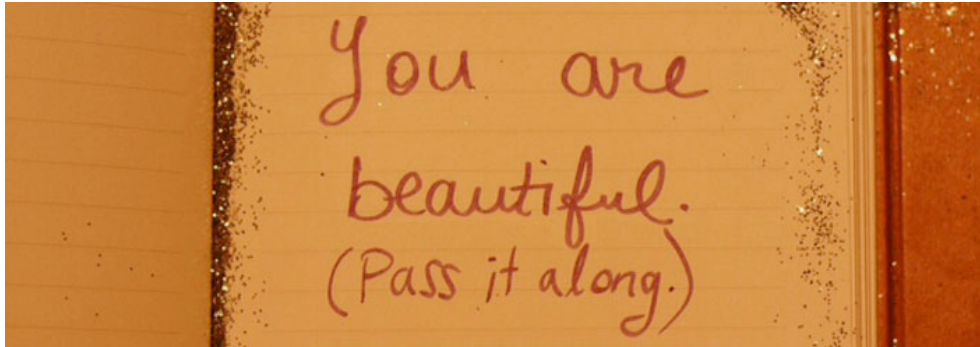


I Used to be 35 Pounds Lighter Than I am Today

By Maura Byrne

<http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/you-are-beautiful.html>



The other day when a young woman told me that her number one goal in life is to be thin, my heart ached for her. Ladies, I am alive today to tell you that there is more to life than a number you see on a scale.

Our society defines beauty as a number on a scale, a dress size, inappropriately clad swimsuit models, pornography, the number of calories you eat in a day and the fact that you don't eat hamburgers or ice cream. And each day, millions of girls and women from every country, get on a scale and hope to quench their yearning for happiness and success through the number that flashes back at them. I speak from experience when I say, that is fleeting beauty. I used to be 35 pounds lighter than I am today and could have easily died. My life, your life, is a miracle: cherish it.

It took me a while to comprehend that seeing my ideal number on the scale would never fulfill me. It's so empty and tiring. The scale can't measure your strength, beauty, courage, determination, perseverance, joy, love, gentleness, compassion, athletic ability and purpose. So you see, your validation of beauty and sense of acceptance is not the width of your waist or the number you see on the scale. You aren't your hair and skin color. You aren't your shoe size or lipstick shade. You are not the number of miles you can run or sit-ups you can do. You aren't the number you see in your jeans or the number of calories you consume at lunch.

What you are radiates from the beauty of your soul. You are beautiful because you are compassionate and sensitive. You are beautiful because you love passionately, have a gentle spirit and giving heart. You are beautiful because you find your worth in God the Father. You are beautiful because you are His daughter. You are beautiful because you embrace the challenge to be an authentic woman. Authentic beauty flows from the heart onto the face. Authentic beauty is compassion, forgiveness, gentleness, modesty, courage and strength. Authentic beauty is the Blessed Mother. Let us seek to mirror her beauty.

*"Mary was not 'full of grace' because she was beautiful;
she was beautiful because she was full of grace."*

- Archbishop Fulton Sheen