

'I don't call myself thin... this'

Coleen Nolan says she's happy

Loose Women star Coleen Nolan has gained a plethora of fans as one of the few women on TV today that truly feels like 'one of us.' Despite starting her career at the tender age of 15 with The Nolans, and then going on to become a successful TV presenter, not everything has come easy to the singer. She was unceremoniously booted off *This Morning* 10 years ago after her first attempts at presenting were poorly received and she admits that the experience left her feeling 'useless and worthless.' She's also struggled with her weight, getting down to a size 10 for her 2007 wedding to Ray Fensome, father of her daughter Ciara, nine, and released three of fitness DVDs. She's since regained weight, but tells us she's happy with her current figure, which she feels reflects her 'true size.' A decade on and Coleen has more work offers than she can possibly take on while juggling being a wife and mother. She's also an accomplished author with her second novel, *Denial*, on sale now. Here Coleen talks about proving she could cut it as a presenter, how she's letting go of her weight worries and how she and Ray keep their relationship alive.

How does it feel being back on *This Morning* doing *The Hub*? Did you feel like you had a lot to prove going back?

It feels unbelievable. I was gutted at the way it ended and the way it was dealt with before. I didn't really work for two years after I lost the *This Morning* job last time. No one would touch me for anything. Life was hard. I was the main breadwinner, I guess that was my first real taste of how fickle the industry is. Going back I felt that I had something to prove – to myself as well. I walked back in questioning whether I could do the job. But it put closure to it. They asked me to go on stage when *This Morning* won the National TV Award as I'm part of the team, but I just thought that would look bad as I had come with the *Loose Women*.

There's always pressure on women in TV to be unnaturally thin and perfect – how do you deal with that?

I think one of the great things about age is that you get more confident as you get older and you care less about what other people think. When you're younger you have so many insecurities and it just takes one person to say, 'You're putting on weight,' and you're crushed, whereas now I'd say, 'Yeah, so?' You just have to be happy about who you are. It is more about health really. There's an unhealthy obsession about



Coleen with Ray

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re about being s is the real me!

by now she has stopped playing the weight loss game...

age and weight, particularly in the celebrity world.

How do you make yourself feel better when you're not confident?

I lie to myself. Sometimes you just have to lie to yourself and say, 'You look great' and then convince yourself that you do.

You don't hide the fact you've gained weight since your fitness DVD. So what's changed?

If you want to lose weight, make sure that you do it for yourself and not someone else. For years I did it for other people and I'm not going to do it any more. I just don't care anymore. I'm not inhuman, obviously. There are some remarks that are said that are hurtful even if I don't show it. When I got really thin, people were asking, 'Has she gone too far?' But when you put it on they say, 'Oh there you go, we knew she'd put it all back on!' you just can't win. So now I am not trying to win, I am just trying to just be happy how I am.

So you don't feel self-conscious?

Well, the way I see it is that one of the sexiest things, whether you're male or female, take away weight, looks, everything else – is confidence. Dawn French is one of the sexiest people I know because she's so confident and secure within herself and that's so sexy. Looks you get used to, why do you think these men marry these beautiful women

and then run off? Ray said, 'There are certain women you'd like to spend the rest of your life with – and there are certain women you think you'd like to spend the night with.' And he said, 'For me, she has to have a good personality, because in a week I'll be bored and used to her looks and I won't fancy her.' So remember that confidence and self-esteem are the most impactful things. Sometimes you have to fake it until you feel it. Getting over my divorce (from *EastEnders* star Shane Richie), I had to fake being happy until the

day came that I was actually happy. Our minds are the most destructive but also the most powerful things and you can teach yourself to be happy. 'Feel the fear and do it anyway' – a great saying.

Does Ray help you keep your feet on the ground?

Ray's brilliant. He'd never let me get big-headed. I'm always slagging him because he's not romantic, but when things upset me or someone upsets me, he wants to kill them for me. I don't give him enough credit, especially

as I haven't had that before. I've had hearts and flowers before, but never had a man that would fight for your honour. He's like a knight in shining armour – but can be a pain in the arse as well!

What do you do to keep your relationship alive?

Well, I have my 'Little Miss Massage' outfit and my naughty nurse and sexy Snow White. A company said they could send a Zorro outfit to Ray, but I said, 'If you ever stand at the end of my bed dressed as Zorro, I'll laugh til I explode – it will not turn me on!'

Truth vs Fiction...

Karen, the main character in my novels *Envy* and now *Denial* is similar to me in that she has weight issues, an ex-husband, and is insecure about herself. Where she's different is that I think she's nicer than me! She's still trusting and innocent and sees the good in everyone no matter how vile they are. I think part of Karen is my sister Maureen – she always sees the good and makes excuses for the bad. *Denial*'s optioned for a Hollywood movie, and I'd love someone iconic like Sharon Stone to play Julia or even Leslie. But I don't know who could play Karen – maybe someone like Kate Winslet.

Denial by Coleen Nolan (RRP £7.99, Pan)
Out now

