



# Maya

**MAYA NASSAR-MAALOUF MAKES HISTORY  
AS LEBANON'S FIRST FEMALE BODY  
BUILDER**

**M**aya Nassar-Maalouf has transformed her love for fitness into an empire that includes television appearances on networks such as MTV and LBC, a huge social media following and a history making bodybuilding career. As the first ever government endorsed fitness bikini bodybuilding competitor in Lebanese/Arab history, Maya is proof that not only can you reinvent yourself, but you can create a path that positions you to stand out among the crowd.

CEOMOM caught up with this Lebanese superstar to learn more about how her fitness career began and to get tips for starting your own fitness journey.

### **Who is Maya Nassar-Maalouf?**

I would say that my background is very multicultural. I have a Dutch mother and a Lebanese father. I was born in New York so I guess you would say I'm American. I grew up in Africa and I lived in England. Now I live in Lebanon in a suburb outside of Beirut. I have a passion for helping people. I have no background in fitness. I used to work as a journalist for Time Out Beirut. I used to be someone who was very unhealthy. I never exercised. I used to eat very bad food. I suffered from asthma so I would have difficulty breathing just going up the stairs. During this time I gained a lot of weight and became very insecure. This is when I had my turning point. I literally started going to the gym overnight. I did lots of research about how to eat healthy. With time I lost weight and started to look into doing fitness competitions. I would travel to England since we didn't have competitions in Lebanon. I won a competition in England and started to get attention in Lebanon. The Lebanon minister of sports endorsed me and gave me recognition to represent Lebanon abroad. That's when I started to get media attention.

### **How did your fitness career begin?**

During my fitness journey I was so passionate about fitness and living a healthy lifestyle that I became certified in fitness training and sports nutrition. I wanted to change other people's lives the way I had changed my own.

### **What is your philosophy on fitness and nutrition?**

I think it is something that makes your life better. I see it as a reward. I believe a lot of people see it as a sacrifice or a punishment. They believe that if they follow a certain lifestyle it restricts them from living their lives. In the long run it makes you stronger and healthier and you feel better inside.

### **What advice do you have for a new mom who is trying to start or maintain a workout routine?**

They have to get the clearance from their doctor before starting any exercise regimen. I also recommend consulting with a fitness professional.

Consult with a professional trainer at a gym as well as a nutritionist to help you start a nutrition plan. A lot of gyms will have a daycare for moms who need to take their children to the gym. If a mom can not go to a gym or afford a gym membership there are a lot of workout videos that will help them work out at home. Maybe they can even get a treadmill or inexpensive workout equipment to use in their home. There are so many ways a mom can get started. The most important thing is a healthy diet. Also I have a home exercise guide on my website which moms can follow. It's something I created to help other people who want to exercise at home. I also have a mobile app that people can follow to help them develop a diet plan, as well as at workout at the gym.

### **What has been the most rewarding part about being a fitness trainer and nutrition expert?**

I would say the most rewarding part is hearing feedback like, "You've changed my life." I think there's nothing more rewarding than knowing you have made a difference in someone else's life. I have helped young women who have struggled with eating disorders. I've helped elderly people who felt they were going to be cripple or end up in a wheelchair. I see my work as a passion. It is very rewarding and satisfying. It gives me purpose to work really hard and go out of my way to change someone's life.

### **Congratulations on being a new mom. What has surprised you most about balancing a fitness career with being a mom?**

It is very challenging. Being a mom alone is really a full time job. It makes you aware that you have to plan in order to manage your life. I tell people with no kids you have no excuse to not start a fitness plan. It is possible, you can even be active with your kids. Go for a jog, put your baby in a stroller or do a workout at home while your baby takes a nap. I believe if someone wants to be fit they can. It makes you a better mom if you are healthier and fit. It also makes you a better role model, teaching your kids how to be active and live a healthy lifestyle.

### **What upcoming projects do you have?**

Right now I am a gym owner. This summer we opened a second branch of my gym, Start Living Right. I started my diet and training in May. This past September I started competing again and won three trophies including first place bikini beach body. Of course, I plan on continuing to bond with my son.

To learn more about Maya Nassar-Maalouf, visit <http://startlivingright.net>.

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