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SELF & RELATIONSHIP EXPERT

Love Your Body!

1. Accept Your Body "breed"

Think of your basic body shape and size as you would a dog breed. You wouldn't dream of punishing your Saint Bernard for not being as lean as a Greyhound, or your Chihuahua for not being as tall as a Great Dane. Research suggests that our current cultural ideal for women's bodies is attainable by less than 5% of the population. While there are parts of your bodies that you can alter through healthy lifestyle changes, many aspects like height, frame, and shape are genetic. Work with your body "breed", not against it.

2. View your body as an instrument, not just an ornament

Your body is a tool for life. It's easy to lose focus of what our bodies can do living in a culture that overvalues women's external appearance. Take time to reflect on the amazing ways your body serves you each day and allows you to see, touch, feel, express, hear, walk, breath, create, and think. Never let the form of your body overshadow the amazing functions.

3. Get critical about the media messages

Talk back to the TV (or magazine, or billboard...). Say out loud how ridiculous the messages are that you are bombarded with hundreds of times per day. Keep in mind that advertisements are intended to make us feel that we "need" to buy products or services - clothing, make-up, diet plan, clothing, surgery - in order to be happy and satisfied with our physical selves. Studies suggest that merely viewing idealized images in fashion magazines, TV programs, & advertisements negatively impacts your body image.

4. Do your history homework

The notion of the ideal female body is a fluid concept and varies depending on historical context and the culture in which you reside. No matter what your shape or size you can bet that at some point in history it was the ideal. Renoir's paintings in the late 1800's represented very voluptuous women as beautiful works of art. Marilyn Monroe's curvy size 14 considered the epitome of beauty in the 1950's is a far cry from the boyish figured supermodel Twiggy in the 1960's. Taking a step into history can help maintain a perspective that allows you to love the body you have.

5. Focus on health, not size or shape

Instead of focusing on changing your shape or size, focus on taking good care of your body. Ironically, change usually occurs when we accept and nurture ourselves in our current state, not when we put ourselves down. You only have the body you have today and it looks the way it looks right now. If there is something about your body you'd like to change (that is possible to change), you're more likely to experience success if you are coming from a place of love and acceptance, rather than rejection.

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