6 ways to restore your

Body CONFIDENCE



Photo Credit: Antoni Shkraba from Pexels

How often do you look in the mirror and criticise the image reflecting back at you? Or look at a recent photo and inwardly cringe at your arms, legs, bum or tummy?

Chances are...this happens quite regularly.

But what do you think your friends or family would say if they looked at the same photo? Would they criticise, or would they be more likely to mention how much fun you looked like you were having? How great your hair, skin or clothes looked?

We can be our own worst enemies when it comes to negative self-talk. Having objectivity and focusing on the good points is something that many people just don't do.



Photo Credit: Anna Shvets from Pexels

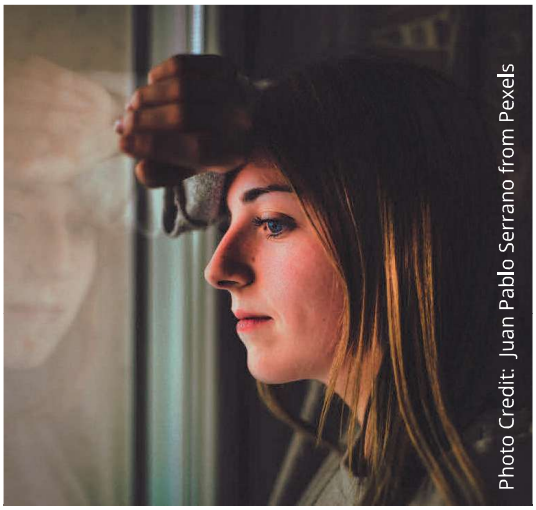


Photo Credit: Juan Pablo Serrano from Pexels

Instead...

Promise yourself that the next diet will be the one that works, that if you could only lose a stone life would be so much better.

The reality is that feeling good is not a number on the scales or a smaller dress size. It comes from within, and no amount of weight loss will change that. If working on turning your inner critic into your biggest cheerleader is something that you need help with, then read on. We've put together a series of exercises to restore your body confidence and help you feel fantastic every day.

How to learn to love your body



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Throughout history, and across different cultures, body shape has always been a determinant of attractiveness and desirability and is often linked to wealth, health and status. The rise of social media has made it easier than ever to compare yourself unfavourably to others, leading you to aspire to a way of looking that is unrealistic and unattainable for the majority of people. No wonder you feel so dissatisfied.

In 2020, the UK Government's Women and Equalities Committee conducted a survey on body image, and found that 61% of adults and 66% of children feel negatively or very negatively about their body image most of the time.

Women spoke of needing to feel thin and curvy, while men expressed a desire to be taller or more muscular. Children as young as 11 gave 'images on social media' as being the thing that influences them the most, perhaps not fully understanding that these are often photoshopped and edited.

Does this sound familiar?

Exercise

How would you describe your body today? Take a minute to write down three things you like, three things you think are ok, and three things you dislike about your body.

3 things you like...

3 things you think are ok...

3 things you dislike...

Learning to accept your body just as it is

You may not love your body right now, but even if it is not your ideal, it is important to accept your body for how it is. Constant negative thoughts and criticism will not only make you feel worse, but also make you far more likely to rebel with 'What difference will it make?' mindset. If you wouldn't say it to your friend, then don't say it to yourself.

Positive reinforcement is much more effective - if you use kind words and praise when you think about your body, you are much more likely to succeed in your health goals.

So next time you catch yourself focusing on your 'worst' bits in the mirror, switch your view to the bits you like best instead: start redressing the balance.



Photo Credit: MART PRODUCTION from Pexels

Learning to accept your body just as it is



Photo Credit: Nicole Schlaeppi from baseimage

Exercise

What can you do to improve your body image?

Mirror work: Look at yourself in a mirror for a few minutes each day. Work up to accurately and honestly describing each part of your body - but using no negative words. Stop the exercise if this happens and return to it the next day. This is all about creating an acceptance of your body for how it is now.

Wear clothes you look and feel good in – store or throw away anything that doesn't fit.

Don't weigh yourself more than once a week (less if possible).

Avoid influences which continuously push the 'ideal' and encourage you to compare yourself. Look for healthy, inspirational social media feeds to follow instead.

Use positive self-talk and affirmations to reinforce and support yourself. You can be kind and honest to yourself - what would someone who loves you say to you? Be your own supporter and you are much more likely to succeed.

Start being your own *superfan!*

It's all too easy to focus on how you look, without giving any time or energy to other areas of your life. So, let's take a minute to think about your other strengths – do people tell you you're an amazing cook, a wonderful mum or a great colleague? Are you incredibly organised, the life of a party, or always there for your friends?

Everyone has their signature strengths, strengths that are a unique combination. Take a little time now to think about three things that you really like and admire about yourself.

Exercise

What three things do I like and admire about myself?

What do I consider to be my greatest strengths or personal characteristics?

What would a friend or family member tell me is the best thing about myself?

What do I do well that other people might not even know about?

Whenever you hear your inner critic starting to whisper negative thoughts, focus on these three things instead. Rehearse them regularly and they will start to be part of the way you think about yourself every day.

Reminding yourself of what is great about you provides the right balance to support lasting change.



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It's time for a reframe: overcoming barriers and limiting beliefs



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Beliefs guide your decisions and behaviour. According to research, people who believe they are healthy live seven years longer than those who think they are unhealthy! Beliefs can be about your body as well as your abilities and strengths.

A limiting belief is just that - a belief, not a truth. You may recognise it as an excuse, a negative thought, a worry, a (perceived) past failure or a fear.

In the same way that negative thought patterns are created by habit and repetition, so are positive thought patterns. By overwriting your negative thoughts with positive alternatives, you can reshape your perspective, which changes your experience of life, and of yourself.

Positive thinking reduces stress and keeps you focused on moving forward, not focused on what might get in the way or what has stopped you in the past.

It's time for a reframe: overcoming barriers and limiting beliefs

Exercise

Challenge your limiting beliefs

Think about a goal you have at the moment. Write down all the 'doubts' or negative thoughts for why you don't think you can do it.

For each limiting belief or doubt think:

- Is it accurate? What evidence do you have to prove it?
- What would your best friend say? Would they agree with you?
- What is standing in your way from achieving your goal?
- What skills or support do you need to achieve your goal?



Photo Credit: Laura Tancredi from Pexels

It's time for a reframe: overcoming barriers and limiting beliefs

Now think about finding an empowering alternative to your limiting beliefs or doubts. Some examples might be:

Limiting belief: I'll never be able to run 5k
Empowering alternative: If I follow the 'Coach to 5k' plan, I'll know how to build up slowly to run 5k.

Limiting belief: I've tried everything and nothing works
Empowering alternative: I haven't really tried everything, only a few things. This time is different and I know I can change anything if I really commit to it.

Limiting belief: I am a total failure (inner critic)
Empowering alternative: Would I speak to a friend in this way? Does it help me to speak to myself in this way? I am now choosing to be kinder to myself and irrespective of what happened before, I will create my future as I want it.

Exercise

Choose one limiting belief and practise replacing it with your alternative, positive belief this week. Write your empowering positive belief below:

Top Tip

One way to stop believing that you cannot do something is to just try doing it. Once a belief has been proven wrong it loses its power.

Make time for yourself

The pace of modern life, plus the perceived expectations placed upon us to balance work, family and friends, often results in you feeling as if you have to do it all. This can lead to feeling overwhelmed, disorganised and stressed. It also means that you don't have time in the day to make space for yourself, to be kind to yourself, and nurture a more positive inner dialogue.

However, take a look at highly successful individuals: they ask for help and delegate tasks to others. They understand that no one can do everything! By delegating you will be able to make more time for yourself – to be kind to yourself, achieve your goals, and enjoy your life with less stress.



Photo Credit: StockSnap from pixabay

Exercise

What can I delegate?
Make a list of all the things you currently do (think about work, family and personal tasks) that it would be possible to hand over to someone else. Identify the priorities - particularly those that take up a lot of your time.

Who can I delegate to?
This could be family, friends, colleagues or a hired help.

Make time for yourself

Take action!

Which task will you delegate this week? Be clear on what you are asking and who you are asking help from.



And then indulge

Now that you have carved out some free time, make sure you don't fill it with more tasks! Think about something you could do that would help give you more body confidence. Maybe go to the hairdresser or visit a beauty therapist for a massage or pedicure. Or simply take 30 minutes for a pampering bath or a DIY manicure. If exercise makes you feel good, then you could set aside this time for a workout. It doesn't matter what it is, the important thing is that when you finish you feel better and more body confident than you did before.

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