



Warrior: A Memoir

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In this inspiring memoir, a former female Marine platoon leader recalls the wars she has fought—on the playing field, the battlefield, and inside her own soul—revealing how overcoming the harrowing circumstances in her life helped her ultimately redefine what it means to be strong and what “perfect” really is.

Theresa Larson has lived multiple lives. At ten she was a caregiver to her dying mother. As an adolescent, an All-Star high school, college, and professional softball player. As a young adult, a fitness competition winner, beauty pageant contestant, and model. And as a grown woman, a high-achieving Lieutenant in the Marines, in charge of an entire platoon while deployed in Iraq.

Meanwhile, Theresa was battling bulimia nervosa, an internal struggle which ultimately cut short her military service when she was voluntarily evacuated from combat. Theresa’s journey to wellness required the bravery to ask for help, to take care of herself first, and abandon the idea of “perfect.” In *Warrior*, she lays bare all of these lives in intimate and vivid detail, examining extremely personal and sometime painful moments and how, by finally accepting the help of others, she learned to make herself whole. From growing up in a log cabin outside Seattle to facing down the enemy in Iraq, Theresa’s journey demonstrates that good health and happiness is a daily, intentional act that requires persistence and commitment.

Theresa hopes that through sharing her story, she will help inspire others to empower themselves, embrace their inner warrior and re-define strength. Startling and funny, terrifying and triumphant, heartbreak and inspirational, *Warrior* is at heart a story of perseverance and success—of a determined woman who is model for everyone struggling to conquer their own demons. Theresa shows that asking for help can be an act of courage, and that we are stronger than we think when faced with seemingly impossible odds.

Warrior: A Memoir Details

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Liralen says

Larson reminds me of Tori Murden McClure, in a way, although their paths have been very different—they both leave me with a sense that they are very driven and competent and very aware that as women in male-dominated fields they face extra barriers.

Warrior is a memoir of the Marines and a memoir of bulimia and a memoir of being female. Larson was still a kid when her mother died of cancer, and she ultimately followed her brother into the ROTC and then the military. I can only imagine that growing up with two older brothers made a huge difference to her strength as a Marine—because she grew up in a boys' world and wasn't afraid to fight on their terms for dominance.

What interests me is twofold: first, Larson balances the elements of the story really well; it's easy to see how bodybuilding and the Marines and softball and bulimia related and where they diverged, and each gets...as much space as it needs, I guess. I said it's about Marines and bulimia and being female, and it is, but it's also about other things, and that mix makes it a stronger thing.

And the second thing: Larson does a great job of projecting competence—of making it clear that she was good at softball and good at being a Marine and so on and so forth—without sounding arrogant, and I'm still trying to pick apart how she did that, because that's something I don't see nearly enough of. There are obviously points when she was frustrated with her performance, or insecure, but she doesn't let that detract from the positives. Another place this reminds me of Tori Murden McClure, I think, and also Adele Levine? (It's almost worth reading the other books Alan Eisenstock (Larson's cowriter) has worked on to see if the same is true there, except I'm not really interested in any of those books.) This is someone I'd trust to lead, and that's a pretty good impression for a book to leave.

Jillian says

Amazing book!! Highly recommend!!

Dorene says

"Warrior" arrived on my doorstep Friday and by Saturday night I'd devoured the entire book.

Theresa Larson's tells a compelling story and while I can't personally relate to the bulimia, many of her other challenges resonate. Anyone who's lost a mother to cancer, struggled with perfectionism or felt they had no control over their own life might relate as well. The beauty in the story is how Larson learns to cope and overcome these challenges.

Ali Elenbaas says

One of my favorite book spots in San Diego is Warwicks books in La Jolla because it is a great little bookshop with wonderful recommendations, but also because they have some fabulous authors come and speak. Last summer, a few of my girlfriends and I got to hear Theresa Larson talk about her book *Warrior*, and each purchased a copy. I've finally gotten around to reading it after being captivated by her talk, and I really enjoyed it. Theresa was a Marine Corps officer out of ROTC at Villanova who struggled for years with bulimia. She tells her story in a way that really helps anyone who has not struggled with mental illness or seen anyone who has really understand it. Mental illness is so stigmatized in society, especially in the military. The bravery that people display by even admitting to it is astounding but they are usually faced with blank stares, and even judgement instead of actual help. Theresa's journey through the military healthcare system is definitely one that unfortunately I have heard before from dear friends who have also tried to navigate the military's mental healthcare. I wish that I could say things have changed since Theresa struggled with this but that is not the case. Theresa now is a doctor of physical therapy and caters to wounded veterans in a way that only someone else who has struggled can. The book is very interesting because of its balance between detailing her time as a female Marine, and also her fight with her eating disorder. I think most people could benefit from reading this, or something like it to learn more about not only eating disorders but all types of mental illnesses that most people still write off because they cannot be seen.

Daffnee Cohen says

This may be the fastest I've ever read a book in my life. It's gripping yet tasteful, raw and so real. While we come from different walks of life, I find so many emotional ties to the stories told in this book. Honestly, it's beautiful.

Renaissance Marine says

i first saw this book and thought it would be interesting to read about combat service in my Marine Corps thru the eyes of a female Marine. i was so disappointed.

Combat, the Marine Corps, are not what this book is about. this was the memoir of a self centered person who claimed to be a leader, while chronicling actions that screamed she wasn't. this book is not worth the time i spent on it. i am thankful i borrowed it from a library and didn't pay good money for it. i only give it one star to show that i did in fact rate it.

Ruby Bibi says

-Interesting story of the struggles of a young woman who is able to accomplish a great deal, but who has issues which bring on a debilitating case of bulimia.

-Theresa Larson lost her mother when she was just 9 years old, and was raised by her father, along with her two older brothers. All her siblings, as well as herself were very tall and very competitive. Because she didn't have a mother figure, it was hard for her growing up, and she always felt that she had to show achievement in the same way as her brothers - through sports.

-She happened to be very athletic, but she found it hard to make friends as a teenager. It seemed to be partly because she herself felt different because of the loss of her mother, as well as because of her 6 foot 1 inch height.

-In college, she took ROTC training and ultimately became an officer in the Marines. With that came

additional responsibilities, and greater stress. Her bulimia, which started on a smaller scale before her entry to the Marines, became worse. Once she was deployed to Iraq, it became a full blown problem. She still excelled in leading her men and was a natural leader, but the control that her superior officers had over her, and her efforts to make sure everything was perfect was still overwhelming.

-The story was very good in showing how someone could spiral out of control, while appearing to have it all in the eyes of outsiders. The stress that she put on herself and how the people around her, whom she first told, had no idea how to help her, even though she was calling out for help, was troubling. Her realization that, unless she dealt with her own issues, she could be a hindrance to those around her, and possibly even cause harm, was a turning point, but without someone to guide her the right way, it appeared that she would still be attending useless therapy. It's her ultimate success, and what went into her mind to achieve it, that is very valuable and could be helpful for anyone with low self esteem, even if it doesn't translate into an eating disorder.

-People sometimes wonder why they have to go through the hardships that they do. In her case, it gave her the ability to empathize with other soldiers who came back with injuries, some apparent and some not so apparent, and to find a way to help them. The book ends on that note, along with her own happiness in not only finding her true vocation, but in meeting a husband who seems to be a true life partner.

Jamie Gogocha says

When I finished this book, I just said, "wow." I might have to come back to this review a little later because I'm still putting my thoughts together, but I will say for now that I'm glad I read this book.

As far as the writing, I loved the way the story was told. The pacing and voice made me feel like I was sitting with a driven, focused member of the military. No punches were pulled, nothing was glossed over, nothing was minimized. The story is told chronologically, and that really allowed me to get to know Theresa Larson (as much as you can in a reader/writer situation) and watch how things evolved, unraveled, and evolved some more.

I have read a few memoirs, but it's still a new category for me. Of the ones I've read, the stories have been interesting and compelling, and I walked away having learned something new and a new admiration for the writer. This book wasn't an easy read. At all. There were times I wanted to quit reading it and my husband wanted me to quit reading it because it got too close to some unsettled/ dealt with things for me. But when I put it down for a few days, all I could think about was picking it back up again. So I picked it up and read every word.

This book was painful, compelling, uncomfortable, and inspirational. It was educational in a motivational kind of way. Theresa Larson is amazing.

Strength of Story says

I picked up this book after listening to Larson guest-star on a podcast, and I'm beyond glad I did.

I cannot stress enough how wonderful of a memoir "Warrior" is. Larson's story of battling bulimia while being a female Marine proves anyone can have--and anyone can overcome--an eating disorder. Her story is one of strength and persistence, but one told with authenticity and honesty. Eisenstock's writing absolutely

sings. I myself identified with many of Larson's struggles. Every chapter, I found myself nodding along in agreement, or laughing, or crying.

A must-read for anyone who struggles with self-doubt.

Although I rented the book from a library, I'm buying myself a copy for my shelf at home!

Emily Farrar says

This book carried such a different mix of emotions in it for me. Theresa spoke to me on an entirely different level than anyone else has. She isn't perfect; but she's my hero. Loved this book.

Kelsey says

I am at an emotional loss to describe this book. What a wonderful, healing experience that took me through the pits of hell and back to peace. I hope one day I can reread Theresa's memoir when I am not so much on a time crunch to pump out a paper about her and her disorder. I feel like reading this book academically took away some of my ability to sit and soak in the real meaning behind Theresa's words. For now, I am satisfied, but I can't wait to really sit with this book and read it with more intention, as it should be read.

Beachpig says

After hearing Dr. Larson on a podcast, I was intrigued to give this book a read. Having never dealt with an eating disorder, let alone under the circumstances in which she did, I took an interest in how she revealed its demons and her fight. Dr. Larson's stories of her time as an athlete, Marine, and family, roll quickly and lively. Her toughness to handle situations is clear, yet interestingly she lacked that same toughness to tackle her eating problem. I find it challenging to conceptualize how she became consumed by the disorder, while at the same time I find an empathy for the pain she expressed in her own lack of understanding of the disease. I think the book offers great insight into bulimia, however I desired for the book to offer a bit more in the explanation and reflection on her success in overcoming it. I felt like 98% was stories of her life, the illness, and then it was 2%, BOOM! Cured.

Elizabeth Cox says

I couldn't put this book down. I work in a library and when I saw it sitting with our new titles, I was immediately drawn to it just based on the title and a brief skim through of the summary. I checked it out without a second thought and couldn't put it down once I started reading. Everyone has different life experiences, but we can all find ways to relate to each other. I related to Theresa's story in many ways and found the book very thought provoking, raw, and emotionally gripping. This may end up being a book I purchase to read over again!

Claire says

Real. Honest. Inspiring. Really enjoyed this book!
