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MELINDA FOLSE

Author of *The Smart Woman's Guide to Midlife Horses*



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Fitness, and
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THROUGH
THICK & THIN

Make Peace with Your Body and Banish Self-Doubt—In and Out of the Saddle

press kit contents

contact information	3
about the book	4
about the author	5
talking points	6-8

book specifications

432 pp

7 x 8½

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“*Riding Through Thick and Thin* is indeed a book that aims to help every woman maximize her time with horses, in and out of the saddle, and to find that joy and passion in every other aspect of her life. I just love the humor and sincerity in Melinda’s voice—reading her words is like sitting down with your friends and trading secrets over a bottle of wine. She shoulders what I think is a significant responsibility: providing a tour of all the different angles with which we can address this issue of body image as horsewomen. The material covered is impressive—from what you might expect in terms of fitness and nutrition pointers, to valuable information about riding biomechanics, to that all-essential look at what’s going on inside our own heads.”

—**Jane Savoie**, Reserve Rider 1992 Olympic Games; Coach at Olympic Games in 1996, 2000, and 2004; Author of Multiple Bestselling Books and DVDs; Popular Motivational Speaker



www.horseandriderbooks.com

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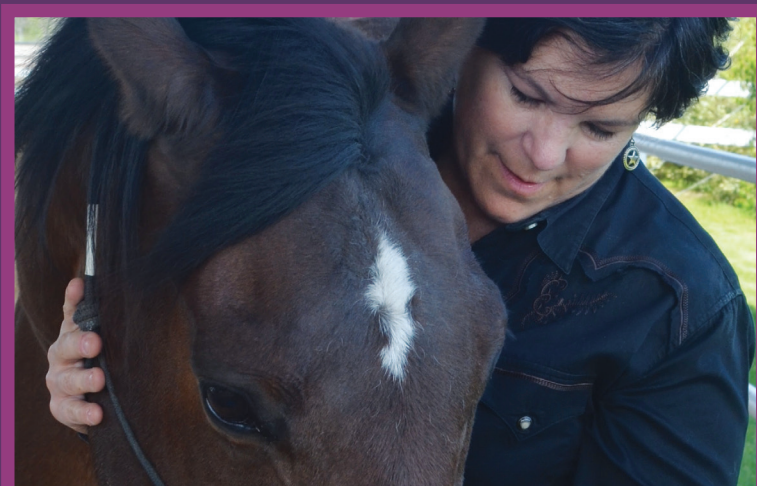
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“Read this book if you’re ready to mend the way you think about your body and feel about your riding.”

— *Trail Rider Magazine*

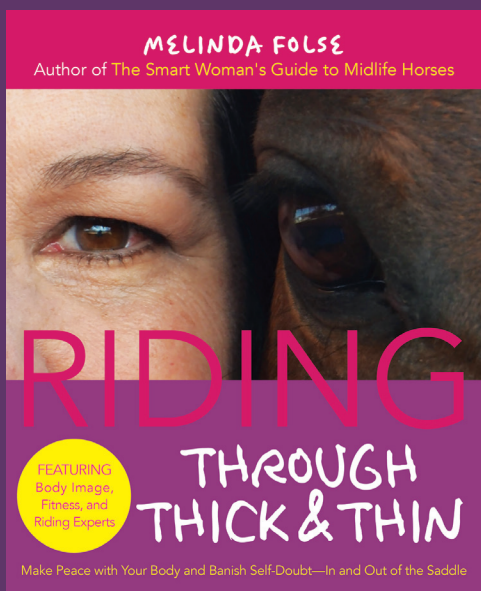


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3

about the book

Many if not most women have been locked in a battle with their bodies for as long as they can remember. And when it comes to riding horses, they drag their arsenal of self-doubt with them every time they step into the saddle. Some quit riding completely. Others ride, but are frustrated by their lack of progress as riders or what they see as poor performance. They succumb to silent self-torment as they wonder how they look, what others think, and whether they have any business being on the back of a horse if their jeans feel a little too tight.



Regardless of seat size, riding discipline, or the degree—or even truth—of the body issues with which these women struggle, the scars on female self-image in our society run deep and wide. So

with the humor and big-sisterly swagger that readers and reviewers have come to love, Melinda Folse, author of bestseller *The Smart Woman's Guide to Midlife Horses*, has decided to step in with a delightful, insightful, fulfilling new book. *Riding Through Thick and Thin* delves to the bottom of the issues that have long held women hostage, bringing together experts, research, resources, and stories to encourage, inspire, and empower. Readers will find some answers that may surprise them: Believe it or not, this isn't about losing weight or getting fit (although if that's a point of interest, there's a section packed with helpful tools and ideas). This book is more about what's going on in every woman's mind—and it taps new findings in neuroscience to reveal that permanent change to deeply ingrained body image issues is not only possible, but may be easier than we think.

about the author

Melinda Folse (formerly Melinda Folse Kaitcer) is author of the bestseller *The Smart Woman's Guide to Midlife Horses*, co-author of *Lessons Well Learned* with Clinton Anderson (both available from Trafalgar Square Books), author of *Grandmaster: A Story of Struggle, Triumph and Tækwondo* (about the life of Ninth Degree Tækwondo Grandmaster Won Chik Park), and a former senior writer at Time Warner's *Millionaire Blueprints* magazine.

Riding Through Thick and Thin was born of a natural interest in how body image issues affect women who ride, but also a compelling degree of curiosity: Melinda wanted to uncover new and helpful ways to approach this problem, pick the brains of experts and thought leaders, and pull together her discoveries into a game changer for people who are out of ways to deal with these issues on their own. The result is a thoughtful and compassionate exploration of the obstacles—internal and external—faced by horsewomen of all shapes and sizes.

Melinda's professional writing credentials include acting as senior writer for internationally renowned horse trainer and clinician Clinton Anderson's Downunder Horsemanship—authoring dozens of articles for his quarterly *No Worries Journal* magazine and several equine trade publications, along with web copy, e-newsletter features, and training materials—and a twenty-year freelance career that equips her well to dig into the depths of each subject she tackles and come up with the gems worth keeping. After writing the book she wished she had been able to find when returning to the saddle at age forty-five, in the form of *The Smart Woman's Guide to Midlife Horses*, Melinda hopes that *Riding Through Thick and Thin* will help readers rediscover the joy horses can bring to life.

talking points

What led to a book on this topic?

“Three things, really,” Melinda says. “First, my publisher, Trafalgar Square Books, called about two years after the release of *The Smart Woman’s Guide to Midlife Horses* and said, ‘Hey! We have this idea for a book and we think you’re the one to write it!’ (I tried not to ask why.) Second, I have personally struggled with my weight for most of my life. (Most of this, in retrospect, was in my head, but that doesn’t really matter.) Third, and usually the most compelling reason for me to write what I write: I was curious, and wanted to know more.”

What was the conclusion?

“The need, as I see it, is for us to get a little quieter, especially on the inside. The mindfulness piece of it is huge. We need to stop beating ourselves up for real or imagined weight issues, take an honest look at our individual circumstances, and find ways to be healthy, fit, and proactive.”

Has there been a shift in the culture around body image and riding? Are there distinctions to be made between the horse world and society in general?

“It’s no secret that obesity rates are skyrocketing—and that trend is echoed in the horse world. In researching for this book, I noticed two important distinctions for equestrians of all disciplines. One is that because we have another living being depending on us to be smart, conscientious, and kind—to keep not only ourselves but our horses as safe as possible when we ride—there’s an additional layer of responsibility that comes with true excess weight when we ride. The second thing is a bit wigglier. Body image is very subjective, and it’s hard to break through what we *think* is true about our bodies and see the *reality*. For riders, there’s an extra edge of self-conscious visibility: it’s not just about being skinny, it’s about being ‘show-ring skinny.’”



talking points

Is this a topic spoken of openly in horse communities—or in hushed tones?

“I think there’s plenty of both. People are very unkind to plus-sized riders—sometimes right to their faces, and more often when cloaked in the anonymity of blogs and forums and social media. I’ve read some true meanness from those who accuse overweight riders of animal cruelty—and some pushback with solidarity that’s truly heartwarming, from communities around the world, documenting how smart, strong, fit riders of all sizes actually feel lighter and take better care of their horses than many ‘average-sized’ riders.”

So how does a rider know what *is* a healthy weight?

“While some of the most common guidelines are valid for most people, the best answer is ... it depends. It depends on your body type, your bone density, your fitness level—your hopes and dreams. When it comes to riding, the best answer my experts gave consistently across the board is that your weight isn’t nearly as important as how you use it. That’s where fitness, balance, energy, and mindfulness come in. And, of course, the horse you’re riding and what kind of riding you do have to be factored into this equation. Navigating between real and imagined limitations—and finding a solution tailored to your own needs and circumstances, rather than just some chart—is part of what this book is all about.”

So what’s the bottom line in *Riding Through Thick and Thin*? Are you saying it’s okay to be heavy if you ride well? Or that overweight riders need to lose weight?

“I think the most important message—and the one I hope comes across loud and clear—is that it’s not about weight at all. It’s about being healthy, strong, and fit, and riding with balance, energy, and mindfulness. It’s about being realistic, responsible, and courageous, while moving forward with joy and confidence.”

talking points

How can someone make an honest assessment of where they are and what they need to do? What thinking needs to change to start down a healthy path?

“I know this sounds counterintuitive, but you do have to love your body right now, *first*, in order to move toward change. Self-acceptance and self-compassion don't mean letting yourself off the hook for making lifestyle changes. It just means loving your own body for all it already does, even as you take the first steps toward what you want it to do *next*, with your horse or in your life.”

What's different about this book in both the horse world and the health world?

“I think the incorporation of mindfulness and self-compassion is finding its way into a lot of current health and fitness literature, and I'm glad to be part of that. There have been pieces of all this floating around for years—but it's a complicated puzzle to try to bring them all together. One of the most curious and wonderful things about this book, I think, is how universal it turned out to be. It's focused around a rider's viewpoint, but all these resources and all this advice is equally valid for just about anyone who struggles with body image or actual weight issues, or, for whatever reason, finds themselves looking at everything through the lens of 'less than,' based on a real or perceived physical 'flaw' or challenge. If we do what we need to do to take good care of our bodies—and make sure we're fit enough and strong enough to do what we're asking ourselves to do—we can all just *relax* already and start to truly enjoy the ride!”

