



"BURNS ARE BEAUTIFUL"

FIVE SURVIVORS ON SCARS AND SELF LOVE

As a child, Abby Fisk searched for images of burn survivors proudly displaying scars that looked like hers. She found hope and healing through photoshoots of actor J.R. Martinez, advocate Kiki Vo, and more.

At 17, her journey came full circle when she embraced her scars with a photoshoot of her own. She wants to show the world that there is beauty in her strength, beauty in her courage, and beauty in her scars.

Inspired by Abby's story, Phoenix Society asked five burn survivors about scars and self-love. They shared their stories of resilience, acceptance, and inspiration.

HERE'S WHAT BURN SURVIVORS KNOW ABOUT BEAUTY:

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It's in all of us.

"My path to accepting my scars has not been easy. For years, I didn't like to look in the mirror. I didn't see myself. I finally started saying to my reflection: "This is me. I am still me. I am beautiful."

It helped most to find something I did before my fire.

Something I did before and I can do now. Whether it is photography, riding a bicycle, painting, or writing. Something I do all by myself. Something that makes me feel good about this beautiful world— and myself.

Some days, I love myself. Other days, I struggle just like everyone else.

Anxiety and depression are a constant battle in my life, but I know I'm not alone. I'm confident I can get through the day because I am a survivor.

I'm here for a purpose: to make a difference and help those I can.

A fire may have changed my appearance, but it didn't change my ability to love life. Beauty is everywhere. It's all around us, and it's in all of us. And it's up to us how much beauty we share with the world."

— Evan

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It starts with a smile.

"Self-love is a must for me. I don't function well without it. What makes me beautiful is wearing a smile every day the sun meets my face. Sometimes I feel like I'm in a cartoon with red hearts popping all around me!

I have no struggles when it comes to living as a burn survivor. I had to accept who I was and quick if I really wanted to live. And I must say – the Phoenix Society played a vital role in who I am. My confidence is on a high and I don't let no one get in the way!

Beauty is having a beautiful soul that manifests on the outside. The most beautiful people I've met are those with scars. Be confident. Be strong. Be proud of the skin you're in. Never forget to smile – it heals all wounds. And no matter what, be you."

— Paula

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*It's accepting your scars —
but not letting them define you.*

"In middle school, I was made fun of because of my scars. By getting involved with my community's burn program, I discovered I was on a journey that would contain highs and lows of learning to process my negative thoughts.

Phoenix World Burn Congress showed me tools to pick myself up again.

I also found healing in my faith and discussing my experiences with other burn survivors. Still, I have days where I feel confident and empowered —and days when negative thoughts creep in and make me feel insecure.

I had to learn how to accept my scars, but not let them define me as an individual. This taught me how to truly, unconditionally love myself.

Beauty is loving yourself for the qualities you like and the flaws you'd like to work on. It's being uniquely yourself and not letting the pressures of the world tell you who to be. Beauty is overcoming the tragedy of our burn injuries and living a fulfilled life."

— Orrealus

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It looks a lot like resilience.

"Accepting my scars began with shaping my reality into what I wanted it to be. It wasn't easy. It wasn't automatic. It was a choice, to grow stronger and rise above the ashes.

Growing up, I learned what the word "resilience" meant: getting up and moving forward despite obstacles. Yes, hello! That is how I define myself. That is what makes me feel confident.

You can be your greatest cheerleader or your worst enemy.

For example, I was so concerned about my first serious partner seeing me without makeup. I remember so clearly closing my eyes and thinking, "Just be yourself." To me, it was a huge deal; to him, it didn't make a difference. To him, I was beautiful with or without make up.

Little by little, I became less guarded. I began to state that I am enough, I am loved, I am beautiful.

I think beauty is a state of mind. Loving yourself brings freedom to try new things, dream big, and plan your future. Freedom to fail and try again—this is a beautiful thing. Fear doesn't completely go away, but your love and courage will be stronger."

— Michelle

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It's seeing your body as a masterpiece.

"I feel like my burns are small compared to many survivors, but I still struggled with my self-esteem after being burned. I struggled being stared at. I struggled answering questions.

When you see scars on your own body, they are imperfections, another thing to be self-conscious about. But when you see scars proudly displayed in paintings or photos, they're art. They're authentic, they're intricate, they're beautiful—and suddenly they aren't flaws anymore.

The moment you begin to see your own scars as art, everything changes.

I was once an insecure girl: ashamed of my scars, looking up pictures of other survivors to find hope. Now I have the confidence to be that person for others. Maybe this campaign will do that, but it also helped me believe in the beauty of my own scars.

Sometimes I worry what others will think of my burns, or wish I could wear a backless dress or bikini without worrying about showing the world the scars on my back. In times like those, I remind myself: I am a masterpiece, I'm proud of who I am, and my burns are beautiful."

— Abby

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Share your story. Embrace your scars. Celebrate your beauty. #burnsarebeautiful