

## PROFILE

Becca Marino is a Memphian, a certified personal trainer and an example of strength. She recovered from years of eating disorders and turned her experience into a lifelong devotion to wellness. As the owner and founder of Fitness Inspiration! Inc., she devotes her knowledge and energy toward helping others maintain a healthy, active, positive life. She wanted to share her story with H+F's readers to make it known that it is possible to overcome this disease and to move forward in hope and self-love.



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*I was clinically diagnosed w/ anorexia nervosa at 14, bulimia at 16 and exercise addiction in my 20s. I acknowledged my problem in 2005. I was 25 years old. I learned that transformation is possible if you are willing to ask for help from qualified professionals and work your butt off. The human body is AMAZING and has the ability to heal and repair itself—it's never too late. Knowing that people are investing in you, and believe in you even when you don't, is a POWERFUL transformer. At this point, I love, respect, and cherish ALL of me—inside and out. Engaging in eating disorder behaviors or negative thoughts about my body would be choosing to do harm to myself.*

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### The Self-Esteem Factor

Building a positive self-image in adolescent girls is crucial in preventing the development of disordered eating. These stats below underscore just how vulnerable young girls are to the pressures of matching up to our society's often unrealistic and unhealthy standards for female beauty, and the crucial role parents play in helping girls navigate these difficult years. Studies show that once girls reach their teen years, they are increasingly less likely to trust or communicate with adults.

- The top wish among all girls is for their **parents to communicate better with them**, which includes more frequent and open conversations about what is happening in their own lives.
- **Seven in ten** girls believe they are not good enough or do not measure up in some way, including their looks, performance in school and relationships with friends and family members.
- 71% of girls with low self-esteem feel their **appearance does not measure up**, including not feeling pretty enough, thin enough or stylish or trendy enough (compared to 29% of girls with high self-esteem).
- 78% of girls with low self-esteem admit that it is **hard to feel good in school** when you do not feel good about how you look (compared to 54% of girls with high self-esteem).
- **A girl's self-esteem is more strongly related** to how she views her own body shape and body weight, than how much she actually weighs.
- 75% of girls with low self-esteem reported **engaging in negative activities** such as disordered eating, cutting, bullying, smoking or drinking when feeling badly about themselves (Compared to 25% of girls with high self-esteem).

\* Adapted from The Dove Self-Esteem Fund's study: *Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self-Esteem.*

### WHAT WERE YOUR STEPS TO RECOVERY?

- Acknowledging I am not in control of the disorder(s).
- Saying, 'life is not meant to be lived like this...consumed by strategically planning my day around hours of exercising; missing out on quality time with friends and family to exercise; being in a bad mood in a restaurant if I can't find exactly what I want on the menu; eating in secret; looking in the mirror for evidence of body-improvement multiple times a day.'
- Telling a safe person, 'I want help so I can overcome this and I am willing to do what it takes.'
- Selecting (with the help of my psychologist, an eating disorder specialist) an in-patient treatment center that specializes in the treatment of eating disorders.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER GIRLS/ WOMEN GOING THROUGH AN EATING DISORDER?

- Ask yourself if you really want to live one more day this way.
- Reach out to safe people and tell them you are struggling. Safe people care about you and will want to support you.
- Ask them to help you in identifying local professionals who specialize in the treatment of eating disorders and body image.
- Make an educated decision when choosing your team. Interview each professional by asking questions about their qualifications, experience and approach to treating your pain. NOT everyone or every treatment center that claims to treat eating disorders is actually qualified to do so.

Contact Becca at [BelievelBringItAchieveIt.com](http://BelievelBringItAchieveIt.com).  
Becca also founded the non-profit B.W.V. Warriors – A Movement for Beauty. Worth. Value...from the INSIDE out. [BWVwarriors.com](http://BWVwarriors.com).