

Limiting Cultural Influences to Improve Body Image

Look over the following exercises and activities. We suggest adding one of these to your goal sheet every week and writing your experience in your journal.

1. Stop buying and reading fashion and popular culture magazines. They have been shown to make people feel worse about themselves.
2. Do something physical like nature walks, yoga, or Tai chi where you connect with your body in a healthy and thoughtful way that is not focused on calorie burning weight loss or looking better.
3. Don't talk about your own body or other people's appearance negatively. Research by Eric Stice and others indicate that a mere three to five minutes of "fat talk" significantly increases body dissatisfaction, which is the key risk factor for the development of eating disorders.
4. Journal about your body in terms of appreciating its function versus appearance. Details some of the things it does for you or allows you to do. Deliberately slow down and pay special attention to appreciate your body and how it allows you to do things like walk, hug, dance, see.
5. Be a good role model for younger people who are learning from you by nurturing your body. For example, get a massage, take a bath to relax, rest when tired.
6. For females: research or find examples of respected, powerful women for whom their power had or has nothing to do with weight or beauty. Make a list of women who are known for what they have contributed rather than how they looked.
7. For females: spend time focusing on what it means to be a woman, in a more internal and spiritual sense. Read books about the sacred feminine. Learn about ancient female traditions and rituals. Share your knowledge with others.
8. For males: speak out or write a letter to gym owners, fitness trainers come or advertises about how men's bodies are increasingly being portrayed in a way that is impossible to achieve for most humans without taking steroids or developing an exercise obsession, and how this is damaging.
9. For males: read books like the Adonis Complex by Harrison G Pope, Jr. and Katherine Phillips or Making Weight by Arnold Andersen, Leigh Cohn, and Tom Holbrook, to better understand the issues of men and body image in this culture.
10. Go shopping with a friend who can help you try on clothes without looking at sizes, and then have him or her or they got the tags out of the clothes you buy.
11. Try removing any large mirrors in your house or covering them. Use only small ones in the bathroom for putting on makeup or putting in contacts etc.
12. Buy and wear loose, comfortable clothes, or at least clothes that aren't tight.
13. avoid television shows or commercials where there are overt discussions about dieting or triggering language dialogue or images.
14. Write a letter or an email to the network or producers of a particularly offensive commercial, show, or magazine, letting them know how the material represented made you feel. Tell them you will no longer be supporting their show, periodical, or product. Be specific and clear and demand they stop what is damaging and offensive. This kind of activity can be empowering and rewarding. Some of our clients have received neutral responses, but others have actually brought about significant changes, such as getting companies to remove offensive weight loss ads.