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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

EVERY BODY IS DIFFERENT

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I have a friend who is extremely concerned about her looks. While talking with her one day, she explained that the reason she is so worried about what people think of her is because as a young girl, she was made fun of because of the size of her nose, and because she had a little gap between her front teeth. This led to her becoming extremely self-conscious about the rest of her body as well.

I recently read that many of us internalize messages starting at a young age that can lead to either positive or negative body image. Body image is how we see ourselves when we look in the mirror or when we picture ourselves in our mind.

The body positive movement is making great strides to promote size diversity, body acceptance, and a healthier body image for all ages, genders, races, abilities, etc. It is important that we continue to embrace body diversity by recognizing the beauty of this diversity.

While we all may have our days when we feel awkward or uncomfortable in our bodies, the key to developing a positive body image is to recognize and respect our natural shape, and learn to overpower those negative thoughts and feelings with positive, affirming, and accepting ones.

Having a healthy body image is an important part of our mental wellbeing, including prevention of eating disorders. The articles in this issue of *Motivated* include some great stories and tips on this important topic. When I shared some of them with my friend, it helped her to have a more positive view of herself, and it helped me to adjust my own outlook, too. I hope it will do the same for you.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Every Body Is Different

Web Reprint,

It is important to remember that everybody is different. We all have different genetic and cultural traits. Even if everyone started eating the same things, and did the same amount of exercise for a whole year, we still would not all look the same at the end of the year. This is because each person's genetic inheritance influences their bone structure, body size, shape, and weight differently.

So, how can you determine your ideal body weight? Well, your "ideal" body weight is the weight that allows you to feel strong and energetic, and lets you lead a healthy, normal life. For example, when your body is healthy and at its ideal body weight, you are not too tired, and you have the energy to interact with friends and family, participate in sports, and concentrate on school or work.

While being overweight can be associated with adverse medical conditions, your body weight can be healthy across a wide range of weights. When searching for your ideal weight, charts, formulas, and tables may be misleading, and should be used under the guidance of a qualified expert. Focusing on eating balanced meals of nutritious foods, and enjoying regular physical activity will help you to achieve balance and arrive at your ideal weight.

Most of all, avoid comparing your body with your friends' bodies or the people you see in advertisements or on your favorite TV shows. If you compare yourself to others, try to remember that we are all naturally different, which means we all have special qualities. Make a list of some of your strengths. What do you like to do? What makes you unique? ■

For some great information on how to achieve a healthy weight, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/index.html>

10 Steps to a Positive Body

Image

Web Reprint



One list cannot automatically tell you how to turn negative body thoughts into positive body image, but it can introduce you to healthier ways of looking at yourself and your body. The more you practice these new thought patterns, the better you will feel about who you are and the body you naturally have.

1. Appreciate all that your body can do.

Every day your body carries you closer to your dreams. Celebrate all of the amazing things your body does for you—running, dancing, breathing, laughing, dreaming, writing, drawing, working, etc.

2. Keep a top-five list of things you like about yourself—

things that aren't related to how much you weigh or what you look like. Read your list often. Add to it as you become aware of more things to like about yourself.

3. Remind yourself that “true beauty”

is not simply skin-deep. When you feel good about yourself and who you are, you carry yourself with a sense of confidence, self-acceptance, and openness that makes you beautiful. Beauty is a state of mind, not a state of your body.

4. Look at yourself as a whole person.

When you see yourself in a mirror or in your mind, choose not to focus on specific body parts. See yourself as you want others to see you—as a whole person.

5. Surround yourself with positive people. It is easier to feel

good about yourself and your body when you are around others who are supportive and who recognize the importance of liking yourself just as you naturally are.

6. Shut down those voices in your head that tell you your body is not “right” or that you are a “bad” person.

You can overpower those negative thoughts with positive ones. The next time you start to tear yourself down, build yourself back up with a few quick affirmations that work for you.

7. Wear clothes that are comfortable and that make you feel good about your body.

Work *with* your body, not against it.

8. Become a critical viewer of social and media messages.

Pay attention to images, slogans, or attitudes that make you feel bad about yourself or your body. Protest these messages: write a letter to the advertiser or talk back to the image or message.

9. Do something nice for yourself

—something that lets your body know you appreciate it. Take a bubble bath, make time for a nap, or find a peaceful place outside to relax.

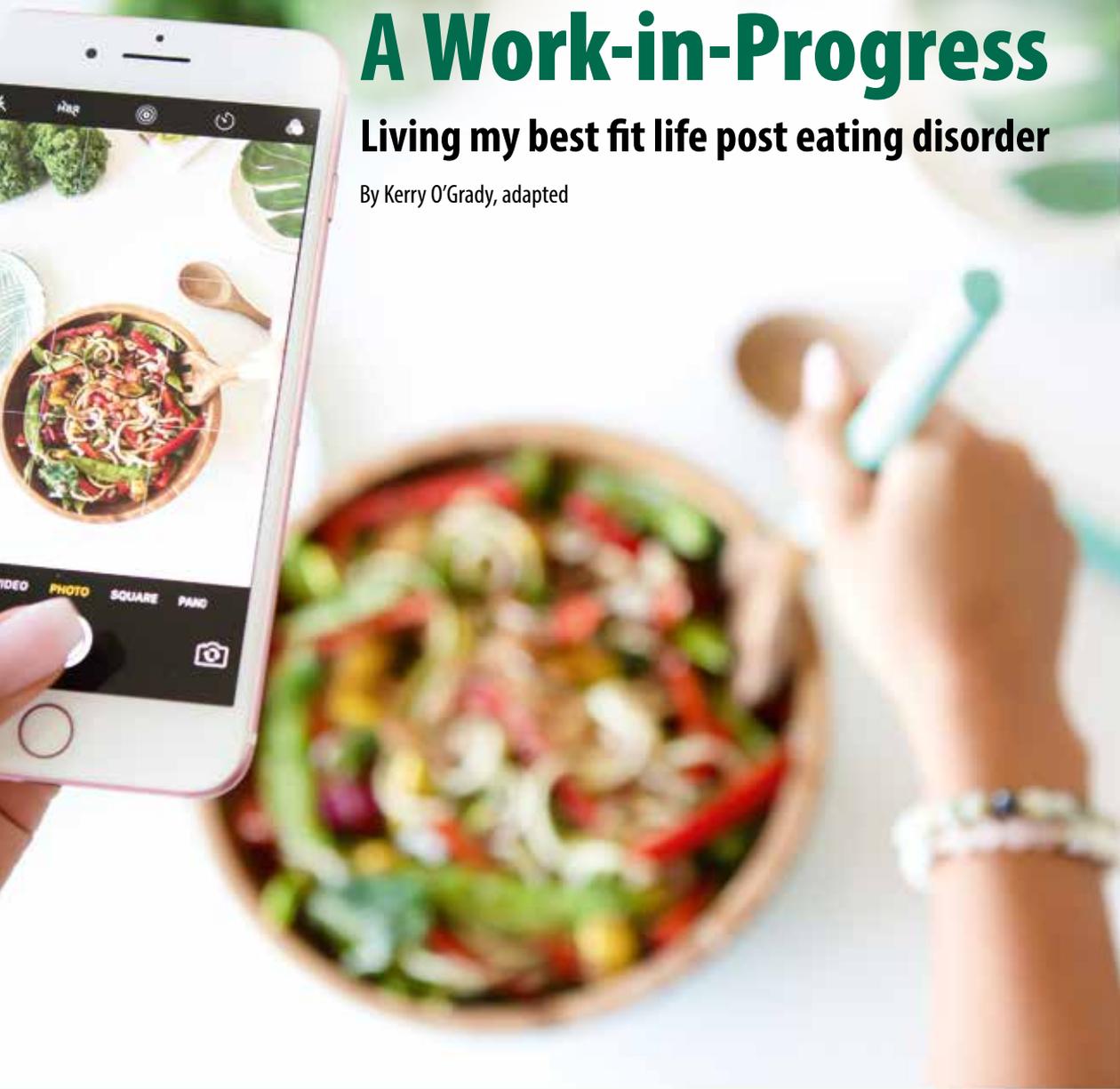
10. Use the time and energy that you might have spent worrying about food, calories, and your weight to do something to help others.

Sometimes reaching out to other people can help you feel better about yourself and can make a positive change in our world. ■

A Work-in-Progress

Living my best fit life post eating disorder

By Kerry O'Grady, adapted



If you ask my friends in NYC to describe me, you'll be painted a picture of a boss lady taking on the city as a full-time professor, writer, and consultant, in addition to being a fitness influencer. They'll also tell you I'm a people person, excitable, and will always make time to help you move apartments and celebrate your birthday.

If you ask my friends in college or in

Phoenix, Arizona (where I lived after college) to describe me, you'll be painted a picture of an entirely different woman. One my NYC friends couldn't imagine. They'll tell you I looked bad and acted even worse: Jittery, nervous, habitually moody, and obsessive compulsive.

It's because from 2004 to 2010, I suffered from Anorexia Nervosa, a disease that nearly took my life.

It's not like I want to forget the girl I used to be. If I forgot her, I wouldn't remember how much I've been through. How much I've overcome. How thankful I am for the people who kept me focused and strong during that difficult time. I credit every experience for making me the person I am today: Strong, fit, successful, and proud; someone who has the energy and confidence to do everything she wants to do, every day.

That doesn't mean every day is easy. Honestly, no days are easy. And no one—unless you've had an eating disorder—understands what life is like in recovery. It's full of self-care and transparency; meaning and gratitude. It's full of energy and vibrancy you didn't know existed when you were in the thick of the fight.

For me, fitness was motivation to get better. I'd been a competitive dancer from the age of five through high school. I also ran winter and spring track as a teen, as well as cross-country. While I was sick with my eating disorder, I wasn't allowed to work out, per doctor's orders (nor, truthfully, did I have the energy). But I missed it, so once I was in recovery, I had to rediscover what fitness meant in this new life stage: One in which eating was both enjoyable and essential; an integral way to achieve my best self.

Merging my love of fitness with my life post eating disorder isn't seamless. In fact, it's a constant work in progress. Here is how I work through the balance:

Food = Energy. If I want to go to the gym or a workout class, I need energy. And most energy comes from food. Food still causes me anxiety, but through the help of medical professionals over the years,

I've got it under control. I look at food differently than my former self. It's now something I need for my brain and body to work optimally. I've also relearned how food is meant to be enjoyed. I eat things I love that will nourish my body and give it energy, every day. Once I started viewing food as power instead of the enemy, my world became a lot brighter (and me, a lot stronger and healthier).

Endorphins Make You Happy. Seeing my body work through a dance class, or lift weights, or achieve a new yoga pose is a constant reminder of how far I've come. It gives me a sense of euphoric happiness. Each day, I remind myself that if I don't keep up healthy habits, I won't be as happy as I am right now—active and accomplished.

Keep Yourself Honest. I don't do any of this alone. I have a support system who knows my past and will catch me if I fall. This support system includes medical professionals, as well as family and friends. I've learned over the years that being in recovery is a permanent thing. If I want to continue down the road of success, I need to understand my triggers and reach out if I feel one coming on. Having a team behind me gives me motivation, as well as inspiration.

Realizing you need help is a sign of strength, not weakness. If you are suffering from unhealthy eating patterns or behaviors, contact your doctor, talk to someone who loves you, or reach out to a Helpline in your part of the world. You are worth it. ■

You Are Worthy of Love

PARENTING
FROM THE HEART



A letter to my teenage self: What I wish I knew about loving my body

By Jessica Henning, adapted

Dear Teenage Jessica,

Look in the mirror. No, really look. Now, say “I love you.” You don’t necessarily have to mean it, but say it out loud. Do you see that curl in your hair? Run your hand through it. You won’t always have that funky, curly hair. Love it when people comment on how they wish their hair could be like yours. Stand straight on, facing the mirror. See those curves? One day, those curves will hold a baby on your hip, and you’ll be glad and proud. Place your hand on your stomach. This is the hardest part, but do it. One day, your stomach may have stretch marks on it from growing a human being, and that’s amazing and beautiful. But right now, your skin is smooth and there’s what you call “baby fat.” Don’t lie in bed at night sucking in your stomach thinking it will make a difference. Embrace it.

This idea of perfect—the perfect weight, the perfect wardrobe, the perfect hair—it doesn’t exist. The best and most important thing right now is to accept and love yourself. Embrace your quirky personality, and don’t try to please people by being something or someone you’re not. Those people that love you for someone you’re pretending to be don’t last. And if they don’t love you for

who you truly are, then they’re not worth it. Who you really are is up to you, and it will change. Let that change happen because you want it, not because of any external influences.

You will encounter people who also don’t have confidence or feel any type of self-worth, and they may project their insecurities on you. Stay strong. Those things are not about you. Use your positivity as a deflection against their self-doubt.

Teenage Jessica, I want you to know this. You are enough. Knowing you are enough will change everything. You won’t need validation from a popular girl’s friendship, or the next fad diet. Your fulfillment will come from within and everything external will be an added bonus.

This takes time, so until it happens, I want you to feel. Your feelings are completely valid and, more importantly, they’re necessary. Embrace those feelings. And finally, live in the moment because once this time passes, you will never get it back. Live in the now and enjoy every second. ■

Love always,
Adult Jessica

Two Stories from Women Who Struggled with Body Image

Web Reprint, adapted

I can't really remember a time when I didn't judge my body in opposition to the bodies around me. I loved gymnastics and dance growing up, but those activities required a lot of time staring straight into a mirror and judging, so I learned the difference very quickly between a "good" body and the one I had. My thighs were too big, my legs were too short, and I was round where I wanted to be straight.

I still do a fair amount of hating on my body, and I'm not proud of it. But now, when I'm measuring how gigantic my thighs are or how short I am next to another woman, I tell myself that this is the body I've got and I owe it to myself to use it. I'm not going to get taller and I'm never going to be a twiggy model-type dashing around the world (or on the TV screen, magazine covers, or at the movies for that matter).

When I can't do it, when I'm in a place of absolute self-loathing and body hating, I try to remember that there are young girls everywhere who are listening to their moms talk about their jiggly arms or their fat thighs, and what it was like for me to hear the women around me talk about their bodies like that. I remember how terrible it felt to stand in front of the mirror and rag on myself, I think of all the young girls out there who are still growing and changing, and I flip the script on the negative self-talk. They're

listening, so I try to say the right thing whenever I can.—Julia Furlan

The first time I was called beautiful, I was standing in a modeling agency. All my life, I've been what's considered "fat." All my life, I was never asked out, asked to a dance, or basically even mentioned in the same sentence as pretty. Of course, my family told me from time to time how pretty I was, but that's what families are supposed to do.

But there I was. I had won a modeling contest and suddenly found myself employed as a plus-size model. I flew to Colombia, to Brazil, to Sweden. I worked for brands galore. My size was no longer a problem, a thing that needed to be fixed. I was apparently beautiful.

Sometimes I still struggle with self-love, as most people do. It's very easy for people to tell me, "but you used to model!" What they don't get is that it doesn't wipe away the years of feeling insignificant. No amount of compliments can erase the mean words, the dirty looks, the memory of hiding in the bathroom during slow dances so that I wasn't the only kid left alone.

If I could tell my younger self anything, it would be, "Keep your head up. Your feelings are valid. Your existence is valid. You're allowed to look however you want, my darling. Give the world some hell."—Sheridan Watson ■

You Are Unique

By Al Steward, adapted



Did you know that you are unique? There is no other person in all the world who is exactly like you! You're different. You're special. You're beautiful.

But maybe you don't really feel like that.

Well, that's not an unusual feeling to have. You're not the first person to feel that way. But you're wrong. I can guarantee it. You're not just another face in the crowd. You are unique ... you are special ... you are beautiful ... there is no one else in all the world exactly like you.

I am not just trying to make you feel good. What I'm saying is absolutely true. Scientists have proved it.

First of all, you know that police and government departments use fingerprints to identify people. That's because no two people in the world have the same fingerprints.

And that's only one way you are different. Some scientists in Japan have discovered that your lips are special too. Just like your fingerprints, your lips have little markings on them, little grooves in the skin ... and everyone has a different pattern.

And there's something else that really is well known ... no one else smells exactly like you. That's not an insult. It's a fact. That's why police tracking dogs can follow one person's trail for long distances just by the smell they leave behind on the ground they touch.

But that's only a small beginning of the ways you are different and unique. Eyes can be used for identification—just like fingerprints—because every eye in the

world is different.

Then there is your heart. It's different, too. No two people in the world have hearts that are exactly the same size or shape. Then there is the system of veins and arteries that carries your blood all through your body. It's also different.

So you see ... you are unique. You are different. You are beautiful. No one—anywhere—is exactly like you.

But what difference does that really make? Does it make you feel a little better about yourself? Perhaps. But is that enough? Maybe you're thinking, "So what? Being different doesn't mean that I'm any better or any worse than anyone else I know. I'm just different." You're probably right.

But being different—being unique—does tell you something. So many people these days are feeling like they are nothing more than a number on a computer card somewhere in a government file. But you are more than that. You're a special design. You were made special. Because that is the way God created you.

You're different. You are not just a number. And because you're different, you are important.

Scientists have only just recently discovered how unique and special each one of us is—how special we are. But God has known this all along. He knows what we need. He knows what we feel and what we think. God made us special, and He has a special interest in us. His plan for us and our life is unique too. It's special.

That's something worth thinking about. ■

True Beauty

NOTABLE
QUOTES



People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.—**Elisabeth Kubler-Ross**

Our bodies are always going to change, and we might not always love that, but it really has nothing to do with true beauty. True beauty comes from within.

—**Nia Jax**

Be kind. It will reveal your true inner beauty.—**Debasish Mridha**

The beauty of a woman is not in a facial mode, but the true beauty in a woman is reflected in her soul. It is the caring that she lovingly gives, the passion that she shows. The beauty of a woman grows with the passing years.—**Audrey Hepburn**

There is nothing more beautiful than someone who goes out of their way to make life beautiful for others.

—**Mandy Hale**

True beauty is born through our actions and aspirations and in the kindness we offer to others.—**Alek Wek**

Unless you break free from the shackles of beauty as dictated by the media and society, true beauty will be elusive.

—**Khang Kijarro Nguyen**

God made you to be the way you are, you needn't try to be anything different than that.—**Victoria Lynn**

I am not this hair, I am not this skin. I am the soul that lives within.—**Rumi**

