



"It's nice to be understated in your confidence," Tierney says. "I appreciate that in others."

## Maura Tierney strives to be self-assured

This *ER* vet is ready to take risks. Interview by Shelley Levitt

**Since I landed my first role**—as the mean cheerleader in the 1987 TV movie *Student Exchange*—I've been fortunate to get steady work. My struggles have been more internal. I spent 12 years in Catholic schools in Boston, where being special, different or curious was frowned upon. Ever since, I've dealt with conflicting feelings of wanting to express myself and being scared of standing out. But I'm finally realizing it's OK to feel good about myself and what I do.

**I've always been a hypochondriac.** There are real doctors on the *ER* set, and when I first started, they all made fun of me; I was always asking them to look down my throat or feel my glands. The anxiety has abated a bit, but if a really great disease came along tomorrow, I'm sure I'd convince myself that I had it.

**I enjoy spending time in New York City** because there's so much diversity; some women have brown hair, some wear glasses, some are a bit rounder, whereas in L.A., every girl looks similar—blonde, hip-huggers, a tattoo right above her buttocks, like a 14-year-old. I'd rather not wear a trendy uniform.

**I'd never played much poker** before winning Bravo's *Celebrity Poker Showdown* last summer. Three days before the taping, I was at home practicing with my husband [director Billy Morrissette], and he kept winning. But I took a private lesson beforehand, and I did everything the pro taught me: I didn't let anyone intimidate me, and I stayed focused. I took home \$100,000 for my charity, The Children's Aid Society Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program. I also saw what I could accomplish when I let myself do something without hedging my bets—literally. In the past, I've sometimes been cautious about the roles I choose, and I want to be a little less so. Now I'm more willing to take some risks, and I hope an acting project comes along that will allow me to do something I've never done before.