

IMPROVING YOUR BODY & SELF IMAGE

Learning to like, if not *love*, oneself and one's body is *essential* to improving your eating habits. You may think you have to diet and control your body in order to be "thin enough" or "fit enough" or "good enough" to finally be deserving and worthy of liking yourself. This is faulty thinking. You are worthy and deserving just as you are. The quest to true health and happiness ultimately is a quest of *self love* and *body acceptance*.

In order to begin to shift you into a more loving relationship with yourself and your body, you first have to identify the thought patterns and core beliefs that contribute to the opposite- self loathing, self disgust and self judgment.

The Voice Of The Inner Critic

"Our healing happens when we notice our critical inner voice, peg it as only a thought with no authority, and then make room for constructive feedback to ourselves."

- Ronald Ruden



What is it that your inner critic thinks and says about yourself?

Here are some common examples what you may hear your critic saying...

- I'm too fat.
- I'm ugly.
- My body is disgusting.
- My stomach is too big.
- My boobs are too small.
- I have too much cellulite.
- I look gross.
- I'm not pretty enough.
- I'm not smart enough.
- I'm not good enough.
- I'm not talented enough.
- I'm not attractive enough.
- I'm a failure.
- I'm unworthy.
- I'm broken.
- I always mess up.
- I never do it right.
- I'm such a loser.
- Nobody likes me.
- I hate myself.

Isn't it painful just reading this list? It is heartbreaking that this is often how we speak to ourselves on a regular basis; especially when we look in the mirror, see ourselves in pictures, step on a scale or compare ourselves to those around us or society's standards.

This negative self and body talk has to STOP.

STEP 1: Write the critical thoughts and beliefs

On the last page, write out all the negative thoughts you think about yourself and the harsh judgments you hear your inner critic say about you (whether or not you believe them to be true). Be as specific and comprehensive as you can.

STEP 2: Where did they come from?

The inner critic didn't just emerge out of no where. Usually, the core beliefs you have about yourself and your body were programmed over the course of your lifetime, especially in childhood, as a result of...

A) The messages you heard from others.

What messages did you receive from your parents, siblings, peers, teachers and family members about you and your body? Maybe your parents told you that you needed to lose weight and looked "chunky". Maybe a kid in your class made fun of your appearance. Maybe you had a nickname that was hurtful. Even if people said things to you just teasing or being playful, they can still be hurtful.

B) The experiences you had and conclusions you made about yourself as a result.

What memories and experiences do you remember where you didn't feel good enough, felt embarrassed, felt like a failure or didn't feel loved or accepted? During childhood it's easy for a child to make incorrect conclusions about themselves because their prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that performs critical thinking, has not fully developed. This means a child is more susceptible to thinking that things happening around them or to them are their fault. A child takes things at face value and often believes that what adults say is true.

Let's look at a few examples of how this may shape your self image...

- Your parents are late to pick you up from school. You are waiting alone and think *"My parents didn't come get me, therefore they must not love me or I must have done something to make them not want to come get me."* This leads you to conclude *"I'm bad"* or *"I'm unloveable"*.
- You try to learn a new sport in gym class and have a difficult time dribbling a ball. You are one of the last kids selected for the teams. You conclude, *"I'm not athletic and other kids don't like me. I'm not good enough."*

The H.E.R. Program

- You get a letter 'C' the first semester in math class. Your parents seem disappointed and tell you to try harder. The following semester you get a letter 'A' in math class and your parents praise you and take you out for a treat to celebrate. You conclude, *"I have to succeed and be perfect to be deserving of my parents love."*

Are you starting to see how easy it is to very quickly create beliefs about yourself that become the foundation of your self image? Imagine all of the experiences that you've had over your entire life that have likely contributed to your current self image!

C) The messages you were exposed to in the media and from society.

What media did you watch, see and listen to as a child/teen/adult and what messages did they convey about how you should look and be? We are bombarded by images and messages in the media that create standards of how we should strive to look and be in order to be deemed good enough. Unfortunately, this sets up extremely unrealistic expectations that leave us always striving to look and be "better" in order to feel good enough according to those images we consume. There will always be something else we can find wrong about ourselves or that could be "fixed" with the right product, diet or system.

STEP 3: What is the loving TRUTH about you?

Here's the thing, all this programming is just conditioning that you've come to accept and believe as true for you. It's garbage. It's time to take out the trash. Deep down there is a voice of your true self that knows these things aren't true of you! That's why it's so painful to continue to think and believe what your inner critic says. IT IS UNTRUE.

So what is true of you, underneath the layers of programming and lies?



If you could wave a magic wand and...

- feel good about the person you are
- feel amazing in your body and skin
- absolutely love and accept yourself
- not care what others think of you

What would be the new thoughts and beliefs you would think and say to yourself?

What constructive feedback would you give yourself?

THE PROCESS...

What does your inner critic say? Write all of your negative thoughts and beliefs here...

Where might have these beliefs come from? (People, experiences, society) List the memories that stand out here...

What is the constructive feedback and loving thoughts you would prefer to think?
It's okay if you don't believe it yet, write here what you desire to think and believe about yourself...

Now complete the tapping process: [Tapping Audio_ Tap Into Self Love & Acceptance](#)

STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOURSELF & YOUR BODY

1) Stop following social media accounts that don't make you feel good or that you find yourself comparing yourself to regularly.

This include a lot of accounts and individuals who are health and fitness professionals. Even if there message is about having balanced nutrition and practicing body acceptance, if you catch yourself comparing your body to theirs and feeling badly about how you look then this account is having a negative affect on your self-perception. Only follow accounts whose content and images make you feel inspired and happy.

2) Take a social media break.

Remove all social media apps (SnapChat, Facebook, Twitter, Tic Tok, Instagram, etc.) from your phone. Try doing a day detox, or even better a week or two! Pay attention to how you feel having removed these triggers that you consume regularly. Be intention about whether or not you decide to continue using these apps, and set time limits for yourself so you minimize exposure to currated content.

3) Practice daily body gratitude.

State out loud as many things as you can think of that you're grateful for about your body. You can listent to **Audio_Body Self Love Affirmation** or complete the **Guided Meditation_Body Gratitude** in your program materials to help you really build this attitude of gratitude. It's especially powerful to give gratitude to your body parts while you're showering or taking a bath. As you clean each body part simply tell it thank you for what it does for you.

4) Do mirror work.

Mirrors can be one of the biggest triggers to the inner critic. What does the voice in your head say when you look at yourself? If you notice that you look at yourself in the mirror and immediately detect everything that's wrong and cringe in disgust, then you need to immediately combat that by looking at that exact thing that you dislike and showering it with gratitude and appreciation. The most powerful way to implement mirror work is to look yourself directly in the eyes and tell yourself "I love and accept you" over and over and over again. This can be extremely hard to do, and may even bring up intense emotions for you. If that happens tap and clear these emotions. With time, you will find you begin to feel more ease and self acceptance.