorcycle or not even the Suzuki music technique, it's a physical theatre technique where you have to stomp your heart out to Japanese music and then you fall on the ground and walk around like a mystical being. It's all very important theatre stuff. But, we did this. After smoking cigarettes. I don't know how I did this. Oh, and did I mention I was 250 pounds? See, the cigarettes didn't help me lose weight like I thought they would.

After college, we still smoked but one of my best friends was really trying to quit. I told him, "But, B, I'm so afraid to quit because it'll make me gain weight." And, he's like, "B, that's a common misconception. Smoking doesn't help you lose weight. It just keeps you stagnant. So, while it may PREVENT you from gaining more weight, it's also keeping you STATIONARY in one spot." My name is Brooke for a reason. And, this was around the time I really started getting into law of attraction and hippie dippie stuff and feeling the flow. This idea was so far THE MOST VIABLE for me to understand and for me to want to quit. It was around the time I started the South Beach Diet principals and I wanted a change. But, I also just wanted one more cigarette.

They were what got me through long car rides. Or, they were the reward from huffing it into the city, getting to my destination and having a cigarette (ignoring the fact that I was huffing up the steps from the F train). I thought cigarettes were a friend of mine. But, they were controlling me.

One of the things I can't stand about myself is that it oftentimes takes a come to Jesus moment for me to change a behavior. Smoking was no different.

One day, I had a job interview for a real job. At a popular TV network in the archives. Steady gig. Paid over \$45000. Health Insurance. I celebrated the awesome job interview with a cigarette outside of Rockefeller Center. Whoops did I just give it away? Anyways, I have a weird feeling in my body as I take the PATH train home to Jersey (home to Jersey? Aw, did I just say that?) And it isn't the cigarettes. It's that something is NOT right with Momma.

And, it wasn't. While I was pretty much securing a secure job with room for growth, Momma was being rushed to the Emergency Room. The ambulance was going down the winding roads of Lake Toxaway, North Carolina. Because, she had a horrible asthma attack that made her oxygen level the level that could cause brain damage or well, worse. Yeah, she was an asthma patient...and a smoker. I was on a flight the next morning down the hospital. So, thankfully Momma, because she's a sturdy Cajun woman bounced back after two months of recovering and we both said, "Um yeah maybe we should stop smoking."

So, we stopped. Cold turkey.

I ate a lot of ginger and wasabi with my sushi before improv rehearsals and my friend from my improv troupe told me that was probably helping with my smoking cessation. I was proud. Then I worked on Boardwalk Empire and we had to smoke those fake cigarettes. And I picked up real smoking again right away. This time American Spirits - they're natural and eco friendly - hell they send me seed packets on my birthday - they're the good guys. I tried to knit to quit. But, then I wanted to smoke after I made a lot of progress knitting as a reward. Simultaneously, down in North Carolina, Momma had started smoking again, too.

Momma moved up with me to New Jersey and we were a smoking duo. It feels so

weird to be an adult child and to smoke with your parent. But, I did it. Until Christmas Eve circa 2012 when Momma starts having another asthma attack and my boyfriend Harry and I rush her to the ER. People still to this day don't understand the severity of asthma and how Momma was slowly losing oxygen to her brain. So, Harry screams "Bring this lady in the back now. She's having a heart attack!" And, boy, they listened to him. I will forever be grateful because seconds count when someone is losing their breath.

After seeing Momma in the hospital. Again. We damn well knew that third time wouldn't be a charm. So, Momma quit officially cold turkey. Never had one ever again.

It wasn't that easy for me because I still worried quitting smoking, quitting the feeding (pun intended) of that hand mouth connection would make me start over-eating (I was on track with my weight loss, y'all.) But I knew I couldn't do it because it would be too tempting for Momma. And, I felt like a fraud because I condoned healthy and clean-ish eating but I was still smoking. So, one day we were in Jack's 99 cent store in mid-town and I came across this little homeopathy kit by Boiron and it was on sale for like under \$10 claiming to be homeopathy to quit smoking. And, y'all know what? In two weeks it worked like a charm.

Ironically (or actually maybe not ironically because it's a medical fact), my right index finger and fingernail got less yellow and dry. My skin got better. My body changed and I lost more weight - not that the weight part matters - I got HEALTHIER. I added years to my life. And, yes if we're counting, I did lose more weight. Because, I had moved myself out of a scared stagnation.

Like all the other former smokers or the quitters - the good quitters I should say - I was DISGUSTED by the smell of cigarette smoke. Still am to this day.

Something that only cost me \$9.99 was able to combat something that was costing me my life. AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH Look at that.

Thanks so much for listening, y'all. It is my hope to inspire, uplift and entertain you with this Who's Dat Phat Girl podcast. So, if you're HUNGRY for more, you can book me to speak or perform my solo show that inspired this podcast Phat Girl Costumes written by yours truly and directed by my best bud Brian Lady at your virtual or in person event. Please visit Brookehoover.com/fluffybuttproductions or email me at contactbrookehoover@gmail.com for more information. And, let's follow each other on instagram - I'm @Br00keH00ver and those O's are not the letter O but they're ZEROS. Not because I want to be a size 0 but because I guess I'm just so clever with my late 90s Yahoo! self

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