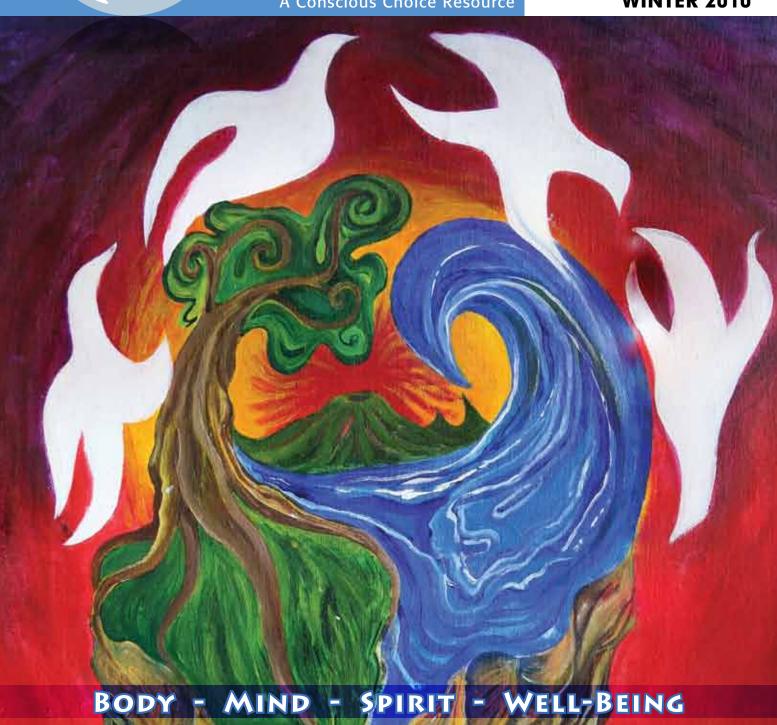
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# Living With Beanie

### Michelle Paisley

here's a joke I like to tell at the beginning of my book lectures that whatever I write about comes true.

After the proposal for "Yoga for a Broken Heart" was accepted, I went through a divorce. As I was writing it, my house went into foreclosure. When it was published and I was marketing it, I discovered both of my parents had cancer.

Perhaps the next one should be "Yoga for Winning the Lottery"?

I switched gears and decided to write fiction. It can't come true if it's all made up, right? Of course, all writers, including novelists, write from what they know, even if their characters are 'made up.' "All In Her Head" is about a middle-aged woman who is obsessed with her weight and her spiritual journey to find peace, love, and creative fulfillment.



After that one was safely written and another contract gained, I thought to myself, "Holy Crap, now when I tour everyone will be judging me as the fat author who writes about food addiction and doesn't walk her talk!"

So, during the course of publication, I joined a 12-step program to end my own compulsions with food. I lost 40 pounds in 6 months, and finally felt confident enough to speak in front of large audiences.

Without the weight, though, I felt raw, exposed. I had mistakenly believed that when I was thin that I would have no problems whatsoever. Instead, all my old demons came out of the closet to say hello, unburdened by the layers of cookies I tried to cover them with. My relationship with my boyfriend suffered. Believing he'd be eating his heart out with my new sexy body, I switched my obsession of choice from chocolate to winning a marriage proposal.

The magic sequel, then, would be "All Over It," because my main character, who also happened to lose weight, would now find inner peace and prosperity, and live happily ever after when her own commitment-phobic partner finally popped the question.

In the end, though, instead of proposing, my 'prince' declared he might not ever be willing to marry me and, that I was living in a 'fantasy' world.

We broke up.

Like Elizabeth Gilbert in "Eat, Pray, Love," I found myself in the ugly cry in the bathroom, only instead of blowing snot into the toilet, I found it safer to do so in the shower. Naked, skinny, wet and broken, I called out to God to make the pain go away, to help me find a new place to live, to lead the way because, frankly, I knew I didn't have the answers anymore. This wasn't a novel, and I was not the omnipresent source.

As if I was Moses, I heard clearly that I should call my friend Sandra.

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Sandra had found a broken-down crack house the year before and renovated it top-to-bottom for her adult disabled daughter. Luciana, who everyone called Beanie because of the way she shot up like a string bean when she was a child, is a 26-yearold mentally retarded woman with cerebral palsy and a heart of gold. Sandra wanted her only daughter to live an independent life, so she founded a non-profit agency, lived in a motor home on the property with her 7-year-old son, while she used her many skills to create a cozy cottage on a huge gated property, complete with a garden and IKEA kitchen.

Beanie mostly sat in her favorite corner rocking chair, drooling heavily into her always matching scarves and bandanas, flipping through magazines, grinning ear to ear.

Her radiance was contagious. Despite my relationship fears, my inner attachments to the way my own romance would play out, I found that when I was around her, instead of being all in my head, I was all in my heart, because that's the way Beanie lives.

I can dream up all kinds of happy endings to this story, and I'd be satisfied with any one of the outcomes. My books could sell big and I could end up purchasing this adorable cottage that has now become home, or I could find an even bigger and better one of my own. Now that I've learned to truly let go, my boyfriend could indeed come back, and I may or may not want to return there. I may find another true love, one that appreciates my magical, "fantasy" life. I may even begin to write books that don't have to come true.

Names have been changed. \*

Michelle Paisley is the internationally-acclaimed author of Yoga for a Broken Heart: A Spiritual Guide to Healing from Breakup. Loss. Death or Divorce (Findhorn Press. 2007). All In Her Head (Eloquent Books, 2011), and All Over It. She owns Flow Massage and Yoga Therapy in Sacramento, where she lives with her family. To reach her, please visit www.flowmassageandyoga.com

