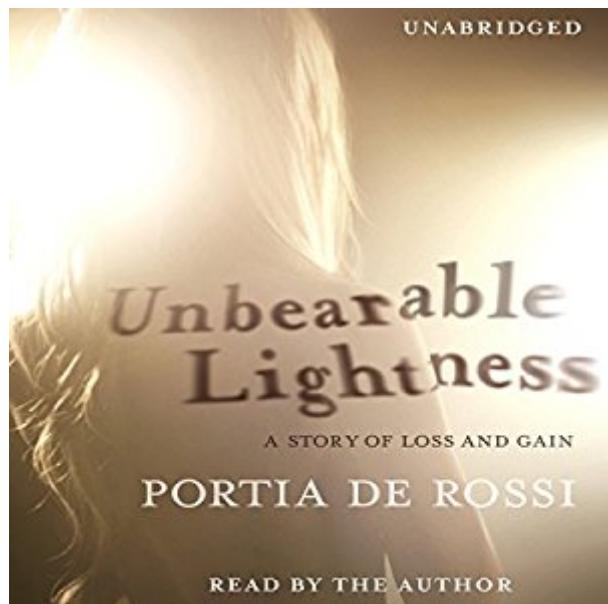


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# Unbearable Lightness: A Story Of Loss And Gain



## Synopsis

"I didn't decide to become anorexic. It snuck up on me disguised as a healthy diet, a professional attitude. Being as thin as possible was a way to make the job of being an actress easier . . ." Portia de Rossi weighed only 82 pounds when she collapsed on the set of the Hollywood film in which she was playing her first leading role. This should have been the culmination of all her years of hard work - first as a child model in Australia, then as a cast member of one of the hottest shows on American television. On the outside she was thin and blond, glamorous and successful. On the inside, she was literally dying. In this searing, unflinchingly honest book, Portia de Rossi captures the complex emotional truth of what it is like when food, weight, and body image take priority over every other human impulse or action. She recounts the elaborate rituals around eating that came to dominate hours of every day, from keeping her daily calorie intake below 300 to eating precisely measured amounts of food out of specific bowls and only with certain utensils. When this wasn't enough, she resorted to purging and compulsive physical exercise, driving her body and spirit to the breaking point. Even as she rose to fame as a cast member of the hit television shows *Ally McBeal* and *Arrested Development*, Portia alternately starved herself and binged, all the while terrified that the truth of her sexuality would be exposed in the tabloids. She reveals the heartache and fear that accompany a life lived in the closet, a sense of isolation that was only magnified by her unrelenting desire to be ever thinner. With the storytelling skills of a great novelist and the eye for detail of a poet, Portia makes transparent as never before the behaviors and emotions of someone living with an eating disorder. From her lowest point, Portia began the painful climb back to a life of health and honesty, falling in love with and eventually marrying Ellen DeGeneres, and emerging as an outspoken and articulate advocate for gay rights and women's health issues. In this remarkable and beautifully written work, Portia shines a bright light on a dark subject. A crucial book for all those who might sometimes feel at war with themselves or their bodies, *Unbearable Lightness* is a story that inspires hope and nourishes the spirit.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was very impressed with de Rossi's insight regarding her condition, which is something that's very rare since most people don't know the real cause of whatever they are facing be it an addiction or whatever it is, some even go as far as to blame their genes, which, of course, puts any and all power outside of themselves making it almost impossible to change their lives. I was equally impressed and surprised by her fantastic writing skills and her amazing ability to explain in great detail and with such clarity the events in her life, her eating habits, and the thought patterns which fueled her behavior. For me it was quite heartbreak to read about the things that she would do to herself, and how bad she felt about herself sometimes, so my heart really goes out to her. But I am so very glad to know that she managed to get herself out of that nightmare and is now living a beautiful dream. Go Portia!!!

I have a soft spot for memoirs, I admit and having always been torn with my own body image, I wasn't sure this memoir would be "healthy" (shall we say) for me to read it. I'm glad I did. Portia's brute honesty is powerful--shocking---courageous and refreshing. While she does ramble at times, I think that is her way--her voice. Often it was just as I was like "Alright Portia, lets get to the next point" that she'd say something so insightful, so spot-on and intuitive... that I was compelled to mass-email her pearls of wisdom to every woman I know. An absolute must-read for any woman who has dared to hate even a small part of herself.

Portia's story of learning to accept herself for who she is, as well as delving into the mind of someone suffering from such a horrible disorder is one that I think resounds with a lot of people. These stories aren't told as often because as a society we tend to shame those that don't fit a certain mold. So to see such a public figure tell her side of the story and everything she went through is such a wonderful change of pace. But more importantly, I think her story can show people that are also dealing with similar problems that there is hope, that there is help. Her writing was so

raw and unfiltered and honest it put me to tears on more than one occasion, and I couldn't put down the book until it was over.

Portia de Rossi's book is a must read for those suffering from eating disorders. It does not promote itself as a "self-help" book but as a brutally honest narrative of her journey to hell and back. She does not hold anything back and her open revelation on starving herself to meet society's ideals, the entertainment industry's expectations of the ideal female form, combined with her misguided view of what it means to be a professional is sure to resonate among those with similar experiences. It is rare to find a Hollywood celebrity writing about their fears and feelings of low self-esteem in a very naked way. De Rossi should be commended for that. Yes, there are celebrities who write "tell all" books, but de Rossi writes from the heart, digging even deeper into her soul. There are parts of the book that are repetitive - descriptions of her eating habits, the constant struggle over her sexuality and others. But they serve to reinforce the constant presence of the demons that were part of her since her early modeling days. She brings to the front that Hollywood celebrities do not "have it all." They are human beings, just like the rest of us. And beyond the eating disorders, the most important message of her book is acceptance of one's self. She does not offer tricks and techniques of achieving this. But put simply, it is the starting point and each individual must find their own way. If you are expecting to be voyeuristic, this book is not for you. The poor ratings written by some .com readers draw from their disappointment that De Rossi did not delve into her sexual relationships. But that is not why she wrote the book. And she is far too classy to even dwell upon the subject. It is my understanding that she penned this book herself, not relying on ghost writers. De Rossi's book is an easy read, her imagery is vivid and disturbing at times, and her literary style makes the reader feel he or she is standing close by, watching as her life unraveled. One almost wants to reach out to save her from herself. You can feel yourself drowning with her. This book will help so many who struggle with issues of self-esteem and sexuality. She is among the fortunate few to return to health and to have found acceptance and love. It is likely to come as a shock to homophobes that gay people can love as deeply as the "rest of us."

I wasn't really expecting anything from this book since I've never really followed Portia's work, but I was so utterly pleased with it and her story that she has to be one of my new favorite celebrities. I found myself relating to so many of her thoughts and reactions. And though I've never struggled with my sexuality there are still relatable elements that she touches on such as fear and insecurity in relationships that I could wrap my head around. Of course most of the reason I finally chose to read

this was to just learn about others' experience and recovery with disordered eating as I suffer with thoughts and actions on a daily basis. Even if you aren't an actress pursuing a career in a related field I feel that many young women could read this and feel a connection. I recommend this also because it is such an easy quick read because she writes it like a real person. She isn't trying to impress anyone. She's real and writes as such. A book I could not put down and am sad to say I've finished reading!

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