

HOW TO IMPROVE SELF AND BODY IMAGE

WHAT IS BODY IMAGE?

Body image involves the beliefs and feelings a person has about their body. People with a positive body image have a healthy sense of self-worth that doesn't revolve around their looks. A positive body image includes having a stable body image, an understanding that beauty comes in all shapes and sizes, inner positivity, and accepting oneself as a whole.

On the other hand, people with a negative body image are not satisfied with their looks. They often compare themselves to others and feel inferior. They are ashamed of their appearance and they might feel awkward in their bodies. They don't have high levels of self-esteem, and they tend to view their bodies in distorted ways. A negative body image can lead to mental health concerns such as eating disorders and depression. The environment people grow up in has an important role in the development of their body image. The culture, family, and peers can cultivate beliefs about ideal beauty standards.

To improve your body image, here are a few things you can consider:

BE MINDFUL

This is the first step to improving self and body image. Try to identify your unhealthy thought patterns and locate where they originate. Stop yourself once you start having these thoughts before they escalate. Become aware of the damaging self-talk and actively replace it with positive self-talk. This negativity has power over us only as much as we let it. Thoughts can be very misleading, and it is not wise to take your thoughts as facts rather than just opinions. Our minds can play games with us, making us believe that we are unworthy or unbeautiful.

LIST 10 THINGS YOU APPRECIATE ABOUT YOUR LOOKS.

Remind yourself of this list every time you look into the mirror instead of hyper-focusing on every little flaw. Because of the beauty culture we live in, most people focus on what they can fix or change about their looks when they look in the mirror. You can change this narrative by actively shifting your focus to the positives in the mirror. Write these positive qualities on sticky notes and put them around your house so that you'll see them daily. Sticking a note on the mirror might be a great start!

VALUE YOUR BODY FOR WHAT IT DOES INSTEAD OF HOW IT LOOKS.

Our bodies have a functional value that needs more appreciation than aesthetic value. We experience this life through our bodies. Take a moment to respect your body for what it does for you every single day.

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE.

Do people around you talk negatively about yours, theirs, and others' bodies? These comments can affect you and contribute to a negative body image. Spend time with people who support and appreciate you. Your real friends will love you for who you are and see the real beauty inside you.

SPOIL YOUR BODY.

Get a massage, a haircut, or any other self-care practice to make your body feel good. Simple things to show appreciation to your body, such as a bubble bath or even a nap, can make a huge difference by cultivating inner compassion.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY.

Our bodies deserve love and attention from us. Exercising regularly and eating healthy food can help you feel better physically and psychologically. However, it is important to remember that over-exercise or unhealthy dieting practices are not good for you. We need to cultivate compassionate care rather than harmful obsessions. Remember, the key concept here is taking care of yourself, not punishment.

DON'T RELY ON EXTERNAL VALIDATION TO FEEL BEAUTIFUL

Compliments from others shouldn't be the main source of your confidence. It has to come from within you. You need to perceive yourself as beautiful. No one else but you can determine your self-worth.

TRY TO IDENTIFY THE UNDERLYING MOTIVATION FOR SELF-CRITICISM.

Regular and harsh self-criticism originates from inner beliefs and cognitions. For example, if you are consumed by the idea that you want to be thinner, perhaps this idea comes from a wish to regain control in your life by changing your looks. Self-reflection is very important to cope with unhealthy patterns. There are healthier ways to fulfill emotional needs. If you identify harmful and overwhelming patterns, it might be a good idea to seek professional help.

MEDITATE.

Meditation helps people detach from unhelpful thought patterns and decreases stress. Try to find meditations especially focusing on self-love and acceptance. Don't forget that you are so much more than your looks: Beauty is so much more than meets the eye. Try to identify things you appreciate about yourself that are unrelated to your looks. These characteristics define who you are, not your body. Self-love and self-confidence make a person beautiful. Feeling good about yourself makes you look attractive; remember that beauty is a state of mind. Try to view yourself as a whole rather than as an imperfect body part.