

Health & Wellbeing

October – Improving your body image



Here are some steps that you can take to move towards a better relationship with your body.

Broaden your social media feed

Seeing a constant stream of the same kind of body represented in the media over and over impacts how we view bodies that fall outside of this cultural ideal. We are presented with an 'ideal body' that is thin, white, tall, young, able bodied, cis, heterosexual, athletic, affluent... and any bodies that exist outside this are considered problems to be solved.

We need to see diversity. Our eyes need to see the full spectrum of human bodies. Only then are we likely to understand our bodies are not a problem or a project. We can see all bodies as perfectly normal and human (including our own).

Social media cleanse

Whilst you're adding to your social media content, it's also important to get rid of the repeat offender accounts who post content that makes you feel bad about yourself. Unfollow, unfriend, hide, or block the brands or people who share posts that:

- Cause you to feel 'less than', or like your body is a problem that needs fixing
- Encourage you to constantly compare yourself to others, rather than embracing individuality
- Promote diets, weight loss, 'cleanses', and share before and after photos
- Use "good" vs "bad" food messaging
- Trigger self-judgement, self-criticism, and shame



Focus instead on accounts that empower you and lift you up, rather than dragging you down.

Wardrobe

Are you persisting with clothes that are too tight in the hope that you'll soon lose weight? If we are enduring bra straps that cut into our skin, dresses that restrict our breathing, jeans that strangle us when we sit down, or underwear that rides up, it is so difficult to feel comfortable in our body. It is challenging to live peacefully within our body if we are continually reminded of it in a negative, uncomfortable way. Clothes that fit well are a relief, and help us to let go of constant self-judgement.

Surround yourself with supportive people

Healing your relationship with your body is easier when you have some people around you who 'get it'. This can be difficult to find considering how deeply entrenched our culture is in the thin ideal and diet culture. If you don't have friends or family who get it, follow Facebook pages filled with such people i.e. 'The Moderation Movement' and 'The Mindful Dietitian'.



Learn about and practice self-compassion

Self-compassion is an absolute game changer. If you're concerned that self-compassion is self-indulgent you needn't worry - it helps improve your compassion for others. If you're concerned you'll never improve without your inner critic, please know the research says otherwise. You're more inclined to challenge yourself and try new things if you're not afraid of failing, and you'll reduce your stress hormones too.

Strengths & values work

Think about what's most important in life for you. What and who do you love? What thrills you, moves you, gives you a sense of purpose? What makes you, you? I'm guessing appearance and weight didn't feature in your answers. I'm guessing you thought about values, strengths, character, connection, meaning. Really getting in touch with our strengths and values can help to remind us of what is truly important to us and what we really want in our lives. It can help to take the focus off the superficial and refocus on the authentic. It can help us heal our relationship with our body.