

Improving Your Body Image

Body Image – *A picture of the body seen through the mind's eye.*

Body image has many aspects:

Visual – what you see when you look at yourself

Mental– how you think about your appearance

Emotional – how you feel about your weight or height

Kinesthetic– how you sense and control your body parts

Historical– shaped by experiences that includes pleasure, pain, praise and criticism

There are three essential steps to use when working on your body image;

1. Paying attention to physical needs –

Listen to your body when it feels pain or pleasure, fatigue or hunger. It will help you to nurture your body.

2. Appreciating the pleasures your body can inherently provide –

Aesthetic, athletic, sensory, and sexual

3. Accepting your body as it is–

By accepting your flaws and limitations you will be able to experience the lovely parts of your body, as well as experience what is and stop longing for what isn't.

People struggling with their body image often have resistance tactics which inhibit their inner growth. Take a look at the list below to see if you fall into any of these patterns.

Delay: Do you procrastinate or forget things you really wanted to do?

"I don't have time to exercise. I'll start next week/next fall/someday."

Denial: Do you see problems in others but not in yourself?

"My sister really hates her body. She needs this handout more than I do."

Blame: Do you reject the possibility of change by blaming either yourself or others?

"I'll always be obsessed with dieting because my mother pushed food on me."

Rationalizing: Do you make up "good" reasons instead of admitting the real reasons?

"I need to have cosmetic surgery because looks are crucial in my business."

Fear: Do you scare yourself into a state of inactivity?

"I'd be enormous if I ever stopped taking diet pills"

Avoidance: Do you arrive late or lose things in order to dodge what feels threatening?

"Too bad I slept in and I couldn't attend that free body image seminar."

Material adapted by Suzanne Welstead (2016) from the book, *Bodylove: Learning to like our looks and ourselves*, by Rita Freedman.