



# YOUR BODY

Meet seven women who overcame self-criticism and embraced their perfectly imperfect selves

AS TOLD TO GINA ROBERTS-GREY

## “PETITE FRAME”

**Tiffany Pittman, 36,  
Delray Beach, Florida**

I was in fourth grade when bike shorts hit the fashion scene, and I was so excited when my mom bought me a pair. But when I stepped onto the school bus in my new shorts, some boys said I was too skinny to wear them and all the other kids laughed. I never wore that outfit again.

Growing up, I saw thick as the epitome of being a woman, and despite being cornbread-fed I didn't get the goods. In high school, at size 0, I felt inadequate and ugly. I prayed to gain weight and forced myself to eat. Nothing worked. In college I accepted my size and began weight lifting to sculpt my body. I've been working out ever since because it makes me feel good. I wish I could have loved my body when I was younger. I learned when you appreciate yourself, you attract people who appreciate you.

# HEALTHY & HAPPY

# I ♥ MY...

## “CURVY SHAPE”

**Natasha Coleman, 35,  
Panama City, Florida**

I am not a skinny woman, but that doesn't mean I'm not fit. I have always been confident in my appearance, even back in 2010 when I was at my heaviest, 438 pounds. That's when not fitting into an airplane seat made me realize that I couldn't continue to live at that weight, so I set out to change it.

Exercise was never a factor in my life; I didn't play any sports as a kid. But I fell in love with Zumba, which helped me shed 228 pounds. To keep my fitness foundation and teach others what worked for me, I became a certified Zumba instructor. However, despite being a curvy size 12, people often look at me funny when I tell them I teach Zumba. They'll look me up and down and ask, "You teach fitness?" At first, the comments were tough to hear. I used to get upset that I didn't have the slim appearance typically associated with being an exercise instructor.

But I got over that. I believe in loving yourself at any size. I did when I was overweight. I continue to love myself no matter what others think.

Recently, a small lady in my class remarked, "You can really move for such a large lady. I could barely keep up." My first thought was that despite losing half my size, people still think I'm big. Then I was glad that even though I outweighed her by almost 100 pounds, she was having a hard time keeping up with me!



**"I believe in loving yourself at any size. I continue to love myself no matter what others think."**

## “MUSCULAR ARMS”

**Andrea Simon, 28,  
Charlotte, North Carolina**

Since elementary school, baring my arms made me feel uncomfortable. I've dealt with questions like "Do you pump iron?" and references to my "guns." I dreamed of wearing tank tops and looking the way other girls looked in them. I wanted to feel small and petite, which I equated with femininity.

When I decided to lose weight and get in shape and actually began pumping iron, I discovered that, because of these arms, I could hold my body in yoga poses and do other things I never knew I could. It was the first time I embraced feeling strong. That acceptance and strength felt feminine and sexy to me. Seeing others work hard for the muscular arms I was born with gave me an appreciation for them. Today I'm confident putting on a sleeveless shirt and love showing off my arms. It feels great to embrace my body. I wish I had shown love to my arms sooner.



**"Seeing others work hard for the muscular arms I was born with gave me an appreciation for them."**



## “SMALL BREASTS”

**Fatima Scipio, 40, Trenton**

Having breasts smaller than most of my friends made me the target of cruel jokes from adolescent boys. I remember wishing my breasts were larger because I didn't want to be part of the "itty bitty titty committee" anymore.

Growing up with small breasts made me feel like a boy. My more endowed friends' dresses fit their bodies snug around the bust, but mine just hung. I laugh about it now, but back then it was not funny. In my house I stuffed my bra with tissue to see what a bigger size looked like but never had the guts to go outside with padding.

My parents have always been very supportive of their kids, and my mother was very influential in helping me develop my self-confidence. She let me know who I was and who God said I was regardless of what others said about me. That encouragement helped me start to appreciate my

breasts and love everything about myself. As my self-esteem grew I stopped wishing for a bigger

bra size and started enjoying clothing that accentuated my A cups. After I had my son I went up a size and cherished that as well.

Having a smaller bust didn't define me as a girl nor does it define me as a woman. When you learn to embrace your body it is a wonderful feeling that gives you freedom. We are wonderfully made in all shapes and sizes. ▷



**"As my self-esteem grew, I stopped wishing for a bigger bra size."**

