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**Breath is the power behind all  
things.... I breathe in and know  
that good things will happen**

TAO PORCHON-LYNCH

## Stefanie Williams:

# F i t   w i t h   a   p u r p o s e

A quick scroll through fitness influencer Stefanie Williams' Insta feed will leave you in no doubt of how dedicated she is to her passion. But behind the scenes, she's faced an uphill battle to get to where she is today. Here, Stefanie tells of the injury that spurred her on to a soul-searching mission, her journey with endometriosis, and her determination to help others

Writing | Kathryn Wheeler

“If you were to ask that question to my parents, they would say I've been running around and doing muscleman impressions since I was five years old!”

Stefanie Williams tells me, when I ask where it all began.

A fitness influencer and trainer with more than 1.4 million followers on Instagram, when Stefanie reflects on her journey so

far, a love of sport and fitness is front and centre.

“I'm not particularly academic, so I wouldn't necessarily do that well in class, but on the sports field, that's where I really excelled,” Stefanie explains. “I absolutely loved it, I was so happy, all I wanted to do was play sports!”

And her passion paid off when she was scouted for the Welsh

hockey team while she was still in school. It's the kind of pressure and responsibility that could easily be intimidating, but Stefanie took it all in her stride and looks back fondly on the memories from that time.

But it all came to an unexpected end when she sustained an injury that meant she wasn't able to continue playing with the team. >>>



“I cracked my shin bone,” Stefanie says. “It was probably my fault to be fair. I dived, and the defender basically crushed me. When I stopped playing sports, it definitely had an impact on my mental health. I totally lost my way. It was something that had been there my whole life, and something that I knew I was good at, and I was happy doing. You lose your way a bit when that’s taken away from you.”

The injury forced Stefanie on to a path of self-discovery which, she notes, she may not have had the opportunity to do otherwise. That said, it wasn’t easy, and Stefanie now sees her early 20s as a very challenging time.

“You try to conform and do what you’re expected to do,” she reflects. “But, actually, the most important thing is doing what makes you really happy, even if that might disappoint people, or it might not be exactly to plan.”

Following her heart is what led Stefanie to where she is today. About five years ago, she did a fitness course, which sparked an idea. Why not combine her love of fitness with her passion for connecting with others? She set up her Instagram account, and things took off from there.

Quickly building a dedicated following, Stefanie wanted to pull back the curtain that often keeps people feeling in the dark when it comes to health and fitness, and to encourage a healthy attitude towards working out.

“People can be so focused on what they look like, without actually considering the impact on their body,” she continues. “I often see that women will use exercise as an act of punishment rather than listening to their

bodies and focusing on what it needs and how it feels.

“My endometriosis diagnosis made me appreciate how important it was to work with my body, not against it.”

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It’s incredible what happens when women come together, it’s unstoppable

A condition where tissue similar to the lining of the womb begins to grow in other places, such as the ovaries and fallopian tubes, endometriosis can cause intense, life-halting pain, fatigue, and can contribute to mental health problems. Diet and fitness can help ease the symptoms, but many people may need more support, and although it affects 1.5 million people in the UK for many, getting help is an uphill battle, on average taking seven and a half years from the start of symptoms to diagnosis.

“I went through such a long, tedious time to try to figure out what I had, and I was so frustrated,” Stefanie says. “It was a tough time for my mental



and physical health, because I could hardly train. I remember filming some work out videos, and I was lying on the floor in the gym crying because I was so exhausted.”

Stefanie reached out to her GP but her experience was dismissed as bad period pains. This attitude led her to suppress what she was feeling, but it got to the point where she was in so much pain, she knew she couldn't go on.

“I did loads of research and found another gynaecologist who's an expert in endo,” explains Stefanie, as she pinpoints the moment she was finally taken seriously, and was able to access the treatment she needed. “One in 10 women suffer from it, and it's just so frustrating because it's something that's often cast aside.”

In an effort to raise awareness, Stefanie opened up about her experiences in an emotional video posted on her YouTube channel in 2018. The video reached thousands, and the comments were flooded with support and others sharing their own experiences – some even thanking Stefanie for prompting them to reach out to a professional, and getting them the diagnosis they needed.



“I also teamed up with the Endometriosis UK, and I put on an event. We all got together and it was...” Stefanie pauses. “I cried, we were all crying at points. It was amazing, you couldn't stop people from talking. They were saying, ‘Have you got this?’, ‘What do you do for that?’

“It's incredible what happens when women come together, it's unstoppable,” Stefanie says. “I've seen that it can have such a positive impact, sharing something that you might feel really vulnerable about. Because if you feel like that, you can bet that hundreds of other women are going to be feeling that too.”

Despite all she has faced, Stefanie's positivity and her

passion for lifting others is palpable, even down the phone line. When I ask her, as we come to the end of our interview, where this strength comes from, she takes a moment to consider.

“I think it comes from learning to really look after myself,” she says. “You've just got to take each day as it comes. I've also got such an incredible community, which I'm proud of, because it's these women who are on this journey with me. It's important to be as positive as you can, that's what keeps me going.”

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Follow Stefanie, [@Stef\\_Fit](#), and discover more about her health and fitness app GLOW at [weglow.com](#) 