

I'm Good Enough for Me! recounts one woman's journey to self-acceptance. It suggests a revolutionary way of thinking about body image. It is an invitation to embrace yourself for being uniquely, wonderfully you.

I'm Good Enough For Me!

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**I'm Good Enough for Me!**

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# **I'm Good Enough for Me!**

**by**

**McCarley Slater**

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**EUREKA!**



**A**s I stood in line at the grocery store casually scanning the headlines on various gossip magazines, I noticed one in particular, something about revenge diets, and how Reese, Jessica, and Drew got skinny to get back at their exes and are now looking better than

ever. I pondered these words for a moment. I thought about how I would have reacted if I had been a young, impressionable girl reading this headline. It's not the fact that these celebrities are skinny and beautiful that bothered me. What really got to me was the headline suggesting that the skinnier they are, the better looking they are. I stared at the pictures accompanying this disturbing headline, entranced by one image of an ultra-skeletal Hollywood actress frolicking in her bikini on the beach. For a moment, I let myself slip back into a seventeen-year-old's mentality. Would I have believed that these cadaverous women looked better than ever? Would I have held myself to this radical standard? Of course! That is what society had engraved in my brain since I was old enough to register my own self-image. I probably would have gone home and starved myself simply because I didn't look like a concentration camp survivor.

I turned to my infant daughter, Olivia, relaxing comfortably in her carrier. She gave me one of her heart-melting toothless grins and I suddenly felt an overwhelming calling to change the way women's bodies are viewed. I wondered what I could possibly do to keep her from falling prey to these unattainable standards foisted upon young women by their peers and the media. A phrase popped into my head—I am

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good enough for me! EUREKA! I could see it now. A revolution of young women overcoming these absurd beliefs of not being good enough for the world when all that really matters is that they are good enough for themselves. Not a new diet, but a new way of thinking. I never wanted Olivia to feel that God had made her into a person who was less than perfectly okay, no matter what size or shape she is. I went home, made a cup of coffee, and sat down at my computer. I began brainstorming about moments in my life that had, somewhere along the way, caused me to form a distorted view of my body image. Things that had seemed so insignificant before came flooding out. I realized that many of my childhood memories had affected the way I came to value my body later in life.

I remembered the woman who fitted my cheerleading uniform in seventh grade. Even after more than a decade, the memory is crystal-clear. She pronounced me the owner of a bubble butt and told me she would have to order my skirts one inch longer in the back. From that day forward, I identified myself as the girl with the big butt. Oh, how I hated that big butt! A few years later, I came down with a vicious case of mono that laid me up for six weeks. I returned to school an emaciated shell of my former self. All anyone could talk about



was how wonderful I looked! As if the one hundred fifteen pounds I weighed before was not skinny enough, I now felt pressure to maintain the svelte ninety-five pound bag of bones I had become.

A lifetime of long-suppressed memories were soon unleashed. I knew I couldn't possibly be alone; other women had to be going through this same realization. I could finally put my finger on the reason I had been on a diet for the last ten years. The thought of rescuing Olivia and the rest of her generation from a similar fate could not escape my mind. If I could do one small thing to empower women, this would be it. Thus began my journey to achieve this simple objective—saving women from tainted self-esteem and negative body image.

No sooner had my life-changing revelation crystallized in my mind than I realized something. I was no doctor of psychology. I had no credentials to prove that what I said mattered. Who would listen to me? Even worse, who would believe me? I was a twenty-five-year-old stay-at-home mom. Wait just one second! What about my newfound philosophy? How could I so quickly abandon it? In just that instant, it hit me—I am good enough for me! It didn't just apply to body

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image, but to all of the negative thoughts that tell you you're not meant for greatness. After all, I am a woman who has struggled to live with these issues. I don't need to have a Ph.D. to prove my understanding of this subject. I was SAVED by my own philosophy! If what I had endured and overcome could help other women, I had a responsibility to share it. I would put my heart on the line. If it helped just one girl, even if that girl was me and no one else ever took a look at what I had to say, I would have accomplished something great. I would love me ... and why not? After all, I *am* good enough and so are you!

## MY JOURNEY



**T**he little voice in my head that always told me I wasn't good enough began eroding my self-esteem as far back as the fifth grade. I went through what I like to call an "awkward" phase. I was short, a little chubby, and had a huge gap between my two front teeth. I wore big red

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glasses that echoed my little round cheeks. My best friend was a fellow classmate, a very precocious girl who already looked like she was eighteen. One day on the playground, we were trying to get the boys' attention by playfully interrupting their soccer game. I had a major crush—my first *real* crush—on one of the boys. As every girl knows, the manner in which your first crush responds to you can forever change life as a fifth-grader knows it. Even though there had been no prior competition or obvious animosity between me and my voluptuous little friend, and even though she didn't feel any particular attraction to that one soccer player, she decided to give me a nickname. "Pudgy pig!" she yelled across the soccer field. "Get the ball, pudgy pig!" When the boys realized she was calling *me* by that horrific name, they laughed hysterically. I was mortified. I went home, stared at my naked body in the mirror, and cried. Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.... What a crock!

My mom sat with me at the kitchen table. It took her a while to coax it out of me. I was too embarrassed to recount the tale, even to her. I was ashamed because, in my mind, I believed that if everyone at school thought I was a pudgy pig, then she must see it too. I was convinced my predicament must have

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been common knowledge and I had just been let in on this heretofore well-kept secret. She kept telling me that when I smiled, I lit up a room. Instead of accepting the compliment, I wondered why she didn't just tell me I wasn't fat. What a fool I had been to not see it before. I determined, right then and there, to stop crying to her about my situation and simply set out to change it.

The ball was rolling. My adolescent mind was hard at work, scheming solutions to what I perceived as a fixable problem. I began sneaking my mom's over-the-counter diet pills out of the medicine cabinet after everyone was asleep. I hated my body. I was ashamed to wear a swimsuit in front of my family, even in my own back yard. I remember reading in a magazine that if you chew your food one hundred times per bite, your body will work off the calories and not absorb as much fat. A week before the family planned to go on a swimming vacation at the nearby KOA campground, I began chewing every bite one hundred times. I did sit-ups in my room at night so I would not feel fat in my swimsuit. I was eleven years old.

If I could go back in time, I would spend less time worrying about my body image and more time enjoying being a

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young and carefree kid. A bad seed had been planted in my young mind. As the years went by, that seedling was nurtured by society, my peers, and by my own self-hatred until its roots were firmly planted in my psyche. I went through adolescence reminding myself every day that I was not good enough. In high school, I wore a size four. I had what would now or then be considered the perfect figure, yet I was never happy with the way I looked. When I went off to college, the gymnastics and cheerleading that had been such a part of my life in high school came to a screeching halt. I replaced those activities with school and work. It was my first taste of the real world and instead of carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders... it soon showed up on my big bubble butt!

I'm sure you've heard of the "freshman fifteen." Well, when I came home after just one semester, I had put on twenty pounds! When you're only five foot four, twenty pounds might as well be fifty. I had a hard enough time accepting my body before, but now I was totally disgusted with myself. Even though I was ashamed of my body, I put on that smile my mother always bragged about and I bravely faced all of the people I hadn't seen since graduation. I acted as if nothing had changed, but inside it was a different story. I was so

embarrassed to discover I was the only one of all my friends to have packed on the dreaded college weight.

Why, when we put on a few pounds all of a sudden, do we feel like the absolute scum of the earth? My personal favorite is when people point out your excess baggage, as if you hadn't noticed it when you looked in the mirror every day. I just want to say to them, "Thank you for sharing that enlightening information with me. I actually had no idea that I had gained weight until you said something!" At Christmas that year, my grandpa patted my arm and said to me, "You've beefed up a bit!" Beefed up? What am I, a cow? I fought back tears. The voice inside my head grew louder and louder.

That time marked a watershed in my life. Looking back, now, I attribute much of the upheaval to the changes in my body and my perceived self-worth. My first real adult relationship began to fizzle; it had begun when I was still in high school—a thin girl. At one point, once I'd started college and added some weight, he actually used the words, "You're getting fat and I can't handle it." Several such heart-breaking conversations ultimately led to our splitting up. Although I was emotionally wrecked, deep down inside, I didn't blame him. I blamed myself. I felt worthless. How could anyone love me this way?

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I opted to not go back to school the next semester. Instead, I got my own apartment. It was to be the beginning of many character-building experiences in my young life. I have learned, since then, that “character-building” often translated to “gut-wrenching.” For me it was the realization that my life might not turn out the way I had expected it to.

I spent the next few years believing that, because I was never going to be a size four again, I would never be worthy of great things. I allowed those thoughts to dictate the way I lived my life for a long time. I lost my self-respect and made some terrible decisions. The problem was not that I was slightly overweight. It was that I believed that, because I was overweight, I did not deserve my self-respect. And if I could not respect myself, how could I honestly expect anyone else to respect me? My confidence was lost in the midst of my negative thoughts.

Starting from about age nineteen, I became the queen of crazy diets. I started off with the no-carb diet. For six months, I did not put one single carbohydrate into my mouth. I was determined to get those twenty pounds off. The hilarity of it all was that I actually believed that a diet of bacon, hamburger meat, and cheese was actually going to yield long-term weight-



loss success. The weight came off, but in the meantime, I was an unpredictable, carbohydrate-deprived monster! The worst part was that my hard-won success was short-lived. As soon as I began to eat bread again, my body went into shock. It held on to every french fry, hamburger bun, and doughnut as if I was a hungry bear preparing for the hibernation of all winters. In two months, that is exactly what I looked like. I gained back every pound I had lost, plus two more!

My mom told me that her friend's daughter had lost weight on a forty-eight-hour miracle diet. My first clue should have been that I had to stay up until 3 a.m. when the infomercial came on so I could order it. I sprung for expedited shipping so I could get started as soon as possible. My enthusiasm turned to skepticism when the package arrived, containing nothing more than what looked like a bottle of mixed fruit juice. For two days, I drank four ounces of this mystery juice, diluted with copious quantities of water, every few hours. I ate nothing and spent the better part of the two days in the bathroom. At the end of this little ordeal, I had lost only seven pounds and I didn't even have the energy to celebrate. Needless to say, it only took forty-eight more hours for the miraculously lost weight to return. I rode this crazy dieting rollercoaster for over a year.

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When all else failed, I went back to the no-carb thing, only to see my weight yo-yo with no real solution in sight.

Next, I tried one of those drink-a-shake-for-breakfast-and-lunch diet plans. I followed the guidelines by drinking two prepared beverages for breakfast and lunch, and then ate a light dinner. Eventually, I began jogging every day after work. For once, I felt like I was actually accomplishing something. I was totally avoiding the bathroom scale, but my clothes were getting looser and other people began to notice that I was thinner. I decided that I could step it up a notch with a little help from a powerful fat burner that I picked up at the vitamin store. This was before ephedrine was taken off the market. It wasn't long before I noticed some strange things happening to my body. My hands shook, my heart pounded, and I began to sweat profusely at all times. I could hardly sit still for more than a few minutes. Did I stop taking it? Absolutely not! I was getting skinny, so why would I want to go and do a crazy thing like stop taking the fat burners? Shaky hands, pounding heart, profuse sweating, and an inability to sit still seemed like a small sacrifice for the results I was seeing. Instead of jogging one mile, I could—and did—jog three. The pills totally killed my appetite, so I cut out the one real meal a day that I had been eating on the drink-two-

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shakes-a-day plan. I had so much energy, I began staying out all night dancing with my friends. I was on a downward spiral emotionally, but the desire to be thin consumed me.

It was not until I met my future husband, Scott, and an entirely new group of friends that I began to realize that I had much more to offer than a cute figure. Even though I still had issues with my body, it became easier to feel comfortable in my own skin. I eventually took myself off of the pills. My weight fluctuated throughout our relationship and continues to do so, yet Scott's love was consistent even when my love for myself was under scrutiny. When I had my daughter, I realized there is so much more to life than having the perfect body. My whole perspective on life changed. In the hospital after I gave birth, I was heavier than I had ever been... and happier. I felt a sense of power in being a woman. My body had created this amazing little person, how could I possibly be bothered by a few extra pounds!

I have learned most of life's lessons the hard way. Learning to love and accept my body has been the hardest. I hope somewhere between these covers that women of all ages can learn from my mistakes. I finally figured out that self-worth starts on the inside. Even the word starts with self, for

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goodness' sake. Today's young girls are trying to live up to what society views as perfection. This is unfair and likely unachievable. The truth is that we are perfect if we say we are. Speak it and you will believe it. I tell myself at least once a day, "I am good enough for me!", and you know what? I feel more confident than I ever have. Of course, we should strive to be healthy and take pride in ourselves, but whether you are a healthy size two or a healthy size twenty does not determine whether you are worthy of happiness in other aspects of your life. Confidence is your best accessory. Don't leave home without it.

On my journey to self-respect and self-satisfaction, I have developed several weapons against my battle with negative body image. In the following pages, I explain how you can use them, too. I give you permission to laugh, if you promise to learn something!

I'm Good Enough for Me! recounts one woman's journey to self-acceptance. It suggests a revolutionary way of thinking about body image. It is an invitation to embrace yourself for being uniquely, wonderfully you.

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