

Learning to love your body!!!

By Lauren Parsons

"If you realised how powerful your thoughts are, you would never think a negative thought. They can have a powerful influence for good when they're on the positive side, and they can and do make you physically ill when they're on the negative side." - Peace Pilgrim

Increasingly women (and even men) are struggling with their sense of body image. The latest stats show that 75% of women are dissatisfied with their appearance, 89% saying they want to lose weight. 50% of women are on a diet at any one time and 80% of 10 year old girls have already dieted! And while men are generally more satisfied with their appearance, 22% of them want to gain weight.

The images portrayed in the media give people unrealistic definitions of how we 'should' look. The average model is a size 6-8 while the general population's average is a size 14. On top of that, make up, camera angles and other tricks of the trade are used to enhance photos, which are then airbrushed and shaped to create a flawless (and totally unattainable) look. No wonder we're all unhappy, its as if we're running in a never-ending mouse wheel with a carrot being dangled that we are NEVER EVER going to reach!

Really we are already all so beautiful, but we just don't realise it. We're so busy walking around with our blinkers on, pre-occupied with trying to nip, tuck and change different parts of ourselves!

So, from today, take a stand and decide that you are going to LOVE your body! It's the only one you've got and the only one you'll ever have – so hey, WHY NOT? The French have a great phrase for this, *d'être bien dans sa peau* (to feel good in your skin) – this is the goal!

If you find yourself getting caught in the "If I could just lose this extra 5 kilos, then I'd be happy" syndrome, then recognise it and take action **TODAY!**

Step One: Reflect on what's realistic for you.

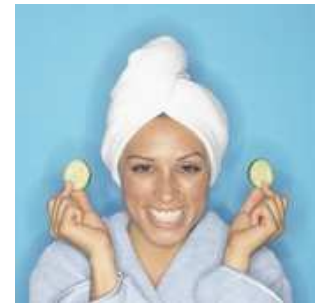
- Think about what is a realistic body shape and size?
- What is your family history like? Genetics have a big part to play in our overall size and shape.

Step Two: Realise that your past does not equal your future.

- Events that happened to you in your past, significantly influence your present perception of yourself. It is important that you recreate your body image by recognising and releasing these feelings from the past.
- Think back over the events in your life that may have contributed to your body image. Start with childhood memories and continue to the present. What types of messages did your parents give you about your body? How did other relationships affect your body image?

Step Three: Positive resetting.

- Look at the people around you (not the supermodels) the **real** people and see how people of any and every size and shape look great...when?...When they are standing up tall and have a big smile lighting up their face! Everyone looks beautiful when they smile, so guess what you should do too! (In doing this you will notice too, that skinny people look dull when they frown.)
- Try this quick exercise: Stand in front of the mirror with poor posture, hunch your shoulders forward, slouch, stick your gut out and put a frown on your face. Observe yourself. Now pull yourself up as tall as you can with your shoulders back and tummy tucked in, turn slightly side on with one leg forward and put a huge smile on your face! See the difference!
- Reflect on the things you like most about your body. Keep looking for even the smallest things.
- Make a list of all the things you can do to take care of yourself and your body. Which actions can you take on a regular basis to demonstrate that you love yourself and that you deserve to be healthy?
- One aspect of gaining control of a negative body image is understanding the role of negative and irrational thinking. We are often our own worst critics and can be very hard on ourselves.
- Harness the positive power of your mind! **THINK POSITIVE** and you will be! If you have negative messages repeating over and over in your head like a cassette tape, you need to hit the rewind button and re-record them with positives. "I am beautiful just the way I am!!!" "I love my body!!!" "I am really happy with how I look!!!" might be some good ones for starters!
- Write out some positive statements and stick them to your mirror, repeat them to yourself every morning! (For more on this topic, look out for the article in the next issue "*Re-setting negative thinking*")



Step Four: Get a little help from your friends.

- Make a list of the people you would like to surround yourself with because you know they will be positive and supportive of your ambitions. These are the people that always lift you up!



- Make a mental note of the people you feel may be a negative influence. Don't be afraid to chose to spend less time with these people.