

The path to a positive Body Image

Workbook

**“Healthy emotions come in all sizes. Healthy minds come in all sizes.
And healthy bodies come in all sizes.” Cheri K. Erdman**

Nude-Thinking Counseling

contents

workbook



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Having walked through all the previous steps, you will have a deeper understanding of your body and greater insight into your relationship with it. That in itself is healing, for knowing and understanding will allow you to make new choices, to be softer, and to be more specific about the areas to work on.

But I am not going to leave you with just that, let's walk through some key steps to take on the path towards getting that new perspective.

Judgement

Living in the duality of 'good' and 'bad' may be useful for you in certain areas of your life. But when it comes to how you view your body I appeal to your common sense, for there is no set standard to work from and judge if the deviation might be positive or negative. There is no such thing as factory settings and a fixed mould we were all made in.

When we look at media images we might start believing that there is such a thing as a standard, and yet we all know that even these images are enhanced (photo-shopped, airbrushed), we also know that these models are an extremely small percentage of the entire population. So why let your mind lull you into this believe? You have the power to stop that.

If you are struggling, look around. How many people do you see that are exact replicas? Have you ever noticed that most models are a certain age bracket? That is not representative of life, that is about the dream, the societal ideal. There are now models with silver hair appearing, some with curves, even fewer with disabilities, but even these will be given the glam make-over that advertising requires. God forbid that they have a big pimple, are in their sweats running through the supermarket with hair that needs to be cut. And yet this glammed up version is often the image we compare ourselves with. What are we thinking? We must be masochists to do so. No we are not, advertising plays into the ideal-body we spoke of in chapter 1. This idealised, non physical dream world image of our possible selves. And that is why we buy into it. We want to believe that it is possible. We see it as proof that it can be achieved. If only....

So how do you break the spell? Besides embracing reality (more on that later) there is always stepping out of duality. Huh? That's right, non-duality, it's a thing. And I am not going to preach that (but do read up on it if you are interested), what is interesting to bring into your perception is 50 shades of grey, sorry could not resist. Instead of seeing your body as either perfect or flawed, you could also train yourself in a richer pallet, where you look at your body in all its parts and functions and you create a more nuanced visual for yourself. Some bits may actually be ok, others mwah, and some bits whooha or totally yuk. And that nuance can never make you wholeheartedly say this again: I hate my body. Unfortunately it also works the other way around too, that you cannot fully love it, which is why I believe in adapting several strategies to get an optimal result.

Healing steps

Exercise 11

Come on, break your body down on paper and find your 50 shades of grey!

Meaning: what do you love, what is ok, what's mwah, and what is yuk in your eyes.

Hug that reality

It might seem impossible to embrace what is real when you have developed all these very successful strategies for denial. I love a bit of denial myself, it can come in handy when it is completely bad timing to deal with something or when the reality is so gruesome that we must protect ourselves from it (allow reality to only come in small doses). But the pitfall of denial is... it has a limited shelf-life. Reality will keep finding a way to show up and demand to be seen.

The question remains: 'how do I deal?' And perhaps also 'why would I?'

Let's tackle the 'why' first. First off, no one is going to force you. Remember that you have free will here! After some research I found that the main draw back of running away from reality is that it takes tremendous effort. The energy, negative energy, that you put in trying to suppress it all will knacker you. Your system will show the signs of this fatigue. And the mental struggle will mess with you, because you keep telling yourself that things aren't real. Do that long enough and you will have to commit to lala-land in order to keep it up. So why? Because you will feel more balanced and alive (rooted to your life) in the long run.

And now to the how... I am not going to get away with saying 'Just do it!', and yet that is what it boils down to.

Whether you think your body is too old, too freckled, too ugly, too sickly, too weak, too much/little of something... the fact is: this is the current state of your body. And all the hating, disliking, denial, judgement, covering in the world is not going to change that fact. Even when you hope that plastic surgery, pills, diets, bleaching products, etc will make that needed change (and I am not endorsing those, but if that is your choice.. not up to me to have an opinion) your body will still be what it is today, right now. Dealing with it is the best gift you can give yourself, because (trust me on this one) even if you manage to change it, your mindset is still in that negative place and you will find new fault. Remember the examples of people who just had a few too many surgeries? Let that not be you.

'Just doing it' means confronting yourself. Taking away the filters in your mind, the soft light, the tricks you use to avoid seeing yourself. Being yourself. And discovering that you won't die in this knowledge. Being present with yourself, in the now, is beautiful. When you take away your stories and experiences in the past, forget about your projections for the future, and step into this moment with yourself.

Healing steps

Breathe. Smile. Allowing yourself to be connected to your core being is a deeply spiritual and grounding experience. Your presence in the neocortex is magical.

What often stops us from embracing your own standard of perfection (however flawed) is that we compare ourselves to others. And in this comparison we bypass this knowledge that we are not made in the same factory, we are one of a kind with similar aspects, unique and yet the same in our humanity. You have the power, the choice to label something as 'wrong'. And why would you? Focussing on all those 'wrongs' distracts you from your life's purpose. Choose to live in a state of perfection. That is not the same as an illusion. It is embracing all that presents itself in reality and choosing to accept it as your new standard for perfection.

Now shake that perfect ass!

Discipline

You must stand guard at the gate of your mind. Stuff, thoughts and behaviour, creep back in if you think that the work ends when you finish this program, that diet, whatever you chose to implement change.

Our brains are fascinating, what little we know of it, what we do know shows us that we create neurological pathways, connections, when we repeat a learning behaviour. And as we repeat it this link gets stronger and stronger, it will start overriding other behavioural connections in time. And it will even wrap the path to fortify it. Awesome. And yet this is also an explanation why it will take time and many repeats to overwrite your old patterns. There are those that claim that 90 days is enough to reprogram the brain, and NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) has methods to even break these connections and reroute them. So is that the best solution? Not in my experience. I have found that discipline and awareness are the best tools to keep alert. And remember, that 'why' will be the driver behind it all. That is why you know that you must change and keep the change going until it dawns on you one day that you haven't deviated for many weeks. Only then can you start relaxing into the new 'normal' you have established.

Discipline is something many people struggle with. Like New Years resolutions they seem so relevant and important at the time and then real life starts up again and your priorities shift. If you don't know what it will bring to start embracing your body then why would you fight for it, put the effort in it? How high is that on your list of priorities? What does it compete with? This is where I love the 90 day rule. It is amazing how much focus you can give something if you give yourself a block of time to do just that. During those 90 days this is your top priority. Tell those around you, ask for their support. And the progress you make in that period will set you up to keep going after that. I did this with exercise, I wanted to work on my vitality and cardiovascular health, and to do so I found a personal trainer and started working out with her.

Healing steps

I gave myself 90 days to not question it, not wafer, just do it. And after 90 days my body was feeling to different that I knew in my bones that this was what I would continue to do (and I do).

It helps to set goals, to have points to measure by and assess how you are doing. Share these with someone, it makes it more real. And we tend to overestimate what we can do in 90 days, so be happy with small steps, with real deep seeded progress rather than expect earth shattering shifts that have not been rooted in your daily thinking and doing.

Exercise 12

Make a plan:

- What is it you need to change? Be specific, detailed.
- How will you start to implement change? (you are going to come back to this and improve your plan as you start discovering what works best for you)
- Who will you ask for support and encouragement? And who will challenge you?
- Now what is the end goal?
- How will you know you have reached it?
- What intermediate goals are there on route to the end goal?
- How will you celebrate your achievements?
- What do you need to start of your 90 days of focus?
- When will you start those 90 days?

Emotion in the body

You have been so brave, your body is well aware of the journey that you are on. Have you felt anything shift yet? Let's look at some of the things you can do to help yourself on the journey to a better relationship with your body.

Your state, mental and emotional, is directly influenced by your physiology.

Physiology is a broad term that refers to:

- Movement of the body
- Gestures made
- Posture
- Eye-gaze or focus
- Rate and depth of breathing
- Level of muscle tension
- Facial expressions
- Position of limbs
- Alignment of spine and head

Healing steps

Because the mind and the body are connected this way it means that they will have a direct effect on each other. So if you consciously change your body language, physiology, then you will influence your thinking. In changing your thinking you will make difference decisions and show different behaviour.

The most successful people in the world, whether in business, sports or any other career path are at their best when they are working from within their optimal peak state. This state means different things to different people. It is therefore important to identify the peak state that is right for you, allowing you to function to your highest potential at any moment in time.

To find your peak state you:

- Cultivate awareness, which is what you have been working on already
- Bring that awareness into the body, sound familiar?
- Cultivate empowering traits
- Focus on the positive (which we will work on more later)

If you are feeling low in energy, moody, uncertain, scared, you can influence your state by influencing your body. This will shift you into a new state. Here are a few things you can do:

- Listen to energizing or inspirational music
- Start dancing and moving your body to music (shake that booty)
- Hit a punching bag
- Do some exercise
- Go for a walk
- Take a warm bath or shower
- Sit still and breathe deeply from your abdomen (yoga breath)

Each of these suggestions will help you shift your physiology and improve your focus and concentration. As a result you will become more active and productive throughout the day.

Healing steps

Exercise 13 (please watch the instruction video first)

There are certain traits and characteristics that help you get to a higher, stronger, more positive state. To begin cultivating each of these states ask yourself:

- How would I use my body if I was filled with passion or enthusiasm?
- How would I use my body if I was curious and fascinated about my problems?
- How would I use my body if I had an incredible amount of patience?
- How would I use my body if I was the most charismatic person alive?
- What would I say to myself?
- What would I focus on?
- How would I focus on things?
- What gestures would I make?
- How would I breathe?
- What would I think about?
- How would I walk?
- How would I talk?
- How would I interact with others?
- What kinds of decisions would I make?
- What kinds of actions would I take?
- How would I look?

