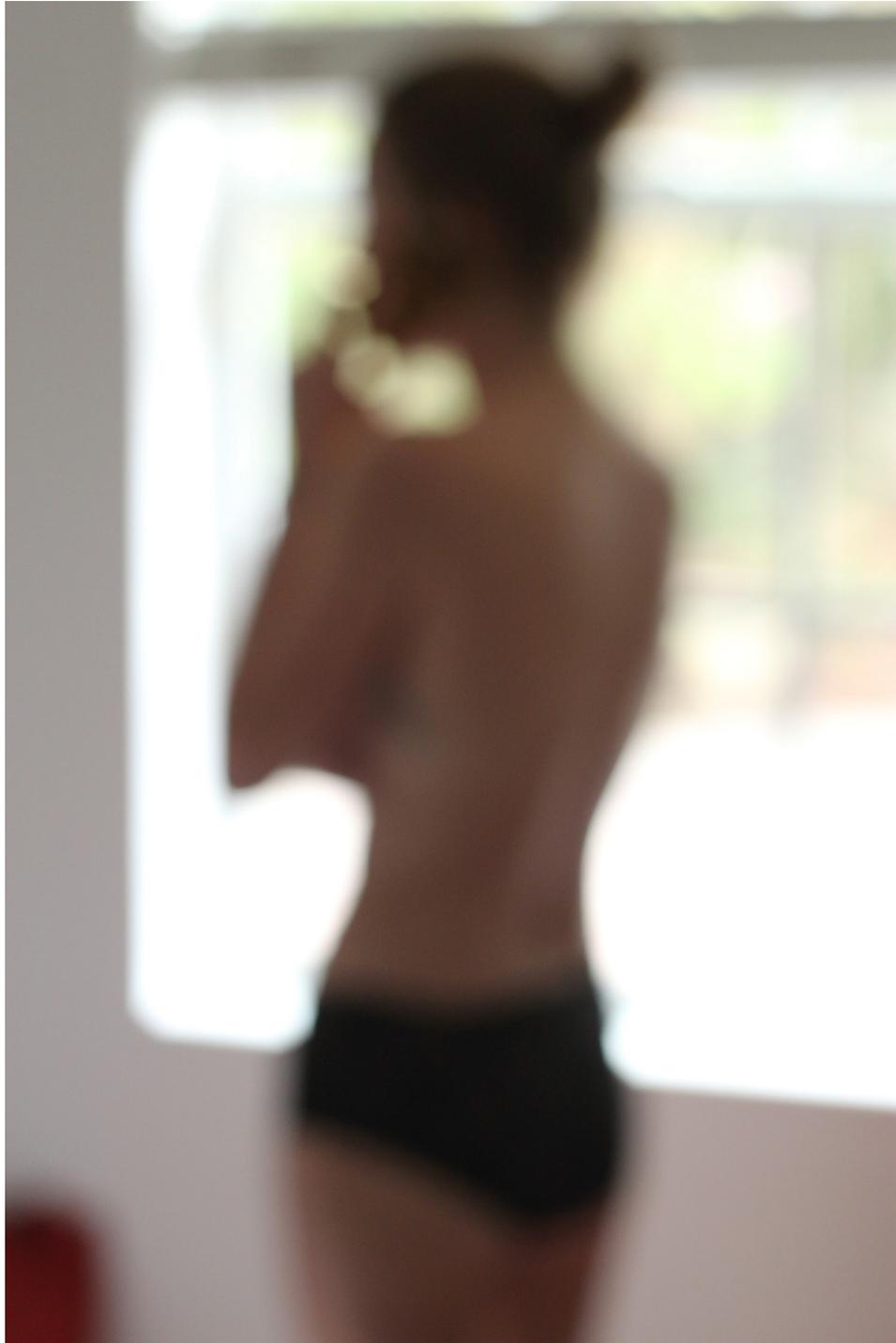


# Her Body in Her Words



Photographs by Elena Mudd

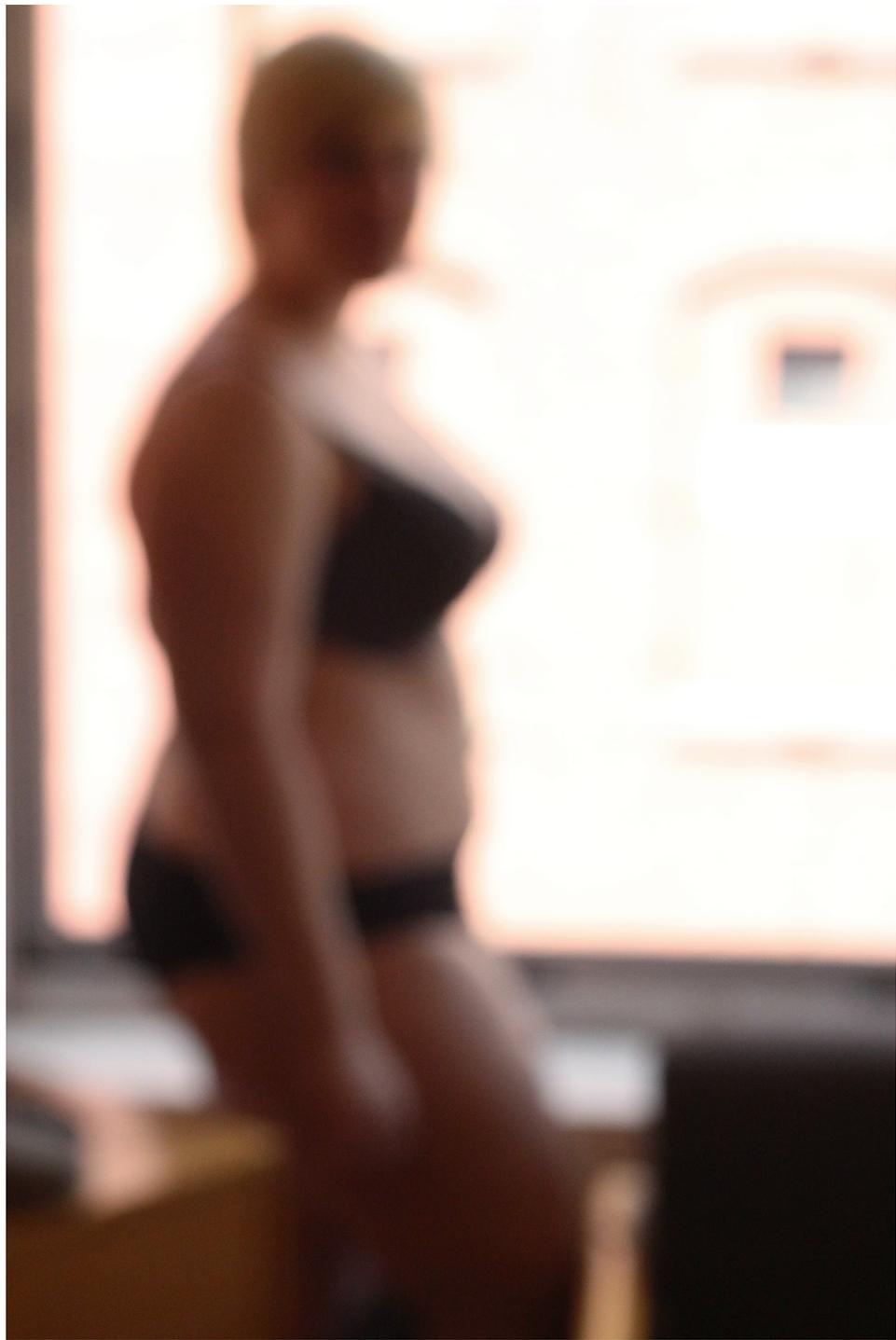
With Words by Elena Mudd and Other Women

*Like most women, I think about my body and how I look everyday. Some days I feel beautiful and healthy and happy, but those are few and far in between. Most days I worry about how much I ate, or think I look too thin, something I have been teased about since I was a child; mostly I just feel ugly and uncomfortable in my own body. My friends and I started complaining about our bodies in middle school and it hasn't stopped since; it only got worse from there. My closest friend developed an eating disorder and I've seen her struggle with it for over six years now. It's something I could never and still do not understand, even though I have my own body issues. As I have gotten older I have seen more and more women and girls around me hurt themselves to be thin or to be 'beautiful.' Even the friends who do not have eating disorders still see themselves a lot worse than how the outside world does.*

*But there is also no black and white with these issues. It seems to me that almost every woman is plagued with thoughts and aspirations to be beautiful and thin, and what they do about it takes on various forms. I believe America in particular treats women's bodies and their portrayal of them in a way that is very abusive and detrimental to the average woman's psyche and self-confidence. I want to see women around me begin to appreciate their bodies, and instead of being their own worst critic, begin being their biggest fan.*

*This book is dedicated to my best friend and to my mother. I love you both and am astonished by your physical beauty but more importantly the beauty that is within you both.*

*Also to all the WOMEN. Thank you.*



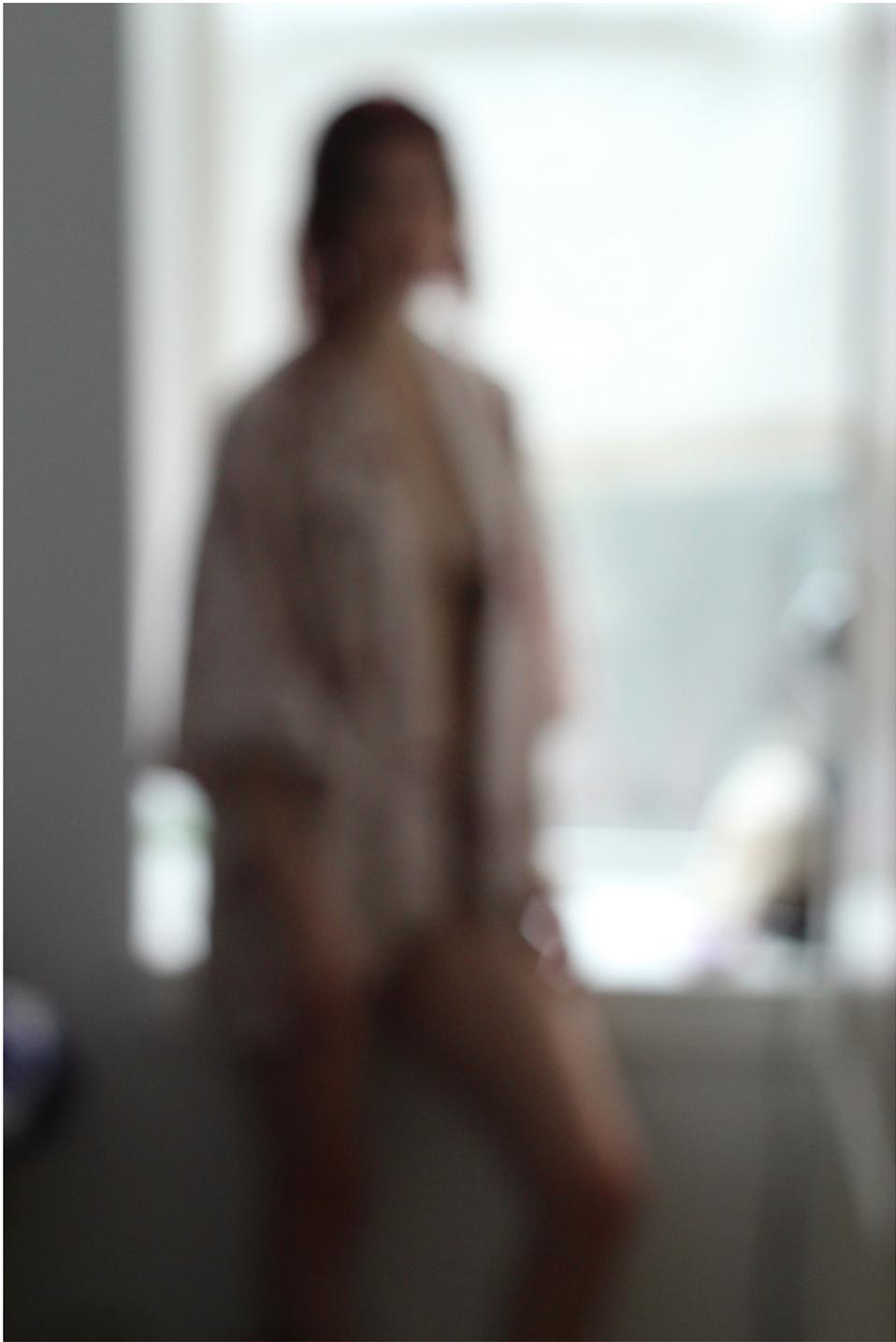
I never thought about what I liked about my body because I thought if I wasn't thin, then what was there to like? I would base my happiness on how thin I was. So I would think to myself, I can't be happy because I'm not thin. And, like, I couldn't understand how someone could be happy if they were fat.

In the past I have not eaten, or at least tried not to but then I'll get really hungry and be like, "fuck," and then eat a lot. I have kinda made myself throw up a few times but like only a few times. It was like after drinking a lot of alcohol and then realizing, Oh my gosh this alcohol and food is gonna make me fat, and then I thought, Well, I just drank so it's normal for people to throw up when they're drinking, even though I wasn't throwing up because I was drinking. I made myself throw up because I thought it was okay.

Right now I am working to lose weight, but now it's much more about feeling good. Sometimes I get a bit like, Oh my gosh I can't believe I just ate that or did that, but I think definitely overall I have come to accept this is what I look like, this is who I am. It's okay. I'm still a good person.





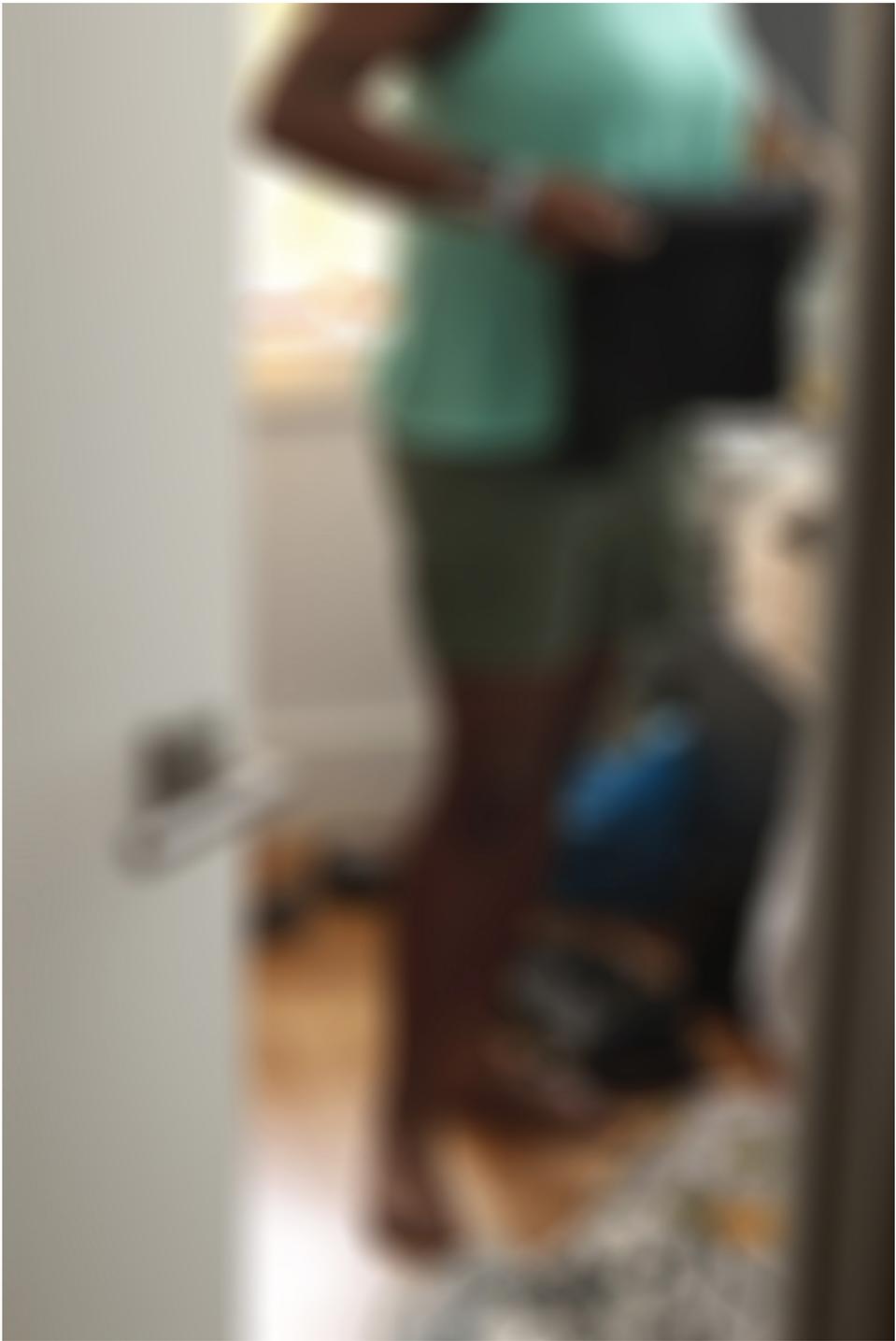


I think I started to consciously think about my body and weight around 2nd or 3rd grade. It was the age when boys and girls started teasing each other and becoming “boyfriend and girlfriend.” I have a really vivid memory from when I was about 9 years old and in the bathroom at school a girl from my class who still had her baby-fat asked me what I did to be so skinny. I was just a super tiny little girl. You know those ones that almost look like they’re going to fall over because their head weighs more than their body? I don’t remember what I answered but to this day it makes me sad.

I love my body. I feel so confident in my own skin and honestly, I think that’s part of what makes me beautiful. But that certainly does not mean that I think my body is perfect. I have a very close friend from home who is on and off bulimic, more than I know and honestly she is pretty close to perfect but she doesn’t always see it. And I know my confidence and level of comfort bothers her. She is so worried about maintaining her hot and skinny image that she is willing to make herself throw up. I can’t even begin to understand that logic.







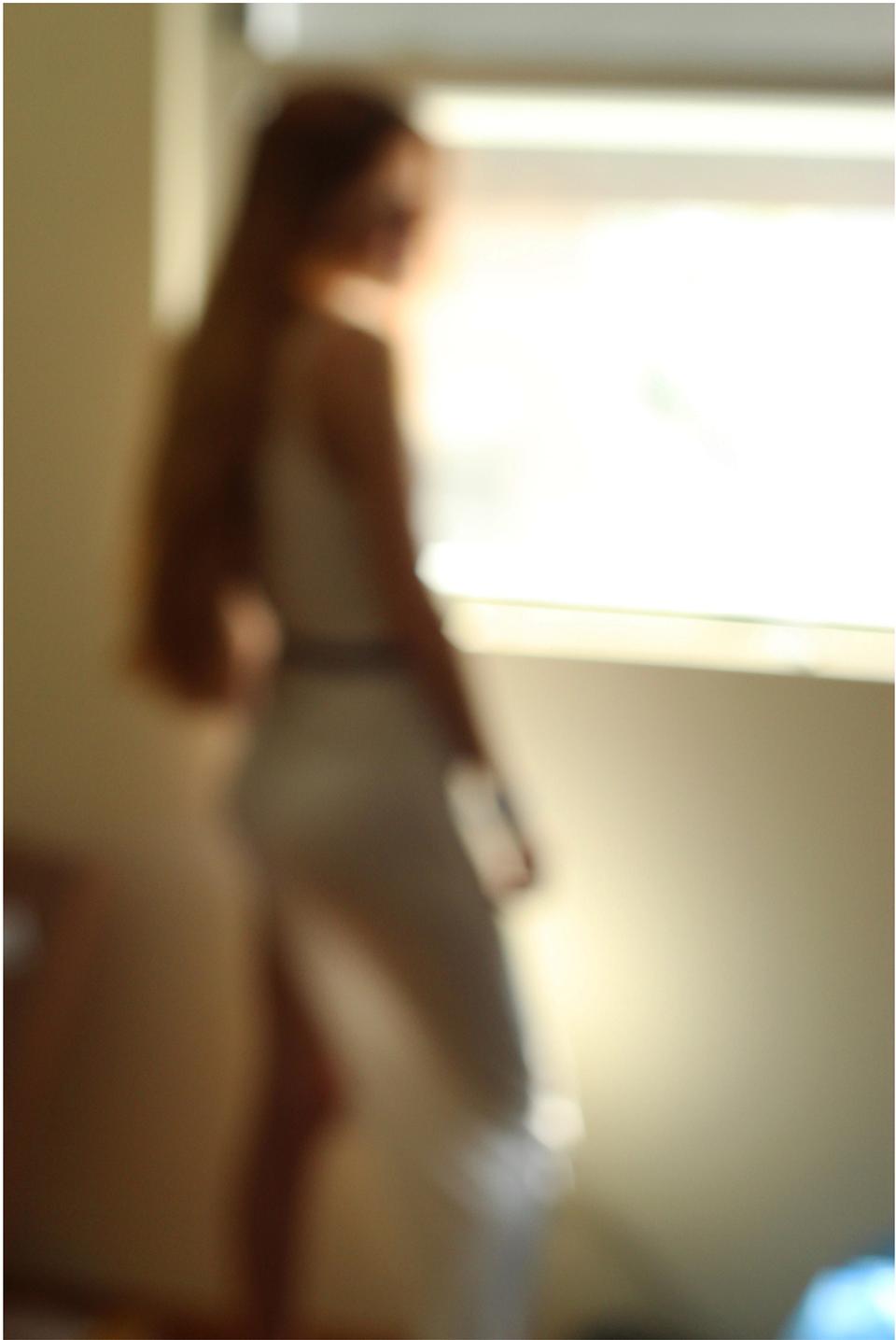
At this point, I feel as though I've always been concerned about my weight. I was diagnosed as bulimic in high school. Throwing up has become part of my daily routine. Starving myself is hard and sometimes I wish I had the willpower to do it, but I definitely restrict and purge more than anything. Breaking down the "psychology" of having an eating disorder is tough. For me, it's sort of a coping mechanism. People typically associate eating disorders with the word control, and that's definitely part of it. I'd also just really love to be thin. Once my therapist asked me what it feels like to purge after eating and I told her that I can only compare it to walking into an air-conditioned room on the hottest day of summer.

I honestly couldn't tell you how it began. I've always felt like the chubby girl growing up. I think I used food to cope with my feelings. The first time I ever threw up after eating was in 8th grade. I just felt like I had eaten too much and it made sense for me to just get rid of it. I didn't think anything of it.

I can remember adults in my life saying little things regarding my weight and the way I eat. I don't want to do that to my children. I've always said that I want to get help and change the way I think about food because I would hate to raise children thinking the way that I do.







I'm a conventionally attractive thin blonde girl, so those images [in the media] pretty much just reinforce to me that I look good or acceptable to most people, aside from being on the small side. I guess it's sort of arbitrary since if beauty standards were different I probably wouldn't feel as comfortable with how I look.

Being thin means I don't have to worry about people judging me for not being thin. It's one less stressor I have to deal with in my life.

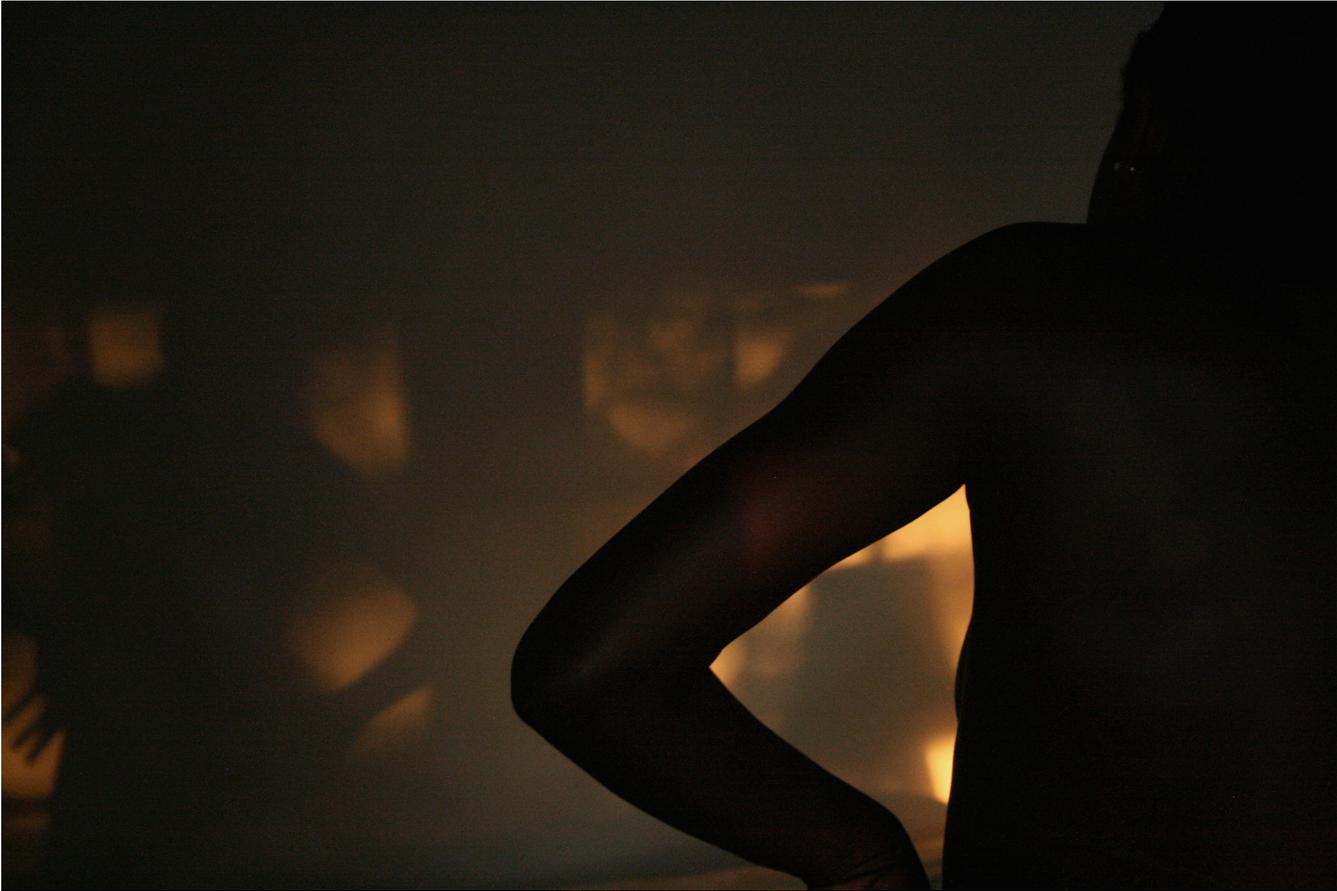






Just read over the questions. I'm really sorry but I don't think I can do the interview for you. The questions just triggered something in me and I can't answer them and don't feel comfortable answering them/talking about it quite yet. So sorry.







*I would like to thank each and every WOMAN who took part in this project and helped me realize my thoughts and visions. I know this was an emotionally challenging experience for many of the women and I can't express enough how much it means to me that they would bare their bodies and their inner thoughts to me and the viewers of this book. I knew each one of the women personally before the project, but through this I feel I know them better and I also admire them more; I was moved by their compassion, pain, and especially their strength. I was also struck by the similarities between us women.*