

10 “Will-Powers” for Improving Body Image

Written by: Michael Levine, Ph.D. and Linda Smolak, Ph.D.

1. Twice a day, everyday, **I WILL** ask myself: “Am I benefiting from focusing on what I believe are the flaws in my body weight or shape?”
2. **I WILL** think of three reasons why it is ridiculous for me to believe that thinner people are happier or “better.” I will repeat these reasons to myself whenever I feel the urge to compare my body shape to someone.
3. **I WILL** spend less and less time in front of mirrors—especially when they are making me feel uncomfortable and self-conscious about my body.
4. **I WILL** exercise for the joy of feeling my body move and grow stronger. I will not exercise simply to lose weight, purge fat from my body, or to “make-up” for calories I have eaten.
5. **I WILL** participate in activities that I enjoy, even if they call attention to my weight and shape. I will constantly remind myself that I deserve to do things I enjoy, like dancing, swimming, etc., no matter what my shape or size is!
6. **I WILL** refuse to wear clothes that are uncomfortable or that I do not like but wear simply because they divert attention from my weight or shape. I will wear clothes that are comfortable and that make me feel comfortable in my body.
7. **I WILL** list 5-10 good qualities that I have, such as understanding, intelligence, or creativity. I will repeat these to myself whenever I start to feel bad about my body.
8. **I WILL** practice taking people seriously for what they say, feel, and do. Not for how slender, or “well put together” they appear.
9. **I WILL** surround myself with people and things that make me feel good about myself and my abilities. When I am around people and things that support me and make me feel good, I will be less likely to base my self-esteem on the way my body looks.
10. **I WILL** treat my body with respect and kindness. I will feed it, keep it active, and listen to its needs. I will remember that my body is the vehicle that will carry me to my dreams!



I will choose to take care of myself and my body!

References:

- Freedman, R., Body Love. NY: Harper & Row, 1988.
Levine, M.P., & Hill, L., 5 Day Lesson Plan on Eating Disorders. Columbus, OH: National Eating Disorders Association, 1991.
Maine, M., Father Hunger. Carlsbad, CA: Gürze Books, 1991.
Rodin, J., Body Traps. NY: William Morrow, 1992.



© 2005 National Eating Disorders Association. Permission is granted to copy and reprint materials for educational purposes only. National Eating Disorders Association must be cited and web address listed.
www.NationalEatingDisorders.org Information and Referral Helpline: 800.931.2237



Ten Steps To Positive Body Image

One list cannot automatically tell you how to turn negative body thoughts into positive body image, but it can help you think about new ways of looking more healthfully and happily at yourself and your body. The more you do that, the more likely you are to feel good about who you are and the body you naturally have.

- 1.** Appreciate all that your body can do. Every day your body carries you closer to your dreams. Celebrate all of the amazing things your body does for you --running, dancing, breathing, laughing, dreaming, etc.
- 2.** Keep a top-10 list of things you like about yourself -- things that aren't related to how much you weigh or what you look like. Read your list often. Add to it as you become aware of more things to like about you.
- 3.** Remind yourself that "true beauty" is not simply skin-deep. When you feel good about yourself and who you are, you carry yourself with a sense of confidence, self-acceptance, and openness that makes you beautiful regardless of whether you physically look like a supermodel. Beauty is a state of mind, not a state of your body.
- 4.** Look at yourself as a whole person. When you see yourself in a mirror or in your mind, choose not to focus on specific body parts. See yourself as you want others to see you -- as a whole person.
- 5.** Surround yourself with positive people. It is easier to feel good about yourself and your body when you are around others who are supportive and who recognize the importance of liking yourself just as you naturally are.
- 6.** Shut down those voices in your head that tell you your body is not "right" or that you are a "bad" person. You can overpower those negative thoughts with positive ones. The next time you start to tear yourself down, build yourself back up with a few quick affirmations that work for you.
- 7.** Wear clothes that are comfortable and that make you feel good about your body. Work with your body, not against it.
- 8.** Become a critical viewer of social and media messages. Pay attention to images, slogans, or attitudes that make you feel bad about yourself or your body. Protest these messages: write a letter to the advertiser or talk back to the image or message.
- 9.** Do something nice for yourself -- something that lets your body know you appreciate it. Take a bubble bath, make time for a nap, find a peaceful place outside to relax.
- 10.** Use the time and energy that you might have spent worrying about food, calories, and your weight to do something to help others. Sometimes reaching out to other people can help you feel better about yourself and can make a positive change in our world.



20 WAYS TO LOVE YOUR BODY!!

Compiled by Margo Maine, Ph.D.

1. Think of your body as the vehicle to your dreams. Honor it. Respect it. Fuel it.
2. Create a list of all the things your body lets you do. Read it and add to it often.
3. Become aware of what your body can do each day. Remember it is the instrument of your life, not just an ornament.
4. Create a list of people you admire: people who have contributed to your life, your community, or the world. Consider whether their appearance was important to their success and accomplishments.
5. Walk with your head held high, supported by pride and confidence in yourself as a person.
6. Don't let your weight or shape keep you from activities that you enjoy.
7. Wear comfortable clothes that you like, that express your personal style, and that feel good to your body.
8. Count your blessings, not your blemishes.
9. Think about all the things you could accomplish with the time and energy you currently spend worrying about your body and appearance. Try one!
10. Be your body's friend and supporter, not its enemy.
11. Consider this: your skin replaces itself once a month, your stomach lining every five days, your liver every six weeks, and your skeleton every three months. Your body is extraordinary--begin to respect and appreciate it.
12. Every morning when you wake up, thank your body for resting and rejuvenating itself so you can enjoy the day.
13. Every evening when you go to bed, tell your body how much you appreciate what it has allowed you to do throughout the day.
14. Find a method of exercise that you enjoy and do it regularly. Don't exercise to lose weight or to fight your body. Do it to make your body healthy and strong and because it makes you feel good. Exercise for the Three F's: Fun, Fitness, and Friendship.
15. Think back to a time in your life when you felt good about your body. Tell yourself you can feel like that again, even in this body at this age.
16. Keep a list of 10 positive things about yourself--without mentioning your appearance. Add to it!
17. Put a sign on each of your mirrors saying, "I'm beautiful inside and out."
18. Choose to find the beauty in the world and in yourself.
19. Start saying to yourself, "Life is too short to waste my time hating my body this way."
20. Eat when you are hungry. Rest when you are tired. Surround yourself with people that remind you of your inner strength and beauty.

Don't Weigh Your Self-Esteem. It's What's Inside That Counts!

