

# Body Image

Body image work is arguably the most important and the most complex topic.

## **Why do body image work?**

Our relationship to our body and weight is directly related to the degree of which we are obsessed with food.

For most all of us hating our body came first and THEN dieting. It was the idea that "I shouldn't look this way" that started everything.

I believe that body image work is most effectively done in a conversational manner. So ask questions, talk about where your getting stuck. We are deconstructing a LOT of old beliefs here and questioning a lot of deeply rooted thoughts.

## **Social Media**

One of the most game changing things I personally did to radically shift my own body image was intentionally follow women on social media my size or larger. Years ago all that filled my feed were your stereotypical "instagram model." You know the one.

I deliberately went through and detoxed my feed. I then found women who just had average looking body's. Women who had thighs that rubbed, stomach rolls, flat asses, zits, and still managed to have a great life.

I have added a list at the end of this handout. These are just suggestions. Don't like some of them? Don't follow. We all have our own body image hangups, find people you click with.

# Body Acceptance

## **Body acceptance does not mean body love.**

I know when I started attempting to accept my body the way that it was I thought I was supposed to have no bad days. I thought I was supposed to love what I saw every time I looked in the mirror and never have another bad thought about my stomach or legs.

This is VERY unrealistic.

The difference now is that when I have that thought, it does not mean I have to take drastic measures. It does not mean I need to cut out food groups or start a new workout plan. It doesn't mean anything about my value as a person. All it means is that I am having a bad body image day.

Take your hair as an example:

We all have those days where no matter what, everything we do just makes it worse. Even if you take a second shower in hopes of doing a reset, it is still awful.

Do you shave your head? No. However, the thought probably does cross your mind!

Do you make it mean no one will love you if your hair looks weird for the day? No.

Body image is similar. Not every day will be great. Somedays you won't think about it and other days you will more.

The expectation that you will always love what you see in the mirror just isn't human though.

# **The story we tell ourselves.**

Now that we know we will never be without negative body image thoughts, let's look at what we are making them mean.

This work, and what I do as a coach, is to challenge your thoughts, beliefs and stories. We cannot change the facts but we can change the story that we attach them.

## **The circumstances is the same- the story after is very different.**

We don't care about our weight in a vacuum, so what is really going on?

Think about a triggering event you recently experienced.

Maybe you stepped on the scale and it was higher than you thought.

So the fact might be "I weigh 5 pounds more." That alone, has no power, but the thought right after very likely will.

THAT is where we have control.

You can attach the story of "I am never going to stop gaining weight" or "I sure loved that meal last night!" or "I guess this is the journey I am on right now" or "Interesting..."

Gaining 5 pounds or 30 pounds isn't the problem. Eating 12 cookies or a pint of ice cream isn't the problem, it is the story we tell ourselves AFTER that is the issue. How can you begin to change that story?

Typically it is something like:

No one will love me

I will be judged

I don't want anyone to see me like this for fear of rejection.

Focusing on our weight is a way to keep us safe. It is much easier to just focus on another diet or trying to lose those extra lbs instead of looking at the underlying issue.

Body acceptance also does not mean you give up on caring about your body. In fact, i'd argue it means you finally START caring for your body. You feed and nourish it. You move and tend to it.

## **Bridge Thoughts**

### **Accept-Like-Love**

To go from hating your body to loving it isn't very realistic. One way to start building better body image is to practice with "Bridge Thoughts".

Bridge thoughts are small steps in the direction that we ultimately want to go.

So if you are at the place of "I hate my body." A bridge thought for you could be, "This is my body." If you hate your stomach currently, you could start with "this is my stomach."

As you do this longer and start really seeing your body for what it is and all that it can do, we can start appreciating it more.

I loved the exercise Dr. Morgan Francis brought up about writing a letter to her stomach and then having her stomach write a better back to herself. I am not really into those kinds of exercises but as she was explaining it , I could see the power in that one.

# You get to decide.

I know how easy it is to fall into the trap of

If I could just:

Lose this stomach...

Tone up these arms.....

Get my butt to be a little more round...

Build stronger legs....

Just lose 30 pounds.....

Lose those flab....

THEN I'D BE HAPPY. That's all I want!

Have you ever looked back at pictures of yourself from a decade ago or even a year ago and thought "Sheesh, I looked great then! Why didn't I see it?"

This is such good proof that how you feel about your body has such LITTLE to do with your actual weight.

And further more, you can't hate yourself skinny overnight or EVER.

This is a mindset thing.

This is CHOOSING to think new thoughts.

Something I loved from talking to Sarah in the interview was (you can watch this in the uploaded files section of the group) when

she mentioned asking her clients, "Do you want to accept this body?"

I thought that was another powerful question.

Whatever your body size is today, is what it is.

However it looks is how it looks...

The question is, what do you want to do with that information?

Body image work is work you will do forever.

Body acceptance isn't just about your weight.

This is about your wrinkles, your flexibility, or agility, your endurance.

This is about how you view your whole self.

Head to toe.

## **The Scale**

Weighing ourselves can be a tactic to make us feel more in control.

We step on it to make sure "we are still ok."

Does it help?

Truly.

There is no right or wrong answer here.

When you weigh yourself, is it easier for you to eat in a way that feels better?

Do you feel more trusting around food?

Or, is it the opposite?

Here is something I noticed for myself when in the early stages of this process and trying to get the hang of intuitive eating.

Any time I stood on the scale, it never went well. Over or under what I wanted, it had a negative consequence.

If I was over what I wanted I felt awful. Maybe I would cry right then and there. Or I would throw on my shoes and immediately go for a run or carry on with my day but the number was always at the front of my brain. Taking up space. Dictating what I would eat the rest of the day and how I would feel.

On the days it would be under what I had expected I would initially get that hit of dopamine. I'd feel so pumped....for a little bit. Then...panic would set in. "I cannot gain that weight back! I have to make sure I stay here or go lower." I was terrified of gaining it back. All day, obsessing over my food, wondering if this meal would make the scale go up.

Weighing yourself, and truly everything in this course, is entirely up to you. My role is to help you see if it is something you want to keep doing. To see if it is really helping you and how, or if it simply is not.

## **Remember the purpose of your body.**

It is easy to forget what the purpose of our body is. We turn it into an object that we should mold, shape or manipulate. Your body is closer to you than anyone else in this world. Remember her actual purpose. Treat her with kindness and respect. Appreciate her.



I hear women all the time say, "It doesn't bother me if they are fat, but I can't stand it on myself."

You may not realize it, but that is a weight bias. That is associating certain attributes, attractiveness or abilities to those who are in larger vs smaller bodies. Fat stigma is a very real thing, I am not arguing that. But the question is, are you finding ways to confirm it even further, or are you looking for ways that isn't true.

And that's ok. I wouldn't expect you to NOT have it. We all battle our own internalized fatphobia. What we need to do is push up against that bias.

Prove yourself wrong.

1. What are your current thoughts about fat? About fat people? What do you make it mean?

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What are your thoughts about thinness? What do you make that mean? What do you associate with thinness?

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How could it these responses NOT be true? Who do you know or what have you seen prove the opposite?

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2. What bridge thoughts can you practice?

From "I hate my body" to "this is my body"

From "My stomach is disgusting" to "This is what my stomach looks like"

Taking a small step in the direction you want to go.



3. How do you want to feel towards your body? What thoughts do you WANT to have when you see your body?

4. Mirror exercise: Focus on 1 part of your body in the mirror. Not the part you hate the least, maybe a shoulder or forearm. Just look at it. Notice the details of it, without being judgmental towards it.

Maybe the next time you look at a leg and after a while of that you try and find something sexy or cute about it. Then maybe the next time you look at yourself fresh out of the shower or with less clothing on than before. Just taking note of yourself.

Your eyes, your hands, your hips. Not judging. Not hating. Just looking. Getting used to seeing your body. Building up that body acceptance muscle.

## **Social Media**

Detox your social media. Everyone on there making you feel like garbage. Gone :) It is a great feeling to do this!

I've listed several suggested pages to follow below. Once you start following a few new people there are suggestions that come up and you can follow more and you continue with this work. This is by no means a list set in stone, just few suggestions.

I do want to make a note that the majority of these women primarily fall on the younger side. I think a lot of that is due to the fact that millennials grew up with social media. I have very high hopes that as millennials age so will the the number aging body positive individuals.

Doing this is the most powerful thing I personally have ever done for my own body image.

Instagram:

@jenne15

@themilitantbaker

@bodypositivefitness

@laurenleavellfitness

@iamchrissyking

@practicewithdana

@thebodyposipanda

@thefatgirlsguidetorunning

@louisegreen\_thebigfitgirl

@bodyimagemovement

@iamishauntay

@danisherrif

@bostanley

@curvyfairy

@gabifresh

@plussizemodel\_claudiafloraunce

@belleslovelylife

@thebirdspapaya

@chunkyandfunkymaddie

@katiesturino

@roseybeeme