



## Learning To Fly By Dannielle Miller

### Beginnings...

Danni started her career as a High School teacher and is now the National Director of **enlighten education**, a company that runs in-school workshops for girls. **enlighten** helps girls develop their self esteem and a positive body image. The company works with thousands of girls each year and is excited at being announced as a Winner for NSW I ACT Small Business of the Year, Children's Services. Danni's work in developing various programs that enhance outcomes for young people has also been recognised in her being judged as a Finalist for NSW I ACT Small Business Champion Entrepreneur. She thrives on her work with thousands of teen girls each year, and enjoys working with the media as a guest expert on adolescent issues. She also squeezes in time to write her own blog designed to support educators and parents of teen girls:

<http://enlighteneducation.edublogs.org>

Danni juggles all this fun with her very important role as "Mummy" to Teyah, 8, and Kye, 6. She loves Wonder Woman, chocolate, her work and reading. She is terrified of lizards.

Danni has just finished reading an insightful new book for educators and parents by Courtney E. Martin, "Perfect Girls, Starving Daughters, the Frightening New Normality of Hating Your Body." Courtney describes the fact that for many young girls, hating your body and feeling inadequate (too fat, too thin, too ugly, too stupid...there are so many "toos" aren't there?!) has become almost an accepted, normal part of teen girl life.

#### Listen girls, who said it had to be this way?

I have my own theories as to why we girls OWN this negative self talk (and let's face it, the boys are not engaging in this self hatred to the same degree). Popular culture and the media have a lot to answer for – but hey, I might save that rant for another column because once I get going on this stuff there is no stopping me! Instead, here I want to focus on what we can do to start healing ourselves and creating new, powerful stories. Now.

See girls, I believe we can do anything, we just don't have to be everything. And certainly not all at once. Trying to be successful, popular, pretty and thin all at the same time is just exhausting. Imagine how much we gals could all get done if we harnessed some of the energy we are using on trying to change ourselves and used it instead to change the world! Or just to have fun for goodness sakes!

I don't want to Perfect. BORING. EXHAUSTING. IMPOSSIBLE. And, I for one, am way over being a body prisoner. I suspect you are too. ☺

#### So – to new beginnings.

Like all things worth doing, achieving self acceptance won't just happen over night. And there won't be just one magic "light bulb" moment. But if we really try, we can all take steps that start us on this vital, life changing journey.

WHAT IS ONE SMALL STEP YOU WILL MAKE THIS WEEK TO END THE CULTURE OF SELF HATRED AND HELP CREATE A NEW BEGINNING FOR YOURSELF AS A YOUNG WOMEN?

Here are a few ideas that might help shine some light on a new path for you to travel:

1. Don't weigh yourself. Really, just stop ok? Refuse to let numbers define you.
2. Read some great girl power books and magazines – "Indigo" is a great start! Try the "Girlosophy" series, Nikki Goldstein's books, or "Body Talk" by Elizabeth Reid Boyd and Abigail Bray.
3. Start using affirmations. Affirmations are powerful positive statements that declare things are already the way you would like them to be e.g: "I am comfortable with how I look", "I am a positive person." They are very convincing if you repeat them often enough!
4. Talk back to the media – when you see an advertisement that makes you feel inadequate, write and complain! Email! Make noise! I love noisy girls.
5. Discuss how you feel with other girls and with older women you admire. The media gives older women an even harder time than they give teen girls – we are made to feel like we are totally past our use by date! But we've got loads to say too and love helping you to feel shiny. How about making a plan to chat with Mum, or with an Aunty, tonight about all the things you are struggling with? I bet she has had, or is having, the same self doubts! Maybe you can be travel partners.

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