

"This book's healing truth and humor are a song to my spirit."

—Wynonna Judd

≡MY≡  
Big Bottom  
Blessing

How Hating My Body Led to Loving My Life

Teasi cannon



What people are saying about . . .

*MY BIG BOTTOM BLESSING*

“*My Big Bottom Blessing’s* healing truth and humor have been a song to my spirit. Every woman will find herself—and a new way of seeing—in this life-changing book.”

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**Wynonna Judd**, five-time Grammy winner and  
*New York Times* best-selling author of *Coming Home to Myself*

“If you’ve ever wrestled with self-image issues or doubted that God is with you in your most painful moments, you need this book. Teasi Cannon is the real deal, and you will be immediately sucked into her story simply based on the authentic way in which she tells it.”

---

**Pete Wilson**, author of *Plan B* and *Empty Promises*

“Teasi Cannon is essentially a truth-and-grace bomb just looking for a place to detonate! Her book is engaging, disarming, and encouraging . . . especially for Jesus’ girls who never quite feel like they measure up.”

---

**Lisa Harper**, author, Women of Faith speaker, Bible teacher

“The hooligans that once rattled in Teasi Cannon’s mind still rattle in most of ours. Read on and find what you need to kick these liars to the curb!”

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**Michele Pillar**, three-time Grammy-nominated  
singer and author of *Untangled*

“After more than a decade of working with women at war with food and their bodies, I have FINALLY discovered a book I can recommend to every one of them without reservation! With tenderness, vulnerability, and a refreshing sense of humor, Teasi Cannon speaks life-changing Truth to the heart of every woman who has believed her appearance determines her value. Regardless of what you weigh or the crazy diets you may have tried, *My Big Bottom Blessing* will set you free from the numbers game to embrace God’s beautiful best for your life!”

---

**Constance Rhodes**, founder and CEO, FINDINGbalance  
and author of *Life Inside the “Thin” Cage*

“One of the most honest, divinely inspired authors to come along in years, Teasi Cannon has penned a life-changing book. You’ll want to read it with a highlighter. Better yet you’ll want to reread it as soon as you turn the last page.”

---

**Lisa Patton**, best-selling author of *Whistlin’ Dixie*  
*in a Nor’easter* and *Yankee Doodle Dixie*

“If you are tired of being defined by your pant size or three little numbers on a scale, *My Big Bottom Blessing* is for you. Snappy, authentic, and powerfully written, Teasi has finally given real women something BIG to cheer about.”

---

**Allison Allen**, Broadway actress and author of the forthcoming Windblown novel, *The Magdalene*

“I only like to read books that change, encourage, or entertain me in some way. *My Big Bottom Blessing* did all three. Teasi’s transparency had me crying one moment and laughing aloud the next. This book is not only a great read, but it offers tools and real hope to anyone dealing with the pain and struggle of low self-image. I love Teasi’s courage as she faces herself, and I recommend this book . . . highly.”

---

**Trisha Frost**, cofounder of Shiloh Place  
Ministries and author of *Unbound*

“Raw, honest, and hopeful . . . Teasi’s story isn’t a foreign one. You’ll likely find yourself in these pages, just as I did. Read with a willingness to open wounds you’ve tried desperately to self-medicate, and be prepared for a heart journey that will lead to a truly healthy and God-honoring perspective.”

---

**Jenni Catron**, executive director of Cross Point Church  
and founder of Cultivate Her

“*My Big Bottom Blessing* uses humor and Teasi Cannon’s real-life experiences to help women overcome the misconceptions of self-image. It’s only through a deep, personal understanding of Jesus and His love that our true image is revealed. This book will change your life.”

---

**Pastor Steve and Sarah Berger**, authors of *Have Heart*

“Through the pages of *My Big Bottom Blessing*, Teasi Cannon gingerly lifts us out of self-focus and sits us smack in the middle of God’s grace! This is a book filled with practical application and truth about every woman’s beauty in the eyes of God. Thanks, Teasi, for the reminder; I needed it!”

---

**Cindi Wood**, Frazzled Female Ministries, author  
of *Desperate* and The Frazzled Female series

“Teasi Cannon confronts the emotional weight of body image with startling courage and refreshing honesty. She wisely balances humor, compassion, and deep biblical truth to help women of all shapes and sizes understand their true worth. This book will become a friend.”

---

**Toni Birdsong**, coauthor of *@stickyJesus*

“The pain of life builds barriers between us and God, causing our perception of our loving Father to be far from truth. We listen to our enemy’s lies about our worth, our weight, and our work. Teasi Cannon has opened her life and her heart with bold honesty to share her journey through the pain of abuse and weight gain. She shares her personal journey as God teaches her to see herself in His eyes: a beloved, beautiful princess of the Most High King. This truth in this book has the power to set you free.”

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**Nancy Reece**, Integrity Fanatic speaker, senior  
consultant of The Human Capital Group, Inc.

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*How Hating My Body Led to Loving My Life*

Teasi Cannon



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PUBLISHING

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To Carli, my sweet beauty from ashes

And they overcame him by the blood of the  
Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and  
they did not love their lives to the death.

*Revelation 12:11*

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And to You, the most worthy One, my Father God. I thank You for my whole life and with my whole life. You are my everything, and I give You everything.

## INTRODUCTION

Does this book make my rear end look big?

You probably won't be able to answer that question until after you've turned the last page, but hopefully your answer is yes. If it is, more glory goes to that crazy good God of ours—the One who truly turns the most unlovely of things into treasure.

Here's the main gist of how it happened for me: even after giving my life to Jesus and becoming a “good Christian girl,” there was a lot of work left to be done in my life. It took me awhile to figure out that this is true for everyone. There isn't a person who stands up from the altar after saying one simple sinner's prayer and walks away perfected. Not you. Not me. Not anyone. It's just a beginning—the starting point of our Christian expedition.

It seems like an obvious truth. Logic would tell me that change takes time. But somehow, almost subconsciously, I thought that simply being a Christian meant that everything should be just fine. After all, the Bible tells us that we can do all things through Christ and that we are more than conquerors—old things are gone and so on. The problem was I wasn't seeing all the evidence in my life, especially in the area of my weight. No matter what I tried, I could never seem to get thin, and that nearly ruined everything. Nearly.

My weight on the scale led to such an agonizing weight of emotional pain in my heart, which led to a total breakdown, which (ironically) led to the very adjustments that saved my life. As these adjustments were made, things started getting better. I know that statement sounds annoyingly simple. So, let me be clear: some of the adjustments were quick and easy, but some took lots of time and were quite painful.

Now, the reason I can't keep this story to myself isn't because I feel the need to share my pain. No one would want to read a story filled with only pain. No, I want to share the story because I love my life now, whereas I used to be miserable. Because I love my friends now, whereas I used to be jealous and bitter. And—perhaps most miraculously of all—I love my body now, whereas I used to hate with a capital *H*—*Hate*—myself beyond words.

I have a feeling the same can be said of you. And as you read this story, I hope you will discover that you are not alone in your pain, no matter how great or small. I hope that you can get healing for even the deepest wounds in your heart, and that you can learn to silence the community of voices/lies in your head as truth takes over.

As I tell you how it all happened for me in the pages to come, I'll also share a little of my poetry, a taste of my journal entries, a lot of my findings, and some heartfelt prayers. Oh, and along the way I'd like to introduce you to some of the characters who claim my head as their residence.

Welcome to my experience of the goodness of God.



O N E

## A BUM DEAL

There are enemies all around us  
Seeking to destroy  
They come to tear our hearts apart  
And take away our joy.  
Some are just plain bothersome,  
Some invoke great fear.  
But none are near as devastating  
As the enemy in the mirror.

•••

Imagine yourself standing in front of a mirror right now—completely naked. Can you say that you love who you see? Believe it or not, I can.

Now you're probably thinking one of two things: either this lady has a perfect body, or she's a total liar. Wrong. In fact, at the writing of this book I am about fifty pounds heavier than society deems appropriate, and I promise the declaration is no lie. Hopefully you will find this easier to believe

once you've read my story. It is an unraveling—or maybe a roller coaster—but it's a tale that ends ever so triumphantly.

As you can probably surmise by now, I have not always been okay with my body. In fact, most of my life *disgust* would have been the appropriate word to define what I felt when looking in the mirror. Research shows I'm not alone. A recent *Glamour* magazine poll revealed that 97 percent of women have cruel thoughts about themselves each day—thirteen times a day on average.<sup>1</sup> And sadder still, 90 percent of high school junior and senior girls diet regularly, even though only 10 to 15 percent would be considered truly overweight.<sup>2</sup>

## VALUE INFLATION

This obsession we have with weight and physical appearance is crazy—especially from a Christian perspective. Think about this: the value that has been placed upon being thin is not a value that has been given by God. In fact, the Bible is pretty clear that what matters most to the Lord is the appearance of the heart. Although being healthy is important, God is far more concerned with the amount of love we are showing than with the firmness of the thigh we are showing. So, who do you think is behind this value inflation? Could it be the Father of Lies, the devil? Who else would want to keep us distracted and weighed down by things that matter so little? Who else wants us to hate the very flesh God made?

It's one of the world's biggest tragedies, really. Millions of women like you and me take their first steps of each day

into a bathroom where a lie/mirror is waiting to tear them down. For some the object of ridicule is a nose that is too large. For others it is a web of wrinkles. For me it was always my weight.

Looking back on my earliest years, I don't remember there being even one season in which I was happy with my body. Painful awareness of my larger size came as early as elementary school. Kids were cruel. Being teased in grade school feels . . . well, you remember how it feels, don't you?

And we all remember the little saying about how sticks and stones might break our bones, but words . . . now those can *never* hurt us. Denial in its earliest stages, don't you agree? I used to stick my little chest out—along with my tongue—while reciting this cheeky mantra in the face of many a bully, hoping it would magically erase my humiliation and fear. But it didn't have the power I'd hoped for. The words just plain hurt. In fact, they stuck to my heart like glue.

Isn't it sad that the hurtful words of our past are the ones that have the most sticking power? I have several flash-bulb memories of my parents hugging me and telling me how smart and beautiful I was. I have vague memories of teachers telling me what a pleasure I was to have in class. But the memories of what the bullies said . . . now, those are crystal clear.

All I need to do is close my eyes for a moment, strap on the seat belt of my mind, and I'm instantly transported back to the fourth grade. I'm doing my best to hold down the position of class caboose as our line makes its way to PE, my

all-time least favorite class. Then the sixth graders round the corner heading our way. I can feel my little heartbeat quicken and my palms begin to sweat. I know what is coming. I know *who* is coming: Johnny. Blonde-haired, freckle-faced, chase-me-off-the-bus Johnny and his hideous sidekicks.

Now in order for you to fully understand the humiliation that would soon flood my soul, I need to offer a quick pronunciation key. My maiden name is Teasi Gootee, pronounced TeaSee Goaty (like goat). It was not at all easy having a name like this in elementary school, especially because it was almost always pronounced Teeezee Gooody.

So out of Johnny's mouth come (at hall-filling volume, of course) the knife-like words with the adhesive power of super glue: "Teeezee Gooody has a greasy bootie." Over and over again he'd say it. Every time he saw me, he said it. And others joined in the fun. I can still feel the phantom pains in my stomach.

Trying to stand up for myself only made me feel even more ridiculous. All I could do was shout, "No I don't. I just took a bath!" That didn't help anything.

I remember every detail of times like those. Good news is, I survived . . . and personal hygiene is priority to this day.

## MEET MY TRAINER

It was during those early school years that I came to know a powerful character who would play a huge role in my life for several years to come. Her name is Trainer. Now, one thing

you must know about Trainer is that she is invisible. Even I can't see her, but I can certainly hear her—and I'm the only one who can. In fact, she lives in my head, but that doesn't hinder her one bit. What she lacks in physical existence, she more than makes up for in verbosity. Some of our earliest conversations would go something like this:

**TRAINER:** Teasi, sit up straight. The fat roll on your stomach is bulging out like crazy.

**YOUNG FAT GIRL:** Oh, okay. (*Sits up as straight as humanly possible.*)

**TRAINER:** Now, look at how wide the expanse of your thigh is on that bench compared to Christina's. Disgusting! Put your feet up on your toes or something to keep those legs from pressing down on the seat.

**YOUNG FAT GIRL:** Oh, okay. (*Sits in ridiculously uncomfortable position in order to decrease thigh width by an amazing half an inch.*)

I remember getting so fed up with Trainer every now and then that I would humiliate myself just to torture her. This would involve something akin to me being nude in front of a mirror while jumping up and down repeatedly just to watch my rolls bounce. I knew she hated my fat, and in my mind this would really show her. But my antics didn't do anything to help my self-image.

And of course my best friends in school were always skinny chicks. I may not know you personally, but I bet if you hated your nose as a young girl, your best friend had a perfect one. It's got to be one of those laws of nature: "Whatever a young girl lacks and wants more than anything, her best friend surely has."

All through my school years, my closest friends were beautiful (a God-given attribute I can now—finally—applaud in others). This made Trainer even angrier the older I got. Man, she would get really upset with me:

**TRAINER:** Oh! My! Gosh! Teasi! No boys are going to like you like they do Michelle if you can't get some fat off that rear end. (*Trainer was never one to hold back.*)

**TEEN FAT GIRL:** I'm trying. I'm doing aerobics every day and running miles.

**TRAINER:** Yeah, but you can't get enough of those honey buns, now can you? Just have to keep stuffing that fat face! If you could just stop eating, maybe you could get a boyfriend.

**TEEN FAT GIRL:** Well, today all I've had is a half cup of Cheerios with one-fourth cup of skim milk, three M&Ms, a spoonful of peanut butter, three small sips of a grape slushy, a cherry Life Saver, half of a ham sandwich with light mayo on thin bread, and an apple.

**TRAINER:** Don't forget the three crackers.

**TEEN FAT GIRL:** Oh, yeah. And three crackers.

*(Hangs head in shame).*

Oh, it was torture. No matter what I did to lose weight, I was always several sizes larger than other girls. It didn't make any difference to me that my body fat percentage was right where it should be. What mattered was the number on the scale.

And soon the only other thing that mattered was having a boyfriend.

## YES OR NO

I got my very first boyfriend in seventh grade, and I was elated. I still remember the thud of the tightly folded note as it dropped on my desk. Once I opened it, I could see that my name was fourth in line after three others which had been scribbled out, but that didn't matter to me. I ignored those names and focused on the words, "Will you go with me, check *yes* or *no*." Shaky and giddy with excitement, I checked in the affirmative and tossed the note behind me, trusting it would land in the right place. I felt like I was in a dream. I was now the girlfriend of Kurt, one of the popular kids.

Our first date was a trip to McDonald's. His dad picked me up in his brown El Camino, and we were off. As soon as his dad pulled out of the parking lot, leaving us for an hour of quality time, Kurt took my hand and asked me if I wanted

to take a walk first. *How romantic*, I thought. *Wow, this is better than I could have imagined.*

We walked along the railroad tracks that ran behind McDonald's, talking and laughing about school stuff. Once we rounded the first bend and were sufficiently out of view, Kurt leaned over to kiss me. My first kiss. I was floating. That is, until I felt his hand traveling up my shirt.

"No, Kurt. Don't do that," I said. And the kissing continued. Until I felt his hand trying to undo my pants.

"No, Kurt. Stop. You'll respect me for this when you're older."

As you can probably predict, Kurt didn't stop to look at me with deep appreciation for my mature composure, as I was certain he would. He only laughed in my face, told me we were through, and headed back to McDonald's. It was a silent ride home. I didn't even get a cheeseburger.

## MEET MY REFLECTION

I did a pretty good job protecting my private parts until tenth grade, but by then my self-esteem had plummeted while my pant size continued to rise. My best friend wore a size zero then, and I wore a size 10, which meant I had no chance at all of attracting a boy with my looks. Welcome to my promiscuous years.

As if Trainer wasn't bad enough, after several years of doing what seemed necessary to get attention from the opposite sex, another prominent character entered my life. Meet



Reflection. Like Trainer, she was disgusted with me, but for different reasons. Trainer hated what I looked like, but Reflection hated who I was. And she was very good at bringing up the things I was trying hard to ignore in order to simply live with myself:

**REFLECTION:** How could you end up with that guy?

You really have become quite the slut.

**YOUNG FAT WOMAN:** No I'm not. Please don't say that.

**REFLECTION:** I thought you were going to wait until you were married. What happened to that little dream, huh?

**YOUNG FAT WOMAN:** It died, I guess. (*Wipes away a tear.*)

We all have times in our lives that we regret, but I really feel sad when I look back on those years of my life. The desire to be a virgin on my wedding day was always present in my little girl heart. The problem was, that desire did not come with an understanding of *why* I wanted it. So, when the pressure came to give up that dream, there was no arsenal with which to fight. It took me years to understand purity was a God-given desire—one He puts in all little girls' hearts, and some girls are strong enough to protect it. But for some of us, the desire gets buried by the lies of this world, and we are tricked into giving ourselves away too soon. Oh, God *tries*

to protect our hearts with His instructions, doesn't He? He knows that sexual intimacy is a gift—a priceless gift meant to be enjoyed by a man and a woman who will never leave each other. It is a deep sharing of oneself, not meant to be experienced with those who do not understand.

In my ignorance and in my pain, I had given myself away one piece at a time until Reflection couldn't even look at me anymore.

### REFLECTION, MEET JESUS

Reflection and I hated each other for many years. Then Jesus came. I was twenty-one when He entered my life for keeps, and I will never forget that time.

For me it happened basically like this: I sank to a new, wretched low. None of my friends wanted anything to do with me—including my heartthrob. Completely alone and crying for days, I finally realized something needed to seriously change. In other words, it finally dawned on me that I was doing a *reebeebally* (thank you, Jim Carrey) bad job of directing my life. Miraculously, the Jesus I met casually as a little girl came knocking on the door of my heart again and lovingly asked, “Can I have my throne now?” I couldn't hop down fast enough.

Once comfortably seated in His rightful spot, Jesus asked me to start going to church. I had never actually attended a real church in my life. Don't get me wrong, my family did believe in God, and we were part of an organized

religious group for years. But we left once the leaders started interpreting the Bible in some less-than-orthodox ways. Years later I spotted the group's name on a list of cults to avoid. All I could do was shrug and thank God that at least there hadn't been poisoned Kool-Aid involved.

Along with giving my Sundays to God, some other serious changes started happening in my life—changes that startled many who knew me. I immediately stopped working in a bar. I immediately stopped partying and sleeping around. I immediately started listening to Amy Grant music (definitely not cool in southern Cal at the time). I was absolutely charged and excited about what Jesus was offering me: forgiveness and unconditional love.

It took a little while for Reflection to understand that by giving my life to Jesus, my past failures were as good as gone. In God's eyes, it was as if they had never happened, and that was good enough for me. Truth was what the Bible had to say about me, that “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. . . .” (Isa. 1:18). I was holding my head up high for the first time in my life.

Even so, there were several tense conversations:

**REFLECTION:** There is no way Jesus loves you.

Think about all the filth you've been a part of!

**YOUNG FAT WOMAN:** I know. I know, but He really does love me. I can tell . . . in my heart.

**REFLECTION:** You can tell in your heart? Now, isn't that sweet. Priceless! Are you really that stupid?

**YOUNG FAT WOMAN:** I'm choosing to believe what God says to me in the Bible. That's final. I get a do-over.

After seeing my resolve, Reflection lightened up on me a bit. But not for long.

### REFLECTION AND TRAINER CONSPIRE

Right around my twenty-second birthday, Tennessee called my name. My parents and siblings had moved there a while before me, and I could feel them tugging on my heart. So I loaded up my Toyota Celica (the kind with the cool flip-up headlights) to the brim, and left California behind. It was a grand trip—just Jesus and me. It was an epic adventure.

But not long after settling in, my adventure took an unexpected turn. At first the turn looked good: I met a cute guy . . . in church! He had big muscles, a winning smile, and (most importantly, of course) he was an usher. Surprisingly, he started to take an interest in me, and we began spending time together.

We talked a lot, and day by day I began to see that under those big muscles he was broken. He had issues—big issues—mainly with drugs and alcohol. Some pretty clear signs led me to wonder if I should leave the relationship behind. My parents saw the signs, too, and pleaded with me to get out

while there was still a chance. But Trainer and Reflection had another take on the situation:

**REFLECTION:** Who is she to expect perfection from anyone? I mean, just think about all those horrible things she did when she was younger. Come on!

**TRAINER:** I agree. Plus, look at that rear end. She's lucky this guy even finds her attractive.

**REFLECTION:** And, Jesus would want her to sacrifice for this guy. After all, isn't that what Christianity is about? Being willing to give up everything—even if it means being miserable?

**TRAINER:** She's only gonna get fatter over the years. She better take this chance while she's got it. There might never be another guy who would find that body attractive.

**REFLECTION:** You're right. She should stick with him no matter what!

So, it was settled. The guy needed to be loved, and the perfect one for the job was me. I chose to stick by my man. And even though he was in drug and alcohol treatment only months before, I walked down the aisle with him and became his wife.

I knew I'd made a mistake the moment I said "I do."

Of course a baby was on the way shortly after the honeymoon. Even though the news sucked the wind out of me

initially, my sweet baby Carli saved my life. She's my positive note, my bright spot, my beauty from ashes, and all the other metaphors that represent amazingly sweet things that can come from devastation.

But my husband only got worse and worse. Oh, he tried to stay sober between bouts of jail and treatment, but he was still broken. His brokenness came out in abuse toward me, and after I could let little Carli see no more, she and I left. It didn't take long for him to start sleeping around, which made it clear to me our relationship was unalterably shattered, and with that another childhood dream died. My story was not going to end with a happily ever after.

Reflection made sure the scarlet letter "D" was securely fastened to my identity. I was a young, fat, divorced single mom. (Had I been one to use the classified ads to find a date, they could just call me YFDSM. Great. No thanks.)

**REFLECTION:** Great! Look what you've done. How do you expect God to ever use you for anything now? You're a . . . divorced . . . woman. (*Looks away with disgust.*)

**YOUNG FAT DIVORCED SINGLE MOM:** I don't know. (*Tears.*)

**REFLECTION:** You've really let God down. And no one will ever want you now that you're . . . you're tainted!

**TRAINER:** And look at you! You're even fatter now than ever. And look at all those stretch marks. Now, that's pretty! (*Three short, sarcastic grunts.*)

**YOUNG FAT DIVORCED SINGLE MOM:** I know. I know. Just leave me alone. Please! Leave me alone.

Failure. My relationship could officially be added to the other one-third of Christian marriages that ended in divorce that year. What an accomplishment!

There was no getting around it. With all the heart and soul I could muster up, I threw myself into being the best mom possible, going back to school to become a teacher in hopes of becoming an adequate provider for my baby girl. There was a lot of alone time spent with Jesus, since He was the only one who would have me. And after many, many months of Jesus pursuing me, I found out He was the only one I really needed. He loved me desperately, even though I was . . . fat.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?  
NEGATIVE THOUGHTS EXPOSED

1. Stand in front of the mirror completely naked (not with your small group, of course). Write exactly what you think about yourself. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How do you think your answer from question one lines up with what God would say about you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. A recent *Glamour* magazine poll revealed that 97 percent of women have negative thoughts about themselves every day. How often do you have negative thoughts about yourself? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If you answered “every day” to question three, about how many times a day do you think something negative of yourself? \_\_\_\_\_



5. Do you remember the time in your life when your negative thoughts about yourself began? If so, when was it?

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6. Trainer (the one who hates your appearance) might not live in your head, but I'll bet you've heard a voice like hers. What is something typical you remember hearing from her? How did you reply?

a. **TRAINER:** \_\_\_\_\_

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b. **YOU:** \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Reflection (the one who is disappointed with you as a person) might not live in your head, but you've probably heard a voice like hers, as well. What is something typical you remember hearing from her? How did you reply?

a. **REFLECTION:** \_\_\_\_\_

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b. YOU: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PEP TALK: NO DENIAL

Even though it is far less than pleasant to admit the negative self-talk that takes place in our heads, getting real about it is the first step toward silencing the voices we're sick of. Ignoring Trainer and Reflection (and any others who get their kicks out of deriding us) is not going to solve anything. We want those self-defeating voices to feel as exposed as a person in a porta-potty who forgot to lock the door. We want them to start worrying because we are ready for serious change. Today is the beginning of the end of business as usual.

## FORWARD FOCUS: THOUGHTS

- Proverbs 16:3—Commit your works to the LORD, and your **thoughts** will be established.
- Isaiah 55:8—For My thoughts are not your **thoughts**, nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD.
- Isaiah 55:9—For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are My ways higher than your ways, and My **thoughts** than your thoughts.

- Jeremiah 4:14—O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil **thoughts** lodge within you?
- Jeremiah 29:11—For I know the **thoughts** that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.
- Matthew 12:25—But Jesus knew their **thoughts**, and said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.”
- Hebrews 4:12—For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the **thoughts** and intents of the heart.

T W O

A SECOND CHANCE?

I would have lost heart, unless I had believed  
That I would see the goodness of the LORD  
In the land of the living.  
—KING DAVID (PSALM 27:13)



Okay, so who's ready for a really sweet love story? I hope you raised your hand, because I think the next part of my tale will encourage you.

I took being a single mom very seriously. I worked several part-time jobs—things I could do with Carli—and went to school full-time. We had so much fun together, my little buddy and me. And I was doing my best to stay hopeful.

Now, chances are you, too, either are now, were at some point, or have a good friend who is a single mom. After all, according to the US Census Bureau, there are approximately 9.9 million single mothers in America, a number that has tripled over the last four decades.<sup>3</sup>