

Start loving your body today—regardless of what it looks like.



Love the Body You Have Today

By Julie Hanks, LCSW

Negative body image plagues the majority of American women, and Latter-day Saint women are no exception. Over the past eight years, I've posed the question "What would you most like to change about yourself?" to over three thousand Latter-day Saint women. Changing their physical

appearance was the most common answer— including losing weight, getting in shape, and looking more attractive.

Billions of dollars are spent yearly on diet and beauty products in an effort to alter the appearance of our bodies. Some of the products we try work, and

many don't. Regardless of the products we use or don't use, the most lasting and genuine positive body image comes from within. So let's challenge the "outside-in" approach to changing our bodies and instead work our way from inside to out. By changing what you think about your body, you can

change how you feel in your body. It is possible to love the body you have today without losing a pound or changing a thing.

How to Love Your Body

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. The current cultural ideal for women's bodies in the US is attainable by less than five percent of the population. While there are aspects of our physical appearance that can be altered through healthy lifestyle changes, many aspects like height, frame, and overall shape are largely genetic. Work with your body “breed,” not against it. I often joke, “I've been working out so hard, and I haven't grown one inch taller!” I'm 5'2” and, other than wearing higher heels, there's nothing I can do about it.

SEE YOUR BODY AS AN INSTRUMENT, NOT JUST AN ORNAMENT

It's easy to lose focus of what your body can do when you live in a culture that overvalues women's external appearance. Take time to reflect on the amazing ways your body serves you each day by allowing you to see, touch, feel, talk, hear, walk, breath, create, touch and think. Never let the form of your body overshadow appreciation for the amazing instrument you have been given. The most severe consequence of disobedience to God's plan was given to Satan and his followers—they were denied the experience of having a physical body, and by their disobedience, lost all possibility of eternal progression. By having a body, no matter what the shape or size, we still have the opportunity to progress in God's eternal plan.

“Take time to reflect on the amazing ways your body serves you each day by allowing you to see, touch, feel, talk, hear, walk, breath, create, touch and think.”

GET CRITICAL ABOUT MESSAGES IN THE MEDIA

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 plans, clothing, surgery—in order to be happy and satisfied with our physical selves. Merely viewing idealized images in fashion magazines, TV programs, and advertisements negatively impacts your body image. Bringing into your awareness the absolute silliness and deception of messages in the media can help combat negative feelings about your body.

DO YOUR HISTORY HOMEWORK

Remember that 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, at some point in history, your shape was the ideal. Renoir's paintings in the late 1800s represented very voluptuous women as beautiful works of art. Marilyn Monroe's curvy

size 14—considered the epitome of beauty in the 1950s—is a far cry from the boyish figured supermodel Twiggy in the 1960s. Taking a step into history can help maintain a perspective that allows you to love the body you have and recognize that the ideal body is a relative concept, not an absolute one.

FOCUS ON HEALTH OVER SIZE OR SHAPE

You 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, you're more likely to experience success if you are coming from a place of acceptance and love. Instead of focusing on changing your shape or size, focus on taking good care of your physical self by nourishing your body with healthy food, strengthening it through exercise and movement, and replenishing it through rest and relaxation so you can more fully enjoy a life of health, happiness, joy and love.

Ask Julie!

Questions about love and relationships? Submit them to Julie here for a possible response in our next issue of Latter Day Woman Magazine.



Julie de Azevedo Hanks, MSW, LCSW, is a licensed therapist, the owner and director of Wasatch Family Therapy, a media contributor on emotional health and family relationships, and an award-winning performing songwriter. For more relationship resources, visit www.juliehanks.com or www.wasatchfamilytherapy.com. Married for 22 years, Julie and Jeff have four children and reside in Utah.

the Grapevine™



NEED UPLIFTING TODAY?



SHERI JOI

Listen to Latter-Day Woman interviewer Sheri Joi having a conversation with amazing and inspiring LDS women who share their lives and passions with us. Go to www.latterdaywoman.com or www.thegrapevineconversations.com.

Latter • Day
woman)))
TM