



**Changed body, changed life**

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# 'It took time to love my soft, larger shape': the body-positive writer who recovered from an eating disorder

Megan Jayne Crabbe was diagnosed with anorexia at 14. When she hit her 'goal weight' and still didn't feel happy, a supportive online community showed her a new way to live

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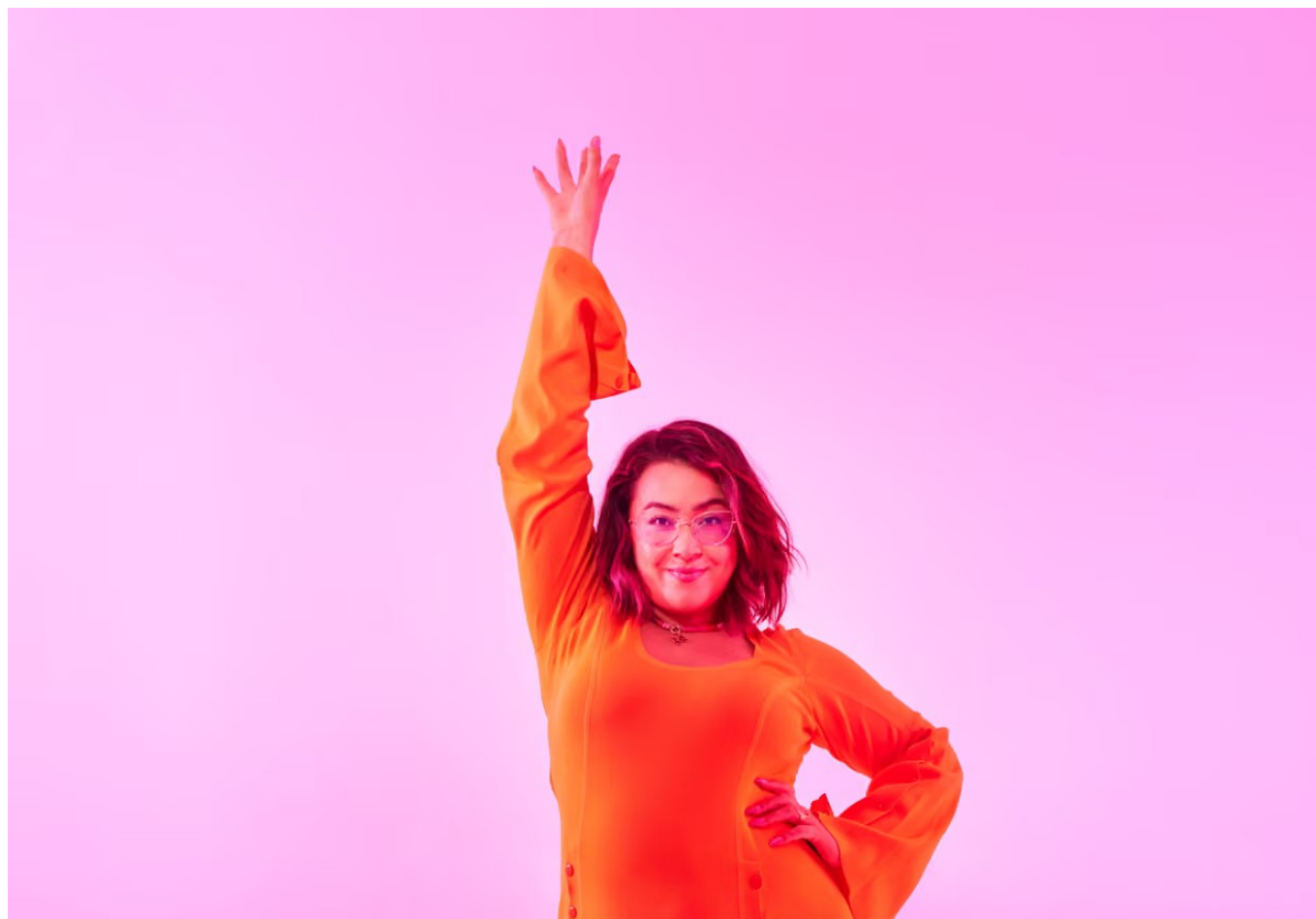


**M**egan Jayne Crabbe's transformation goes beyond the physical. "My 'before' was trying to make myself as small as possible in every conceivable way: my body, voice, emotions, opinions," she says. "My 'after' is allowing myself to be my biggest self, however that looks."

Crabbe, 31, became aware of diets before she turned 10. As she entered puberty that intensified and she became fixated on magazine articles about how to change her body, eating as little as possible as a way to manage anxiety about school and growing up.

At 14 Crabbe was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa and body dysmorphia: "I was convinced I was fat and disgusting and needed to lose more weight." For years she concealed how unwell she was, until the physical symptoms became impossible to ignore. Her body began shutting down - severe fatigue, low blood pressure, hearing loss and dizziness: "There's hair that grows all over your body, because it's trying to keep itself warm."

She spent several months between mental health facilities and hospital. At her lowest point, after her parents were warned her body could fail at any moment, she was hospitalised and fed through a tube. "In that time where your eating disorder is saying to you, 'You have to stay in control', having that taken away is torturous."





Crabbe: 'I'm strong. I'm fit. I can do everything I want to.' Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Guardian

The first shift towards recovery came when her father, usually stoic, broke down in tears. “Seeing the pain my eating disorder had caused him was a massive jolt for me,” she says. She committed to recovery with the same “all or nothing” mindset that had once fuelled her anorexia. “I covered up all the mirrors in the house because I didn’t want to see my body changing, and I couldn’t eat in front of other people yet, but I ate meals by myself.”

By 17, she was declared recovered. “Not the case,” she says. “I was sent back into the world in this newly soft, larger body, and I didn’t know what to do with that. I fell straight back into the diet culture trap.”

The turning point came at 21. “I had been crash dieting all summer, had reached my elusive ‘goal weight’ and I still hated everything about how I looked. Something started to click in my brain of, ‘Wait, this isn’t working.’”

She discovered the online body positive community - “People of all shapes and sizes saying, I’m not dieting, not hating my body, I’m wearing what I want, living my life” - and a decade on is one of its leading voices. She’s seen grinning in a swimming costume in Little Mix’s Strip video, celebrating her body’s softness on Instagram and has written books on self-empowerment. Getting here took reshaping her cultural environment: setting boundaries with friends who talked about weight loss,



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