



# MAYA NASSAR

## LEBANON'S FITNESS QUEEN

The Pure Elite UK bikini model, Maya Nassar, is the first ever Lebanese athlete to compete and win in a bikini modelling competition outside of Lebanon... and the best part is, she wasn't always fit as a fiddle and she's here to tell you all about her journey to the hale and hearty lifestyle endowed with fitness accolades that she lives now

By Rania Ihab

**FITNESS IS A GREAT WAY TO REDUCE STRESS**

*Maya*

*Nassar*



**1 RESTRICT JUNK FOOD TO ONCE A WEEK ONLY**



# ABS OF STEEL

## **How can we turn excess weight to muscles? Is it more difficult for girls than guys?**

Fat and muscle are two separate tissues. It is definitely easier for men to build more muscle than women since they have more muscle tissue and testosterone in their bodies. However, the best way to lose fat and build muscle is through a healthy diet and exercise. Exercise should consist of both weightlifting and cardio. For detailed programs, your readers can visit my website.



## **Please share with our readers how you transformed from being overweight to being the first Lebanese to compete and win in international bodybuilding events?**

A few years ago, I had a very unhealthy lifestyle. I used to eat lots of junk food and never did any exercise. After hitting a very low point and gaining a significant amount of weight, I decided it was time to change for the better. I started eating healthy food and going to the gym up to six times a week. After hitting my goal weight and becoming healthy, I decided it was time for a new challenge. I believe success is achieved and maintained by those who never stop setting new goals. This is when I wanted to achieve the ultimate and decided to start competing.

## **What is 'Start Living Right' and what was the motivation behind it?**

Startlivingright.com is an online website I created to help change peoples' lives for free. I share my experiences with others and show them how to live a healthier lifestyle. My website includes meal plans, exercise programs and tons of advice covering motivation, nutrition and exercise. After the success of my website, I decided to create a mobile application of my site. The application is the first fitness app in Lebanon and has been endorsed by the minister of sports. It has also been ranked number one many times by the Apple store. My app includes everything on my website including a multitude of other tools such as animated exercise illustrations and an online community where users can interact with one another. My app can be downloaded free by searching for "startlivingright" in any smartphone store.

## **We know you're an animal rights activist and so are we! Do you have any future plans to raise awareness on the matter?**

I am currently a board member of the largest animal welfare NGO in the region called Animals Lebanon. We rescue and care for all kinds of animals and have closed down terrible zoos and circuses. We are currently campaigning to change the law in Lebanon and make it illegal to abuse animals. Our draft decree is currently with the Lebanese parliament. If others wish to learn more about what we do or make a donation, they can visit [www.animalslebanon.org](http://www.animalslebanon.org).

## **How can fitness change a woman's life?**

Fitness can change a woman's life for the better by making her healthier, fitter and more confident. Achieving a fitness goal also makes a woman feel proud and satisfied. It can teach her how to be dedicated and have discipline, giving her the confidence to reach any goal she sets in her life. Being healthy will also make her more productive and help to improve her relationships with other people. Finally, fitness is a great way to reduce stress and feel much happier overall.

## **What is your advice to women who starve themselves to lose weight?**

This is certainly the wrong approach. Eating below 1200 calories a day is considered starvation and will only have negative effects in the long run. A low calorie diet will deplete the body of nutrients and cause the body to burn muscle instead of fat. When we follow a low calorie diet, the body will believe that it is starving and will burn muscle tissue as it is a metabolically active tissue that burns a lot of calories. As a result, we will slow down our metabolism and gain back all the weight (plus more!) when we come off the diet. It is also extremely difficult to follow a low calorie diet and will make you feel miserable. The best way to lose weight is to exercise regularly and to fuel your body with a healthy diet that will not leave you feeling hungry.

## **Do you follow a specific diet to stay fit?**

My daily diet consists of natural and unprocessed foods. This includes fruits, vegetables, protein, wholegrain carbs such as brown rice, quinoa, oats, lentils and healthy fats such as avocados, olive oil, raw nuts. I restrict junk food and enjoy it no more than once a week for one meal only.

## **Can skinny girls benefit from your program? How do you advise them to properly gain weight or gain muscles?**

Yes, I have a weight gaining plan for skinny girls available on my website. My advice to them is to eat healthy foods that are high in calories and to try and eat more calories than they burn each day in order to gain weight. It is important that they exercise, but I advise them to restrict cardio to no more than twice a week. Weightlifting will help them build muscles but cardio expends a high number of calories. Doing cardio twice a week will still offer health benefits without burning those extra calories needed to gain weight.

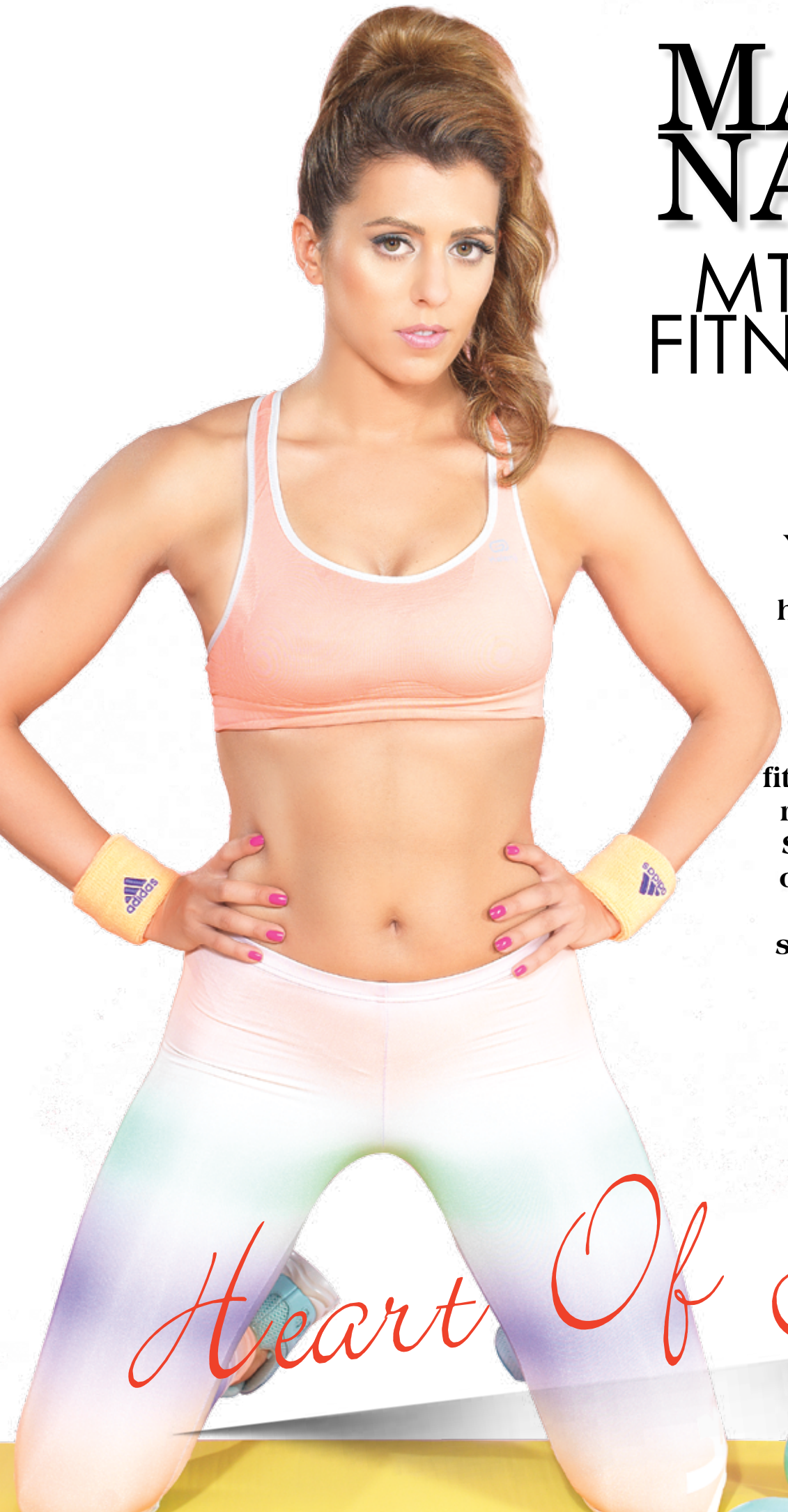
## **Which award are you most proud of and why?**

My best award was winning the overall female winner voted by the audience at my last fitness competition nearly a year ago. There were more than 200 athletes in my last competition and it definitely an honour being chosen as the overall winner. It is one thing to be selected by the judges, but definitely a very rewarding experience to have the audience choose you.

## **Are there any future awards you have your eyes on? When do you plan to work on that?**

My plan is to continue competing internationally and hopefully win some more prizes. Even if I do not win a trophy, my attitude is always to see fitness as a challenge against myself. If I train for the competition and know that I have done my best, then I consider that I have reached my goal and won.





# MAYA NASSAR

MTV'S NEW  
FITNESS GURU

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*Heart Of Gold*

