



For Your Health

## Self-awareness, self-love and a positive body image by Dr. Sara Lederer

One of the greatest gifts we can give to ourselves is to become truly comfortable in our own skin. What does comfort in our skin look like? Recall a moment in which you felt connected to your inner self- whether it be at the ocean, listening to music, or just looking in the mirror with a smile. Being comfortable in our own skin comes when we are able to accept ourselves as we are and allow ourselves to be real and authentic with all parts of our selves.

Appreciating the beauty of our bodies is an integral step in this process. This kind of appreciation does not rest on vanity, but on gratitude. How can we hold a space of kindness towards our bodies, our temple that houses who we are? Our bodies do so much for us day upon day: the back who holds us up in this world and let's us feel strong, our feet that carry our weight, the heart, whose beat nourishes every cell in our bodies, and even the skin that protects us and contains us as we are.

Our perceptions of our bodies can dramatically impact our levels of self comfort and self-love. When we think negative thoughts towards our body, we are not as comfortable in our own flesh, and as a result may become unhappy and insecure. The negative thoughts regarding our bodies- whether it be spots of cellulite, fat on the belly, thighs that don't appear the way we'd like- can spawn negative emotions like depression, unhealthy behaviors like overeating, and even somatic symptoms like stomachaches. It can also impact how we carry ourselves in the world and what we project onto others. One of the cultural epidemics we are struggling with is the messages women receive from the media to appear a certain way, specifically to have incredibly low body fat and very defined, a-symmetrical attractive features. What happens if you do not fit into that .1% that the media suggests is our emblem of beauty? That is the limbo where so many of us lovely women are stuck. What would our world be like with healthier images of women? In a world without magazines, television, movies and even music- all which advertise unrealistic images of female beauty- we might be happier in our bodies. What if we lived in a world where you constantly received the message "you are beautiful and perfect just as you; love your body, love yourself"? What if the picture you see in the mirror every day is the perfect, ideal woman. Instead of looking at pictures of airbrushed women or celebrities in the news, why not take the time to honor your own body. Take this opportunity to see all parts of your body, even the ones you don't often get to see. Enjoy!

Today is the day to cherish yourself. Your body is BEAUTIFUL. You are BEAUTIFUL. Remember what you see today in the mirror. Now go and do something for yourself that makes you feel beautiful!! I hope that today, and everyday forth you choose to engage in activities that feed your self-love and make you feel more attractive. Your life is about you. It hinges on you being connected to and nourishing you. Allow yourself to see what kind of opportunities this life of self-love generates.

Dr. Sara Lederer received her doctorate in clinical psychology from the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. She specializes in anxiety, mood disorders, self-care techniques and spiritual psychology. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Cedars Sinai's Thaliens. Dr. Lederer is also an adjunct professor at Argosy University, Los Angeles and has a private practice at David Plotkin and Associates in West Los Angeles.

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