

RECOVERY SESSION:

COPING WITH BAD BODY IMAGE DAYS



DISCLAIMER

This resource is a living document and is open to change. It was created by students from within the Body Brave community and may not be fully representative of the spectrum of experience. If you have any suggestions to improve this resource or lived experiences that you don't see represented here, please email us at info@bodybrave.ca.

WHAT IS BODY IMAGE?

Body image is formed through the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs we have about our bodies and how we look. Body image varies between positive and negative experiences and varies depending how someone feels at the time. Body image is influenced by internal (example: personality) and external (example: social environment) factors which can influence how we engage with the world.

WHY BUILD POSITIVE BODY IMAGE?

Every individual deserves a positive body image, and it is possible. Positive body image is essential to mental and physical wellbeing and assists in protecting against eating disorders. Along with a balanced approach to nutrition and exercise the most effective prevention for eating disorders focus on building positive body image.

***Hating our bodies is something that
we learn, and it sure as hell is
something that we can unlearn***

- Megan Jayne Crabbe

FOUR ASPECTS OF BODY IMAGE

1. Perpetual Body Image

The way you see your body. This is not always a correct representation.

2. Affective Body Image

The way you feel about your body - satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

3. Cognitive Body Image

The way you think about your body. Can lead to preoccupation with body weight and shape.

4. Behavioural Body Image

The behaviours you engage in because of your body image.



“Speak to your body
in a loving way. It's the
only one you've got,
it's your home, and it
deserves your respect.”

ISKRA LAWRENCE

A positive body image can improve:

Self-esteem: How you feel about yourself.

Self-acceptance: When comfortable with your appearance individuals are less likely to be affected by media and societal pressures to conform to a certain appearance.

TIPS FOR WORKING TOWARDS A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

- **Practice mind over matter:** Remember that your body has not changed drastically in the past 24 hours to create this feeling. As per most ill feelings we have towards ourselves, it is all created in our minds. Poor body image days are because of our minds, it truly has so little to do with our bodies.
- **Limit your exposure to highly stylized and flawless images of fitness, beauty and appearance:** These can increase feelings of body inadequacy and dissatisfaction.
- **Turn it into emotions:** Take a moment, or 10 moments, to reflect and think about what your emotions are beyond low confidence. What are you worried about? What is weighing on your mind that you may be subconsciously trying to ignore by blaming your frustration on your body? It could be nothing, it could genuinely just be a bad day for body image and that's totally valid! But it's also good to check in with yourself and make sure that's where the focus should be.
- **Diversify what you see:** You can control and curate what appears in your social media feeds. Follow people and pages that make you feel good about yourself and your body.
- **See and value yourself as a whole person:** Your qualities, talents, strengths and attributes (and yes, you have lots of these) make you who you are. Celebrate and nurture the things that make you, you.
- **Redirect your worth:** Remember your worth as a person will never come from your body. It will never come from how attractive strangers on the street believe you to be, it will not come from the hours you spend in the gym or the focus on what diet you put in your body. Your worth comes from your ability to love, to do, to be.
- **Practice body gratitude:** What you're grateful for that your body can do.
- **Thought replacement:** When you catch yourself thinking a negative thought, replace that with a positive one, you can use the same thought again and again, but be sure to work to replace the negative with a positive alternative for your mind to hold onto.
- **Nurture your whole self:** Practice body kindness, mindfulness, and self-care. What works for you?
- Move and nourish your body in ways that make you feel good

Journal Prompts

Journaling has been found to have many benefits for mental health, personal development, productivity, self-discovery, and overall well-being. It allows space to express innermost thoughts and feelings providing an emotional release.

Present Day Body Image:

1. What are aspects of your day to day life impact your body image? What makes you feel good about your body and what makes you feel negatively?
2. List 5 things you appreciate about your body.
3. How does my body work for me every day?
4. What part of your body is the strongest? Write about all it does for you.
5. Write about a time your body has helped or protected you. Could you write a thank you letter to your body for this?
6. What are 3 positive memories that wouldn't have been possible without your body (a soccer game, memorable hike, dance recital).

Past Body Image:

1. When was the first time you remember being aware of how you looked? How did you feel?
2. What do you think it felt like before you become aware of your body or others perceiving your body?

Future Body Image:

1. How can you honour your body from this day forward?
2. How do you want to feel in your body?
3. How can you relieve negative thoughts when you feel them? What are your coping mechanisms?
4. What freedoms will accepting your body grant you?
5. What does positive body image mean to you?

Addressing the Issue:

1. Who can you talk to about bad body image thoughts?
2. How do you feel when someone compliments your appearance? How do you feel when someone compliments your personality? Does this differ? Which do you value more? Why?

Building Compassion

1. Could you write an apology letter to your body for the ways you have talked to it, tried to change it, or harmed it?

Affirmations

I love my body and I love myself.

My body is a vessel for my awesomeness.

I eat a variety of foods for my health, wellness, and enjoyment.

Being grounded and whole makes me beautiful. I can get there just by being still, breathing, listening to my intuition, and doing what I can to be kind to myself and others.

My body is a gift. I treat it with love and respect.

Accepting myself as I am right now is the first step in growing and evolving.

My weight is not my identity. I am identified by who I am on the inside, a loving, wonderful person.

My well-being is the most important thing to me, and I am responsible for taking care of me.

I eat for energy and nourishment.

Life doesn't start X pounds from now, it's already started. I make the choice to include myself in it.

REDUCE THE IMPACT OF DIET CULTURE BY CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

"Understanding that diet culture profits off people feeling bad about themselves is the first step in realizing that 'the perfect body' is a socially constructed phenomenon and that it doesn't exist."

"Lucky I did X amount of exercise so I can have a 'cheat' meal"

Change the diet culture narrative: Instead of viewing exercise as a way to "burn off" calories, move your body because it feels good and brings you joy. You don't need to 'burn off' or 'earn' your food either; food is an essential part of life.

"I'm so bad for eating this."

Change the diet culture narrative: Attaching moral values to food and categorizing as "good" or "bad" is prime diet culture in action. Food is simply fuel that gives our body different types of energy and nourishment. While carrots may nourish your vitamin levels, chocolate may nourish your soul, and both are equally as important.

FURTHER LEARNING

Podcasts

[Eat the Rules - with Summer Innanen](#)

[Yes& Body Politics - with Tresla & Guru Shabd](#)

[Living in this Queer Body - with Asher Pandjiris](#)

[The One Where Former Division 1 Athlete Works To Heal Body Image with Victoria Garrick - The Papaya Podcast](#)

[How Does Social Media Influence our Body Image and Perceived Self Worth with Clare - Body Trauma with Nia Patterson](#)

TED Talks

[Leading the movement toward self-acceptance: disempowering eating disorders | Mia Holland | TEDxBSU - Bing video](#)

Reading

[What to Know About a Negative Body Image and How to Overcome It](#)

[From Hair to Height: Male Body Image Struggles](#)

[8 Powerful Steps to Self-Love](#)

[The Power of Self-Love and Self-Compassion](#)

[Loving your body is achievable. It just depends on what that definition is for you.](#)

[Dear Leon: How Can I Develop a Positive Body Image as a Gender Non-Conforming Person](#)

[Gender Dysphoria, Body Dysmorphia & Body Image in Trans & Non-Binary Folks](#)

People to follow:

- [@bodyimage](#) therapist - Ashlee Bennett
- [@selfcareto](#) - Chantée Dardaine, M.A. RP
- [@summerinnanen](#) - Summer Innanen