

10 "Will-Powers" for Improving Body Image

By Michael Levine, Ph.D.

1. Twice a day, everyday, I will ask myself: What do I really gain from preoccupation with what I believe are defects in my weight and shape?
2. I will think of three reasons why my assumption that thinner people are happier and "better" is ridiculous. I will repeat these to myself whenever I feel the urge to compare my body shape with that of another person.
3. I will spend less and less time in front of mirrors of any type. All they do is make me feel uncomfortably self-conscious as they magnify each body part I focus on into a bigger and bigger flaw.
4. I will exercise for the joy of feeling my body move and function effectively, not to purge fat from my body or compensate for calories eaten.
5. I will not avoid activities 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 (e.g., dancing, swimming, sunbathing) no matter what my shape!
6. I will refuse to wear cloths that are uncomfortable or that I dislike, simply because they divert attention from my weight or shape.
7. On my own, or with the help of loved ones, I will list 5-10 good qualities I have, such as empathy, intelligence, or creativity. I will repeat these to myself whenever I veer toward telling myself "I'm a failure because I'm too fat."
8. I will practice taking people in general, and women in particular, seriously for what they say, feel, and do, not for how slender, or "well put together" they appear.
9. I will develop activities and relationships that enrich my self concept, thereby making it less likely that my self-esteem will revolve around feelings about my appearance.
10. I will give my body "what it really needs, including moderate exercise, healthful foods, sensual pleasures, and relaxation, (and then my) body will respond by treating (me) better." (J. Rodin, 1992, p. 249).

References:

- Freedman, R., BodyLove. NY: Harper & Row, 1988.
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Maine, M., Father Hunger. Carlsbad, CA: Gürze Books, 1991.
Rodin, J., Body Traps. NY: William Morrow, 1992.

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