

# HOW YOGA CHANGED THE WAY I VIEW MY BODY

by Kristen McGee

What woman doesn't have some issue with her body? I didn't notice my figure until I was in the ninth grade and a girlfriend told me that my thighs were looking fat. Before then, I was just happy with what my active body did for me; I wasn't hyper aware of how it looked physically. After that painful comment, I started to punish my body. I didn't want fat thighs so I ate less and less every day. By the time I entered high school, I was severely underweight and my parents intervened. I was lucky enough to have a strong and supportive family so I never got to the point of hospitalization; but it did make a lasting impact on how I viewed my body and food.

In 1994, I moved to New York City to attend NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Lucky for me, yoga was a big part of the theater program. We practiced in our movement classes and in the morning before school. I discovered the original Jivamukti on Second Avenue and started taking classes there. Soon, I started to feel my body again. I cherished the way it moved and breathed through the asanas. I fell into a deep state of contented rest at the end of each practice. It was the first time in years that I felt like the little girl who loved to live in her body and didn't judge it from the outside.

Disordered eating doesn't go away overnight and I still have some quirky habits when it comes to food. Yoga has been my life raft through these past 20

years. After graduation, I got some work in small film and television roles. I kept practicing and teaching yoga to keep me grounded. Now that I am a career yogi, every day of practice is a lesson to me.

Motherhood was one of the best things that could have happened to me. I practiced yoga every day of my pregnancy. I started to view my body in a new way and have so much respect for what it's done for me. It's difficult to believe that I had a beautiful little boy growing inside of me and now he is here with me.

I started practicing gently soon after Timothy Grayson was born and I feel so alive and inspired. My body is completely different now. It's womanly and I have bigger hips and a bit of a tummy, which I would like to keep. I'm no longer interested in having the perfect looking body. In yoga and in life, there is no such thing as outside perfection. Being happy, healthy, balanced and in love with my body, my life and my family is about as perfect as anything could ever be.



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