

A Pinch of Sage:

Words of Wisdom

Larger than Life

The word treasure has many meanings — ranging from “wealth or riches” to “booty.” Such is the English language that it can also mean “to cherish or value.”

As a large Pagan woman, it has taken me almost half a century to reach a “cherishing” place about who I truly am. I was nine when I realized that my larger-than-“normal” body was unacceptable in our society.¹ I began a regimen of amphetamines, prescribed by my doctor, to shrink my nine-year-old body to a more pleasing size. So began a nightmarish downward spiral of yo-yo dieting — a series of diet pills, diets and weight losses followed by normal or “binge” eating — and the inevitable weight regain and increase. This pattern lasted until shortly after my fortieth birthday, when I was involved in a near-fatal collision — one which I was told I probably would not have survived had I not had the cushioning of my “excess” weight.

The accident resulted in my being confined to a hospital bed for nine months, during which the Goddess chose to make me Her own. Through a series of dream encounters and in discussions with a Pagan friend, who brought me plenty of reading material to fill my long days (and ultimately became my mentor), I became deeply and forever connected to the Deity who now fills every breath I take and every moment that I live with vibrant joy.

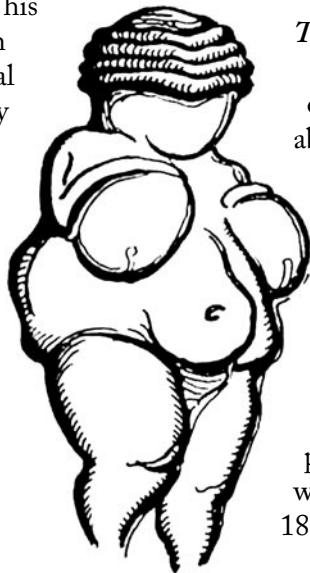
Whether writing or participating in ritual, molding the clay sculptures that I love to create, or going about my daily chores, I can feel Her there, and I know, in some inexplicable way, that She is me. When I look in the mirror now, my body is still larger than society says is attractive, there are lines on my face that bespeak my five plus decades of walking this planet, and my blonde hair is shot through with the spun silver that She has graced me with, but I see only beauty — Her flawless creation — as we are *all* perfect.

My days of dieting and self-hatred are in the past and, whenever I am able, I try to help other women see their beauty as well. I eat sensibly and enjoy life, realizing there is room for all of us and that our wonderful diversity of size, color, and points of view are the components that make life so interesting.

Many of us look outward to others for approval and for a reason to feel good about ourselves, but as the charge of the Goddess says:

You who seek to know Me, know that your seeking and yearning will avail you not, unless you know the mystery: for if that which you seek, you find not within yourself, you will never find it without.

The Goddess gives us the understanding that whether our bodies resemble a super-model or the Venus of Willendorf, we are light, love, and beauty, and each one of us is worthy of the treasure of self-acceptance. Begin the journey to give yourself that priceless gift today. @



Tools for Self-Acceptance for Women of Size

- Venus of Willendorf: Tape a large copy of the Venus of Willendorf, an ancient, abundant Goddess (see opposite), to your bathroom mirror or somewhere else where you will see it every day. Purchase a small statue of Her to add to your altar.
- Delta Burke Fashions: Delicious plus sizes: www.deltaburke.com.
- NAAFA (National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance): A non-profit human rights organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for fat people. See www.naafa.org or write to: NAAFA, P. O. Box 188620, Sacramento, CA 95818.
- *Fat! So? Because You Don't Have to Apologize for Your Size* by Marilyn Wann, Ten Speed Press, 1999. (Still available online). I love this book!

¹A sad pinnacle (abyss?) of this attitude recently came to my attention when I was spammed by MyBodyParts.com, a Website that offers software to “try-on” various forms of plastic surgery.

— *Leona Reber is a solitary Priestess of Bast living in a small town in Northern California. She writes regularly for several art and cultural organizations and the Lincoln News Messenger newspaper. When she isn't writing, she can be found up to her elbows in clay creating Goddess figures, dragons, fairies, and other mystical beings, many of which adorn women's altars. Visit her Website: www.living-art.net/leona. She welcomes your comments at: paganart@jps.net.*