

*A Guide to Body-Acceptance:  
Real-Life Stories About Making  
Peace With The Body You  
Have*

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# Foreword

Thank you for downloading *A Guide to Body-Acceptance: Real-Life Stories About Making Peace With The Body You Have*. You're in for a real treat!

For most of my life, I've hated my body. I grew up wishing to be skinnier, wanting to look like Britney Spears, with toned abs and a perfect butt. I longed to have upper arms like Heidi Klum and long legs like Giselle Bündchen. All in all, I wanted to be everyone but me: a sweet German kid with short legs, a short body and a round face.

My super unhealthy body image led me to many diets, a ruined youth and an eating disorder that almost took my life.

Unfortunately, I'm far from alone in my desire to look differently as we live in a world where women of all ages feel dissatisfied with their bodies, at best, and truly hate their bodies, at worst.

Over the years, I've learned to slowly accept my body and ultimately love her deeply and unconditionally. I've learned to see her as my biggest ally and closest companion instead of a thing that I needed to shape and mold in order to look acceptable, belong and adhere to the crazy beauty ideals of our times.

Yet, when I look around, I see women suffering deeply: they hop from one diet to the next, talk about their bodies ALL THE TIME and are so darn insecure about the skin they're in. This is why I'm so passionate about the work I do and I strongly believe that our culture, our world needs us women to heal ourselves in order for everyone else to heal.

I'm blessed to work with women who are committed to leaving the dieting and body shaming world behind and enter into a universe of self-trust and self-acceptance, finding a life that feels differently on the inside and makes them happier than ever before.

My work as a body image and self-love coach has also given me the privilege to connect with other wonderful women who are on the same mission as I am: helping women see their true beauty – no matter the shape of their butts and thighs.

**In this little e-Book, 9 women share their stories of finding body-acceptance in a world that makes it oh so hard for us women to connect with our bodies on a deeper level.**

**Nonetheless, body-acceptance is possible and I hope that you'll find these stories encouraging and motivating on your own journey to body-love.**

Love and hugs,

*Anne-Sophie Reinhardt*

From "When Are You Due?"  
To "What My Body Can Do."  
by Mallie Rydzik

Last week, Matt and I had furniture delivered to our new house. I had just gotten out of the shower when the crew arrived, so I threw my hair up in a bun and tossed on a dress and cardigan.

The men did a nice job of setting up our living room and bedroom set, and, at the end, I had a couple of documents to sign. One of the men decided to make small talk.

"When are you due?"

Perhaps the rules are different elsewhere, but I've always known the rule of talking to women to be "Never attribute to pregnancy what can be attributed to fat."

Since this is part of the Body-Love Blog Tour, some of you may not know my story. I use "fat" as a term that holds no positive or negative connotations, it simply is. A very Buddhist approach to body talk. I am fat: I weigh 225 lbs. and am 5'4". It's fine.

I've spent years in therapy and on medication for my binge eating disorder, which is related to my diagnosed OCD. It has taken time to appreciate my body for what it can do rather than for what it looks like.

What can my ever-changing body do?

- I was a starter on my Varsity volleyball team at age 16 and 150 lbs. (and 5'4"). We wore spandex shorts.
- I started dating at 155 lbs. I was 18.
- I took up running at 160 lbs. My first race was a 4-miler (weird, right?).
- I graduated college at 165 lbs. I wore a bikini on beach week.
- I chased tornadoes at 175 lbs. I met my now husband.
- I ran a half marathon at 185 lbs. It took me over 3 hours.
- I defended my graduate thesis at 210 lbs.
- I got married at 220 lbs.
- I hiked full-fledged mountains at 225 lbs.

You know what's sad? *It's sad that I can remember my exact weight range from important events in my life.*

Until I started therapy in 2012, I didn't realize that this was an unhealthy way to view myself. As a number.

I can't tell you the number of diets I went on over this 10-year period. Look at those numbers: they are in chronological order. Do you think dieting did me more harm or good?

The jump in weight between my half marathon and wedding represented the peak of my mental health breakdown. As my head deteriorated, so did my body's self-care. Before officially adding chronic depression to my diagnoses, I stopped showering. I stopped exercising the day after my half marathon. I continued to binge eat, although those compulsions were waning under my new medication.

I've made a lot of improvements in my life. The most important one is the change in perception I have of my body.

My body is capable.

My body is tough.

My body is resilient.

Under the guidance of a nutritionist and therapist, I've taken on Health At Every Size and Intuitive Eating.

I don't need to be skinny. I need to be healthy.

There are no "good" foods and "bad" foods. There are only foods.

The man who delivered my furniture had good intentions. I had to make a split second decision, and I decided not to embarrass him the way he had (unintentionally) embarrassed me.

"When are you due?"

"Oh...not for awhile now."

"Will it be your first?"

"Yup!"

"Congratulations, I have a three-year old."

And we parted ways. It's true, we won't be due for a while now...probably a few years still.

I waited for the old, familiar feelings to hit me. *I have to lose weight, ASAP! OMG I'm so fat! I'm going to eat everything in the fridge! No wait, I'm not going to eat for the rest of the day!*

These feelings never hit. I awaited them; I was aware of them. I know how my head tends to react to even the *suggestion* that somebody somewhere maybe thinks I could lose some weight.

This was the first time the feared mistaken pregnancy comment was made to me. Surely I would start bawling soon?

But it never hit.

I'm still making progress, but knowing that a stranger's perception of my body didn't destroy my day felt good.

Really good.

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*Mallie Rydzik is a Ph.D. dropout with OCD, depression, and an eating disorder. She*



*has made the bizarre transition from scientist to life coach after a long period of therapy and self-growth. Now, she encourages others to find themselves and live their uncharted lives on The Off-Road Millennial site and podcast. She lives in the Washington, D.C. area with her husband, cats, and mortgage.*

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# 5 Lessons I've Learned About Body-Acceptance

by Llinos Mai Thomas

For most women, body love is a topic, which catches up with us at one point or another. Certainly for me, having experienced the changes cancer and chemo caused to my body at such a young age, it's a subject, which I find very emotive.

I try to live my life by the above tenet - if it doesn't make my heart sing, I avoid it.

Hating my body is something that definitely does NOT make my heart sing!

So here are the five things I've learnt on the road to body love:

## **1. Focus on the parts of your body that you like.**

This is a goodie. Everyone can find something about themselves they like. For me, I have a big, happy smile and eyes. I like my legs too. So that's is what I focus on in the mirror if my reflection is giving me a hard time.

## **2. Be grateful for your body.**

You couldn't live without it! When you're ill, your body heals. As a woman, a new life can grow inside you and you give birth to that new life. When I hate my scars, and the hair, which grew back after chemo, I think about how my body got better after cancer. We as humans are amazing.

## **3. Be your best friend, not your worst enemy.**

Please believe me when I say: you are beautiful. You have gifts to bring into this world. I have been down and lonely and afraid but I am here now to tell you that you have strength and confidence. I've been there sweetheart.

## **4. Do what makes your heart sing (see above!)**

You have too much to offer this world to sit in front of the mirror hating yourself. Focus on what you love, whether it's art or horse riding. You will be too radiant to focus on your thighs.

## 5. Don't get too stressed about diet and exercise

I want to eat healthier and exercise more often for my general wellbeing, not out of a sense that society wants me to be a size 10. This is an up and down process for me, as I try to find a routine that works. What is not an option is feeling the draining guilt and stress that has come with this for me in the past. That doesn't help me emotionally or mentally.

I don't have all the answers, and sometimes I have bad days when I tie my hair back and put on a baggy t-shirt. I'd rather do that than focus negative energy on my hair and stomach. This is a long and on-going journey, but we don't have to do it alone. From the bottom of my heart to yours: you got this, and we can do this together.

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*Llinos Mai Thomas is a writer, cancer survivor, mental health warrior and creative soul from Cardiff, UK. She shares her health journey to inspire others on the road to healing, and has raised thousands of pounds for charity.*

*Find her at:*

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*[www.facebook.com/inspirationafterillness](https://www.facebook.com/inspirationafterillness)*

# *I Love My Voluptuous Body*

*by Stacey Herrera*

I was nearly 10 lbs. at birth.

Yep, I arrived on this planet as a full-figured goddess.

While the fact that I do not have a skinny past has its advantages, I have plenty of not-so-pleasant memories related to my ample proportions.

It was hard growing up with a mother who was curved in all the right places, an older sister who had much of the same, and a little sister who has never been anything but petite. I was the chubby middle of my sister sandwich.

Other children teased me about my weight. My childhood nickname (which I still answer to today) was "Spoonie" because my face was round and chubby, like a soup spoon. Although I was very active, highly flexible, and did not overeat I never lost the "baby fat" as my mother assured me I would.

I eventually evolved into an introverted teen, who dressed in black clothing that covered and masked my body, at least that was the intention. It wasn't until I was a young adult that I began to shed the cover and accept my well-padded packaging.

There wasn't a single moment that triggered a change, but a series of moments that happened over time. One day I realized that I like myself, just like I am. It doesn't matter what other people think, the only opinion that truly counts is mine.

I have grown very comfortable in my own skin. Yes, there are still parts that I like a bit less than others (like my fluffy arms), but I love my voluptuous body.

I love the curve of my hips and the dimples in my thighs. I love the fullness of my breasts and the bulk of my soft belly. I appreciate my large slender hands and my narrow finger-toes. I love my almond-shaped eyes, the dimples in my cheeks, and my million-dollar smile.

I have never gained or lost an extreme amount of weight. I am still the same portly size that as I was 20+ years ago, but I am not the same woman. I no longer hide my curvaceous figure underneath yards of material. Instead I choose to accentuate my

womanly stature in flattering garb. My confidence is obvious and I'm not ashamed to admit that I'm an intelligent, strong, fleshy, beautiful woman.

You're most important job is being who you are.

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*Stacey Herrera ~ Shift Instigator*

*I'm a life coach, but I really accompany people through the "less than 1/2 life crisis," by giving them permission to Declare their Clarity, Reinvent Happiness and be Joy-Full. Because being 40-something is delightful, delicious, and divine!*

*If you you're bumping up against something and need a push in the right direction I'd love to give you some one-on-one, absolutely free. Just click [here](#) to schedule your free "Declare your Clarity" strategy session today.*

*Find her at:*

[www.onefootfirst.com](http://www.onefootfirst.com)

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# Love The Body You Have Today

by Summer Inmanen

**There is an epidemic amongst us that is destroying your attempt at getting that ideal body from all the perfect eating and exercising you are doing.**

This epidemic is not a new food, a magic supplement, or a new variation of exercise. No, this is the epidemic of ignoring a huge piece of the puzzle when you embark on a journey for health (or vanity, in my case) and it can literally ruin your chance at living a healthy and happy life.

**The issue begins when your intentions are driven by a preconceived notion of perfection that usually equates to being super lean and having zero cellulite, eight-visible abs, and a gap between your thighs.** Let's be honest – how often have you said to yourself, “I hate my \*insert body part here\*” or “I want to get rid of the fat on my \*insert small part of body here\*?” It never ceases to amaze me how many women (and men) harbor so much hatred for their bodies.

With the media constantly bombarding us with images of genetic mutants who appear perfect, it is no surprise we are seeing more and more of this obsession with the perfect physique. **And it is not just Hollywood perpetuating this. We now see this within the fitness community too, with rock-solid Cross Fit bodies being featured everywhere.**

As Tina Fey so eloquently put in her book *Bossypants*: “*Now every girl is expected to have: Caucasian blue eyes, full Spanish lips, a classic button nose, hairless Asian skin with a California tan, a Jamaican dance hall ass, long Swedish legs, small Japanese feet, the abs of a lesbian gym owner, the hips of a nine-year-old boy, the arms of Michelle Obama and doll tits.*”

**Our ideals have become out of control.**

People assume if you have the perfect diet, training program, get eight or nine hours of sleep every night, and have zero stress (lucky you!), that you will automatically be able to achieve the body worthy of a “fitspiration” ad. That your life will suddenly be so filled with joy that you'll feel like you're living large on Beyoncé's yacht.

**I am sorry to tell you these unrealistic expectations are holding you back from being able to end the diet-sabotage madness and be the best version of yourself.**

When your actions are derived from (often unrealistic) body composition goals, you may be hindering your progress because this lack of self-acceptance is a stressor on your body. It can disrupt levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, which can wreak havoc on your health. This can manifest into various behaviors such as micromanaging your food and supplement intake (“maybe I just need to eat more kelp?”), becoming guilt-ridden if you miss a workout, binging on pepperoni pizza and chocolate covered almonds, and measuring your entire self-worth on your body fat percentage.

You are doing more damage than good. And in the end, you’ll probably still hate your body and want to push your hormones to the brink of destruction to lose ‘5 more pounds’.

**Accepting yourself today (yup, in that body that you have right now) by cultivating self-love, and letting go of unrealistic expectations and preconceived notions about what your ‘ideal’ body should be is the missing link to achieving optimal health and happiness – and sanity.**

We are all built to look different – we are not Labrador Retrievers meant to look identical to one another. We are supposed to be unique and this is what makes us beautiful.

**Rather than believing that your life will be amazing when you fit into a cookie-cutter appearance, you need to prioritize loving yourself in the body you have today.**

**Trust me...I know.**

***The light bulb went off when I finally realized that I needed to stop looking for a food solution to my body problems.***

When I started to work on loving every inch of the body that I had at that moment, ***something magical happened.*** I no longer thought about food all the damn time. I didn’t deprive myself all week and then crack-out on cake every weekend. Eating became easy and effortless and my life became so much freer.

**Own the body you have today and rock it like the gift it is meant to be.** Buy clothes that make you feel sexy and don’t stress about what size they are. Let’s break free of this epidemic and start living a life with complete acceptance for our unique selves.

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*I'm Summer Innanen, Certified Nutritional Practitioner through the Institute of Holistic Nutrition, diet rebel and food lover on a mission to help you feel hot-damn fearless in your body.*

*I've been featured on TV shows like Better Living Through Yoga and Dinner Party Wars, was a guest star on the talk show Daytime, and am currently the*

*co-creator of S&STV.*

*I'm also a total 80s chick, and if Sarah Silverman and Slash had a love child (then bleached her hair), I'd be it.*

*I roll with straight-talk, tough love and wicked humour to inspire women to ditch their diet demons, rock their bodies, and start caring about shit that actually matters (like snatching your dreams, spoiling yourself silly, and remembering how holy-powerful sex makes you feel).*

*I struggled with weight and body shaming for SO many years. Trust me, I've tried it all, only to end up stuck in an endless cycle of sabotage and self-hatred.*

*It wasn't until I remodeled my relationship with food and to my body that I was able to shake off the extra weight, wink at my reflection in the mirror, eat what I felt like, and walk out on the antidepressants and insomnia pills that I'd been taking for 17 years.*

*And now I'm teaching other women who are OVER dieting (and guilt parties...and kitchen "safes" that lock us out from our cookie stashes) how to do it too.*

*Ready to break the rules? Grab your sledgehammer and get my free guide [here](http://eepurl.com/ljREv) (<http://eepurl.com/ljREv>). Or head to [summerinnanen.com](http://summerinnanen.com) for all of my rule-breaking advice and to work with me!*

*You can watch my video talking about my story here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksYwO0H\\_PyA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksYwO0H_PyA)*

# How I Learned To Accept And Love My Body, For Reals

by Vanessa Millar

The other week I outed myself as a chronic long-term body hater right here on this blog. My journey to finding love for my body hasn't been easy, it's been a damn long road. But I am pretty pumped to be able to say that I am now in the best place I have ever been and I can honestly, and with so much love, scream from the freakin' rooftops **"I love my body"!**

Am I the thinnest I have ever been? No. Am I the most toned? Probably not. Am I the happiest and most free? Hells Yes!

I would love to share with you, today, exactly how I got here. What I did, what I changed, what I let go of and what I leaned toward instead. I am hoping my story can give you, my gorgeous sisters, a little hope, a little encouragement that you CAN free yourself from your own hatred, that you CAN get to a point in your life when you look in the mirror and say, damn I look good. I want you to know that you CAN find the confidence to go out there and get yourself everything that you desire in your life. I want you to know that it is totally possible to heal your relationship with your body (and food, mainly cupcakes and ice cream) and accept yourself as you are for ALL that you are.

So pull up a pew, pour a cup of herbal tea, grab a raw bliss ball and come on a journey with me...you are going to LOVE this.

## **It all began with 3 simple words... I'm not enough...**

My body hate sprung from years of low self-esteem caused by a belief that I had held on to from very early childhood, that I wasn't enough. Those three words plagued me, daily, and I would add in all kinds of not-so awesome descriptive words to continue the hate fest. I began to really believe these words I repeated to myself... I am not pretty enough, funny enough, smart enough, cool enough, GOOD enough.

I had also mainly decided that I wasn't thin enough. When my belief was repeatedly reinforced by well meaning, but not very nice "put that tummy away" comments from my family, snide judgments from girls at school and the constant barrage of "ideal

body" visuals in magazines and on TV, I was totally and utterly convinced that I would NEVER be loved by anyone if I didn't lose some damn weight.

This belief and the hate I had for my body severely limited my ability to fully enjoy life. It stopped me from asking guys out, from wearing the clothes I loved, from seeing my friends on numerous "fat" days. It held me back from being my confident and sassy self, the girl who isn't afraid to ask for what I want in life. It stopped me from going after the career I wanted, from really using my voice, from being me. I believe we all have an incredibly unique and important role to play in this life, and if we are limited from expressing it, living it, well then, my loves, we are just depriving the world of our unique awesomeness.

I didn't wake up one day and realise enough was enough, it was time to love my body, and it was a much more subtle and slow process than that. It was a gradual awakening and it began with awareness...

It was only when I became aware, really aware, of my fat belief and how it was limiting my life, holding me back from my happiness that I could begin to address it. How can we even try to understand a problem if we are not aware of, or we do not want to be aware of it. Ignorance is bliss, right? In order to heal, **awareness is ALWAYS the first step.**

I became aware of my need for control. I was in a constant search for control and I was gripping hard to any ounce of control I did have. Control over my emotions, my circumstances, my relationships, my weight and my life. I also loved me a bit of blame, making everything someone else's fault. It was my mum's fault, my upbringing, the universe, anyone's but my own fault. I was desperate, and I mean desperate, for someone to save me.

Ironically, it was my blaming that was causing me to give away the control that I was yearning so much for. I found the control I was looking for comes only from **accepting that I am utterly responsible for my own life.** I chose it and I need to accept it for the way that it is. No one is going to save me...I must save myself.

From this newfound awareness and acceptance I began to **shift my thinking.** I had always thought myself a positive person, an optimist, and a supportive friend. I knew that there were a whole lot of things in my life to love, my friends and family, my freedom, this beautiful country and I felt truly grateful. But whilst I had so many nice things to say about the world around me, the truth is I was nothing but crazy, mad, negative to myself. If I spoke to my family and friends the way I spoke to myself I wouldn't have any...

*Ness, you are so fat, worthless, useless, dumb, silly, ugly,*

*no one is EVER going to love you*

I had found her, **the inner critic**, the bitch that says all these terrible things. I gave her a name, Rhonda, I gave her a different voice to my own and I detached. I realised that I am not Rhonda and I sure as hell don't have to listen to her.

I am not a negative person I simply have negative thoughts. To put Rhonda back in her place, I flooded my mind with positivity, positive affirmations, positive thoughts and I decided that everyday I would wake up, look in the mirror and say...Ness, I choose you.

When I started to choose me I started to treat myself like I would my best friend, I stopped punishing my body with the name calling, bad food choices, binge drinking episodes, deprivation from skipping meals and pain from pushing myself way way too hard at the gym.

**I also let go**, I let go of the expectations, of the need to control things, the should's, the if only's. I released the restrictions, the rules, the guilt, the fear. I started to accept myself for exactly who I am right now, believing where I was, was exactly where I needed to be.

I let go of the people in my life that I had allowed treat me poorly. For years, Rhonda had set my benchmark for what I would allow people to say to me. We only let someone treat us as badly as we treat ourselves. So naturally when we start to speak kinder to ourselves we stop tolerating smack talk from other people.

***I returned to my body,***

***I returned to love.***

I started to move in a way that felt good and **I found yoga**. Yoga taught me (among so many other things) to be in my body, to focus on what it feels like, what it can do, instead of what it looks like. My body is capable of amazing things, my stretch marks aren't ugly, and they are proof I popped two beautiful new lives out of my hoo ha. I realised that the size of my body is not related to my worth, I have much more to offer the world than flat abs and cellulite-less thighs.

**I embraced my uniqueness**, I realised that trying to fit into a mold, a category, a clique would mean denying huge parts of me. I stopped trying to label myself. I am not a hippy, a corporate, an artist, a gypsy. I am Ness and I no longer require a defined stereotype to feel "normal". I am totally unique and that is O freakin' K.

**I found my authenticity** in just doing the things I like to do...

I love yoga and loud music equally, eating healthy and Friday night fish and chips, being analytical and getting creative, bush camping and getting dressed up to eat at nice restaurants, fisherman pants and pretty dresses. This is who I am, no labels, just genuineness. Phoar, the freedom!

**I decided that I was enough.** Can I tell you how amazeballs it feels to KNOW that you are good enough? I knew on such a deep level that despite my current weight, pimples on my face, cellulite on my thighs, stretch marks on my tummy I am enough and I am totally, utterly loveable.

**I found my soul mate...**me. I spent all my adolescence searching, crushing hard on so.many.boys, desperate for a partner to complete me; I delayed my happiness until I found HIM. Seeing myself as my own soul mate makes the search for a partner more natural, more authentic and a hell of a lot less stinky (you know, the hardcore desperation smell?). It is damn fine to want a partner, but the difference is that now I want a man because I want to share my life with someone, not because I want some knight in shining armour to save me or bring me my happiness.

**I got jiggy with stillness, discovering the joy and freedom of the now.** In the now, I have more clarity, more focus and I am less limited by time. By cultivating present-moment awareness I got a little more patient, making "infinite patience" my mantra. I began trusting the process, believing that everything was unfolding exactly as it meant to at the perfect time.

**I got myself some sisters that rock!** My girlfriends are the BEST; they support me, love me, challenge me with love and make me a better person. Body-image chats can get pretty heavy and negative around most women and I am so glad I found chicks that are open, that just get it, get me and who would never judge my body no matter how huge my ass got.

I found my ladies when I kicked Rhonda out, shifted my thoughts from trash to positive and as it turns out, positivity is MAGNETIC.

**Positive thoughts = positive peeps**

**yay!**

**I stopped taking things so damn personally.** This is how the judging thing works, judge less, feel less judged. People judge for two reasons;

- **1.** Because they see us kicking goals like they wish they were, because we have exactly what they know they could have if they only worked for it.
- **2.** Because they are insecure about the very thing they are commenting on, we are fat only because they secretly think they are (or they are petrified of getting fat).

This knowledge is freeing because you can know, for reals, that those nasty, bitchy words that get thrown around are NEVER personal, ever. Bitching and judgment says so much more about the judger than the person copping the judgment.

I found my voice; **I began to trust my intuition**, the infinite wisdom that exists within all of us. When I began using my own intuition I needed less recognition, less approval, less permission from others. I found all of it within.

Finally, **I discovered my passions**, what I really care about, and made it my purpose. Now I use my voice to share my story, my passion, and my mission to bring some love to body-acceptance and get my sisters loving their perfectly imperfect bodies just like I do.

***We are all perfectly imperfect,***

***uniquely beautiful and***

***beautifully unique***

***I would love to hear from you, pop a comment below and let me know if you are hearing what I am saying, girl.***

much, much body-loving love,

Ness xx



*Vanessa Millar is a Body-Love Coach, Yoga Teacher, Reiki Practitioner and founder of [learn.grow.heal](http://learn.grow.heal).*

*She is on a mission to help women find acceptance, connection and love, in their own skin.*

*Vanessa has experienced her own personal struggles with body image, self-esteem and emotional eating, leading her through periods of anxiety, depression, bulimia and binge eating.*

*Having made an inspiring recovery, despite facing some incredibly heart-breaking challenges, she feels blessed to be able to share everything she knows and everything she has learned with women, just like her, all over the world..*

*Vanessa is the creator of The Body-Love Revolution eCourse, an incredible online course designed to help women feel better about the skin they are in and find the*

*confidence and sassiness to go out there and kick-ass at life. For more information and to join the Body-Love Revolution visit [learngrowheal.com.au](http://learngrowheal.com.au).*

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*[www.learngrowheal.com.au](http://www.learngrowheal.com.au)*

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*[www.twitter.com/vanessaamillar](http://www.twitter.com/vanessaamillar)*

*[www.instagram.com/learngrowheal](http://www.instagram.com/learngrowheal)*

# Five Transformational Lessons I've Learned About Body Acceptance

*by Kimberlee, the Holistic Sculptress*

Every day we are exposed to countless images of perfected, airbrushed beauty. Striving to measure up to these idealised images has become a universal obsession. Body shaming, size bias and habitual self-criticism has become an epidemic. In a world dictated by unrealistic standards of perfection, there are times when I feel deeply discouraged by the weight of expectation. In these moments, it takes great courage to pause and actually listen to my body.

Your body is wise and expressive, communicating unspoken longings through inspired thought, feeling, sensation and emotion. Tuning in on your inner mental dialogue can reveal a deeper truth. Significantly, I've learned when I'm caught up in a negative mental dialogue, I'm actually allowing my self talk to determine what's possible. However, when I pause and acknowledge what is coming up for me - or swirling around in my head - I can free myself from the mental anguish. Tuning in enables you to powerfully connect with what your body wishes to express. From this vantage you can literally transform your experience.

Cultivating body acceptance is about learning to self-regulate, as you learn to move in ways that feel good for you. Nourishing balance, wholeness and loving acceptance is a practice, it goes beyond conceptualising the idea of body acceptance on an intellectual level. In essence, body acceptance is about learning to accept your self, just as you are, while being prepared to take inspired, imperfect action.

## **Lesson One: Body Acceptance is a Process**

Body acceptance and learning to befriend your body is an ongoing process, a journey. In a world where we crave instant results, appreciate that life, your beautiful life - is a process.

## **Lesson Two: Body Acceptance is Cultivated From Within**

Body acceptance flows from understanding. Often when we feel unhappy, we lean into habitual patterns (such as distraction, avoidance and suppression). Habitual patterns are in-built mechanisms, which serve to help the body cope with trauma and

overwhelm. Naturally, the body defaults into these patterns as a way to self-soothe and comfort.

The practice of inner reflection ignites the realisation: in order to truly feel better, we must dig deep in order to be able to learn how to trip the habitual response. Body acceptance requires great courage and resolve, because facing your habitual responses can be intensely confronting. But when you know your process, you can begin to practice the art of shaping your reality in a whole new way.

### **Lesson Three: Body Acceptance is a Process of Unlearning**

When you were still making sense of the world, your mind was exposed to various mental filters. Perhaps like me, you were told "children should be seen and not heard" - as you moved through your childhood, it's likely you heard many "shoulds"! Mental filtering gives rise to mental patterns that are often not conducive to creating happiness. Instead many conditioned patterns have the potential to cause immense suffering.

Body berating is a learned behaviour prevalent within our society. Yet striving to fit in to the weight of expectation is not a kind way to treat your gorgeous body. Moving into body acceptance is constant process of "unlearning", it's a practice.

### **Lesson Four: Body Acceptance is Being in Relationship with Your Self**

Body acceptance requires leaning into and learning a whole new way of being and relating with yourself. Essentially, it's about learning to be your own best friend (BFF) by resolving to take loving care of yourself, each and every day. Realise when you slip up it's not a catastrophe. It's all experience.

### **Lesson Five: Body Acceptance Flows from Compassion**

Body acceptance is about listening to your body with care and attentiveness. Be kind and gentle with your tender heart. Beneath all the layers of conditioned thought there abounds a perfectly whole human being. Begin to welcome wholeness into your everyday experience.

### **Body Acceptance: Putting it into Practice**

In a world that is addicted to quick fixes and easy answers, we are conditioned to seek an instant solution. Gazing into my yesterdays, there was a time when all seemed hopeless. In an attempt to cope with the intensity of feeling, I tried to numb down my experience and distract myself. Yet, the more I tried to stuff my emotions, the more my life (and my weight) spiraled dangerously out of control.

During a defining moment when there were no answers, choice beckoned. Remain wrapped in the illusion of safety - or take a momentous leap of faith into a whole new way of being. Through truly nourishing my body, I've released the physical burden of those extra pounds. But perhaps more significantly I've dissolved the pain and overwhelm that once weighed me down.

Putting self-love into practice is simple to implement. Notice I'm ***not saying it's easy***, but it is relatively simple. Living into body acceptance is a process. You can empower your process by **choosing to stop listening to the media**. Remain open and receptive to your inner world and **trust in your beautiful body wisdom**. Just by taking the time to read this you are on your way to experiencing a whole new way of being.

Place both hands over your heart and breathe deeply. As your chest gently expands, sense your heart filling with love and compassion. Rest in the assurance that your body is wise and beautiful and strong - and it is safe for you to be with your feelings.

When you are feeling fearful, frustrated or discouraged, take the pressure off by affirming: *"Gorgeous, I'm here for you. I appreciate you've done your best. All is well and good and beautiful"*.

No recriminations. Remember your life is a process, enlivened and shaped by you.

### **Affirmation from the Heart**

*"I breathe in love. The breath of life flows through me and I flow through life with grace and ease. I love, cherish and appreciate my whole body."*

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*Hi I'm Kimberlee, a certified personal trainer, writer and creator of Holistic Sculptress. I created Holistic Sculptress because I believe in the power and life that flows through you.*

*The world has given us a definition of fitness that is based on assumptions and labels. Yet when we take the time to get to the heart of the matter, we see that this image-driven approach is not helpful.*

*The magic is in YOU! You already have the secret to sculpting wellness. Everything you will ever need*

*for a happy, fulfilling life exists within you. My dream is to help you realise this for yourself, so you can free your heart and experience greater balance, happiness and abundance.*

*Find her at:*

*[www.holisticsculptress.co.uk](http://www.holisticsculptress.co.uk)*

# Learning To Love Your Body

by Rebecca Weller

*Man*, it took me a long time to learn to love and accept my body.

For years I tried to make it do exactly what I wanted it to do. When I was at college I wanted it to dance all night and study all day, while existing solely on sandwiches, chocolate and cider. When I joined the workforce I wanted it to work 10-hour days while I fed it less than 1200 calories a day and partied all weekend. I denied it rest and pushed it beyond its limits with empty promises like guarana, sugar, caffeine and 'energy' drinks. I got upset and spoke hatefully to it when it put on weight, and punished it by starving it for days at a time.

In my relationship with my body I was cruel, controlling, demanding, ungrateful and downright disrespectful.

Learning to love and accept your body is a process – one that starts with kindness, compassion and understanding. Just like any relationship, it takes time, trust and mutual respect. Play your cards right and eventually it'll grow into deep self-love more rewarding than you ever imagined. But girl, you gotta treat it right...

## Kiss Goodbye to Dieting

Aaahh, the diet trap. If you've ever counted calories, chugged meal-replacement shakes or attempted radical detoxes, you know by now that diets don't work. You might lose weight quickly but sooner or later that weight will come creeping back, bringing with it a whole heap of self-loathing and feelings of failure. Yep, I've been there too (and spent my fair share of time in diet hell and struggling with perfectionism) and it ain't pretty.

The good news is that by choosing to nourish your body with wholesome foods instead, you'll not only feel better (about *everything*), your skin will glow, your eyes will sparkle and you'll bounce around with sustained energy before enjoying deep, peaceful sleep. *Hallelujah!*

## Stop With the Negativity!

It's hard to love and accept our bodies when we feed ourselves an endless stream of

negative thoughts all day. What stories does your inner chatterbox feed you, beautiful? Stop and listen. *Now is that how you would speak to your best friend or partner?*

Negative thoughts are just as toxic to the body as junk food. What's worse is that they usually have nothing to do with reality, and are instead just a mixture of fear, ego, and stories from our past. They don't serve you, gorgeous. Time to let 'em go.

### Get Clear on How You Want to Feel

Rather than fixating on your external appearance, set an intention for how you want to *feel*. You might believe that all you want in this world is a flatter stomach, but what if we go deeper than that? If you stop and think about it you might discover that you really just want to *feel* a certain way. Maybe you want to feel playful, feminine, liberated, sexy, or confident. Or maybe it's sassy, strong, relaxed, or content.

Use your desired feelings to create a mood board to remind and inspire you when you find yourself feeling down or thinking negatively about your body. It'll help you make decisions that align you with the way you truly want to *feel*.

### Count Your Blessings

Focus on all the good things in your life. Keep a gratitude journal or join a movement like the 365 Grateful Project to keep your thoughts focused on everything you have to be happy and grateful for. Positive thoughts have a powerful effect on your health and body – plus they magically attract more of the good stuff. *Win-win!*

### Harness the Power of Affirmations

Fake it til you make it, baby! Rebuilding your relationship with your body takes time. Affirmations like: “I'm becoming healthier every day” or “I love my body!” can help. Remember to make your affirmations positive, set them in the present moment, and keep them short and sweet.

Repetition is key, so put them where you can see them. Set hourly reminders in your phone, stick post-it notes to your bathroom mirror, or write them in your journal. You might feel silly at first but you might also fall head-over-heels in love with the incredible difference they make to your health and happiness.

### Tune In

Instead of hating on your body, let it guide you. Start really listening to it. What's it telling you about how much rest you need, or which forms of movement suit you

best?

When you eat, do so mindfully. Notice how you feel during the meal and afterwards. Take stock of your usual eating patterns and note which ones arise out of boredom or habit, or when you feel frustrated, scared or overwhelmed. When you find yourself mindlessly reaching for snacks, stop for a moment. Breathe. Drink a glass of water and tune in. Are you really hungry or is something deeper going on?

### Start Living Today

When we're unhappy with our bodies we often put off doing things that will make us feel good because we're embarrassed or believe we're not worthy. In doing so, we get stuck in a never-ending cycle of not being good enough.

Recognise that no matter how you feel about your body, you *are* worth it, beautiful. Cherish every day as a gift and get creative! It doesn't take a lot of effort to boost your self-esteem and enrich your life. What can you do to bring more quality into every single day?

Could you spend more time outdoors in the sunshine, away from TV and technology? Fill a vase with beautiful flowers? Organise a picnic lunch date with a friend? Go for a long walk on the beach? Light aromatherapy candles and take a bubble bath? Wear your favourite perfume, dress and heels – just because it's Tuesday?

Adequate self-care is essential in rebuilding your relationship with your body. Show it some appreciation, baby! Cherish your temple, replenish your energy, and invite bliss back into your life.

Your body will love you for it. ♥

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*Rebecca Weller is a Holistic Health Coach passionate about helping women to re-ignite their sparkle and fall in love with life again. She provides one-on-one health coaching, hosts regular wellness events, is the author of eBooks: 'Eating for Energy' and 'Dessert SuperSmoothies', and creator of The Sparkle Project.*

*Ready to get your glow on, beautiful? Join us at [VeganSparkles.com](http://VeganSparkles.com).*



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# *I Love Me Just The Way I*

## *Am*

*by Deborah King*

I seem to have spent years worrying about my body shape, especially after I had the kids.

No one explained to me just how different I was going to look. No-one told me about the stretch marks till it was too late or about the dangers of putting on too much weight, or that I didn't have to actually eat twice as much food just because I was carrying an extra person with me 24hrs a day.

I mean we're talking back in the day. Way, way before wearing ordinary clothes while pregnant was fashionable.

The "bible" in those days was a book called Everywoman. It had pictures what I should look like month by month. It scared the crap out of me - I didn't want to end up looking like the end result.

After four beautiful children, one natural birth and three caesarians - wow - didn't I look like a honey (not)

Breastfeed they said, it's natural and it's best for the baby. Well I bloody hated it. My clothes were not button up or zip up. I used to have to go sit in the car to feed. I lasted two weeks with the first, five months with the second (bye bye boobs), two weeks with the third (hello mastitis) and six weeks with the last (hello again mastitis).

Did you know there is an enzyme in the cabbage leaf that relieves mastitis. Try going down town with a massive cabbage leaf in your bra but it worked (thank you Dr.)

After each pregnancy I had extra weight to lose. The first and second were easy to get back into shape but with the third the weight just hung around. I eventually got rid of it with proper eating and exercise. The fourth only took me three months to get back to pre-pregnancy weight.

You want to know how - I didn't stress about it because I knew what to do and I knew what I did worked. It's when you stress and get angry and frustrated that the results are either slower or non-existent.

### **Fast forward a couple of decades**

Lo and behold a lump found in the breast. As I sat in the hospital waiting for my ultrasound and making silent bargains with God, I looked around at all the other women sitting there, all dressed in hospital gowns and I remember thinking - if I get through this what do I have to look forward to?? What's my reward?

My gift if I got through it (and I did by the way, it was a cyst) and now all I have to do is go for a breast screen every two years, no biggie.

And my gift was there up on the TV, a short film about menopause.

Great I thought. Hurrah, can't wait. I get through this and then that's waiting for me. At that moment I was truly wishing I had been born a boy!!

### **Fast-forward another decade**

And here we are in menopause land. Happy happy joy joy only there wasn't any and my body changed. AGAIN. For freak sake. I literally went from trim taut and terrific to fat frumpy and fragile overnight. Literally overnight. I am not joking ladies!

This is where it all turned to crap. This is where my head turned to mush. This was the biggest hurdle to overcome.

Menopause for me was not a walk in the park. It was a marathon in the park but this is another whole blog post waiting to be written.

### **What I did and how I did it**

I had lots of stuff to deal with at this time in my life. Not only were my kids grown and leaving home, getting married etc. etc. which provided me with a new phase in my life - the empty nest, I had huge self esteem and self worth issues.

I couldn't lose the weight, no matter how hard I tried. I kicked and screamed and my relationship with food was not attractive. I set up this hate shame guilt punish relationship with myself.

I wanted my body to stop mucking around and go back to normal. I wanted it to engage in healthy pursuits but my head wouldn't play.

I felt so uncomfortable, so ugly, so old that I would cry myself to sleep and cry myself awake sometimes. I figured, this is it, I've lost control over my body, my life is over, I'll never be able to lose weight again and I cried some more.

I remember seeing a photo in the paper of a bevy of beautiful babes in bikinis. A competition at a local pub. It cut really deep because I knew I would never look like that again.

Then I pulled myself together. I thought, it is what it is and I can't go back.

I looked at the picture again and my thoughts were

I've got one word for you girls and that's - MENOPAUSE

Honestly, it made the biggest difference because I realised no one stays young forever and I couldn't expect to stay young forever. I wondered how they were going to look in 30 years time. It kind of jolted me out of the trance I didn't know I was in.

My God, where had this distorted thinking come from. From my lack of self-esteem and self worth. I was trying to re-create something and re-capture something that was never going to happen. Well not in the same way anyway.

I could always stay young at heart but I couldn't turn back the clock.

### **My mind cleared**

At that moment I was finally able to accept where I was in my life. From there I did a lot of soul searching, reading and heaps of personal development work.

I knew if I could just let go of my ridiculous expectations and start looking inside instead of outside to fix the problems I would be OK, and I would find the best solution for myself.

Once I accepted the situation my mind cleared enough to look for solutions rather than waste time beating myself up. Let me tell you - that time that you waste inside your head thinking about yourself - you'll never get that back again. It's gone.

I decided to get real and so I signed up for a 12-week body transformation challenge. I stuck with it. I got real. I took it seriously. I made a commitment.

And I lost 9kg at the end of the 12 weeks but I forget how many inches I lost as well. For some reason the 9kg sticks in my mind the most.

This was the start of my new life. I realised I could do it. I still had some control. It wasn't all doom and gloom. It was a Godsend.

Mind over matter. The mind is a powerful thing but you don't realise how powerful until you start taking charge.

What we do to ourselves is so detrimental to our health and wellbeing

**Choose life. Choose joy.**

We torture ourselves. That's the only word for it.

We try and live up to expectations, we try and do it all, we try and hold everything together and we think we have to be pretty or smart or pretty and smart, have a career, juggle, multi-task, do everything, put up with lazy husbands, vocalise what we want (all the time), be there for every school event, be creative, stay on top of things.....then fall down in a big heap because we're totally overwhelmed.

No one says go out and be all these people and do all these things. We are born this way.

We're amazons. We're capable. We build walls and won't let anyone in.

Stop it. Stop it right now. Choose to live your life and live it with joy. You can do it, you just need to make the changes, get real, and make a commitment to yourself.

You owe it to yourself and to your family. Be a great role model for your kids - don't get hung up on false beliefs and expectations. Nothing will change unless you do. Your most important relationship is with yourself.

You are the most important person in your life.

And so my fellow amazon, be kind to yourself. Look after what you have. Don't give up on yourself and don't let yourself go. Have pride in yourself. If you need to lose weight then lose it. If you need to work on your self-esteem and self worth then do it.

## **BUT DO IT FOR YOURSELF**



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*I am an emotional health and fitness coach. I work with women to get rid of the **emotional baggage and overwhelm** that holds them back from taking that final step to **SUCCESS**.*

*For example **having that desirable relationship, getting that promotion at work, or starting that***

***new business.***

*To get you where you want to be I use a combination of coaching/counselling, EFT (Tapping) and essential oils.*

*I help you get into your head where all that previous conditioning and those negative beliefs and emotions are stored and deal with it once and for all.*

*You'll be amazed at what you've stored over the years and it's that emotional crap that's holding you back. You might even think you've dealt with "whatever" but remnants remain that are secretly holding you.*

*You'll be delighted at the feeling of lightness and freedom you experience once you've dealt with the demons (sometimes there are things you don't even realise you've held on to, and sometimes it's other peoples' stuff).*

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# What It Really Means to Love Your Body

*by Anne-Sophie Reinhardt*

Body-love is such a loaded topic, isn't it?

Every woman is talking about it and every woman has an opinion on it because every woman is struggling with it.

There are those who say loving your body is impossible if you don't wear a size 0 and there are those who pretend to be totally OK with being morbidly obese; which is a loaded topic in itself. There are those who think loving your body means being obsessed with it and others who believe it means completely letting yourself go.

Extreme points of view that don't even scratch the surface of true body-love.

**But what does loving your body actually mean and how does it look like in everyday life?**

First of all, here's what loving your body does NOT mean: it doesn't mean neglecting your body and your physical health; aka. never working out and having McDonald's for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

It doesn't mean using your body as an excuse to not test your limits or moving beyond your comfort zone.

It doesn't mean over-glorifying your body and all that comes with looking "great".

It doesn't mean worrying about your body and your appearance 24/7 and not being able to live your life – which, I know, is so difficult in our times.

After all, there's so much shame when it comes to our bodies. We feel ashamed

because we have – gasp – such outrageously feminine body parts like hips, booties or thighs. Then there's the cellulite, the muffin tops or the love handles (harassing terms if you ask me!) that keep us up at night, locked into a spiral of embarrassment, abuse and fear.

And so, instead of celebrating our femininity, we try to hide it, cover it or diet it away.

Destructive.

Sad.

Potentially lethal.

And overpoweringly distressing.

It doesn't have to be that way though. There's a different way, a better way of living life for you; a way that takes away the shame and replaces it with love and freedom.

And that's where real body-love comes in.

Loving your body, having an intimate relationship with your body, means taking good care of it. It means being attune to its needs – dietary and more – and listening to it more often than not.

Loving your body means **relaxing** about your size because you know you are feeding it deliciously healthful food and nurturing it with calming self-care routines.

It means skipping a day of exercise without freaking out or eating out and indulging every now and then.

True body-love means not following other people's rules and doing what feels good to your body.

It means having fun with *your* body, doing cartwheels on a summer meadow or dancing Zumba with your best friend, filling every movement with love and joy.

It means experiencing the sensations of taste, lust, touch or thirst with gratitude and awe.

It means catching yourself when you're comparing your body to the body of others and reminding yourself that *your* body is unique and beautiful in its own way.

True body-love means seeing the fire in your eyes, the strength in your arms and the beating of your heart and saying 'thank you' for being alive.

**But most of all, loving your body means trusting your body.**

Your body is benign. It doesn't want to trick you, hurt you or kill you. It's on your side. The sooner you realize that the better because that's where change – and a little magic – begins to happen.

When you trust your body, you will stop starving or bingeing. You will stop judging or fearing. You will stop abusing or hating.

You will begin to see, feel and breathe peace: peace with food, peace with yourself and peace with your shape.

Of course, loving your body doesn't always mean sunshine and unicorns.

You will still have "fat days" or experience the occasional twinge when you catch your reflection in the mirror.

However, real body-love stops you from remaining a victim of your body and instead empowers you to move on with confidence and trust. It enables you to live your life, chase your dreams, have beautiful relationships and powerful, focused conversations without your mind worrying about the way you look or plotting the diet you'll start the next day.

**True body love means being conscious of your body and respecting it for all it does for you, but not giving it power over you, your life and your dreams.**

True body love is a balancing act and needs to be renewed every day of your life. It's a practice; a beautiful practice that improves your health, strengthens your self-esteem and enriches your life in more aspects that you might believe.

And that's what true body-love really means.



*Anne-Sophie Reinhardt is an award-winning blogger, body image expert, self-love coach, speaker and the creator of Body-Love Wellness Circles.*

*Body-Love Wellness Circles is an immersion into the power of body-acceptance. The Circles will be focused around transforming the relationship you have or may not have with your body, food and yourself. To learn more and to join*

*us, go here: <http://annesophie.us/bodylovecircles>*

*Join her newsletter (<http://www.annesophie.us/bodylovenotes/>) and receive bi-weekly nuggets of inspiration, motivation and compassion that will help you to make peace with food, your body and yourself.*

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