

25 Ways to Love Your Body

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Contemporary culture bombards women with negative messages about weight, food, and body image. In this environment, we have to work to make peace with our bodies.

Spend at least five minutes a day reflecting on this list and think about the amazing things our bodies do. Be a rebel- decide to love your body as is!

1. We are born in love with our bodies. Watch an infant sucking her fingers and toes, not worrying about body fat. Imagine being in love with your body.
2. Think of your body as a tool. Make an inventory of all the things you can do with it.
3. Notice what your body does each day. It is the instrument of your life, not an ornament for someone else's enjoyment.
4. Create a list of people you admire who have contributed to your life, your community, or the world. Was their appearance important to their accomplishments?
5. Consider your body as a source of pleasure. Think of all the ways it can make you feel good.
6. Enjoy your body: stretch, dance, walk, sing, take a bubble bath, get a massage, get a pedicure.
7. Put signs on mirrors saying things like: I am beautiful inside and out."
8. Affirm that your body is perfect just the way it is.
9. Walk with your head high, with pride and confidence in yourself as a person, not as a size.
10. Don't let your size or appearance keep you from doing things you enjoy.
11. Remember that your body is not a democracy—you are the only one who gets a vote.
12. Count your blessings, not your blemishes
13. Replace the time you spend criticizing your appearance with more positive, satisfying pursuits.
14. Every year, 98 percent of our atoms are replaced. Your body is extraordinary — respect and appreciate it!

15. Be the expert on your body. Challenge fashion magazines, cosmetic companies, and weight tables.
16. Let your inner beauty and individuality shine.
17. Be your body's ally and advocate, not its enemy.
18. Every morning when you awake, thank your body for resting and rejuvenating itself so you can enjoy the day.
19. Every night when you go to sleep, thank your body for what it helped you do throughout the day.
20. Find a method of exercise that you enjoy and do moderate amounts of it regularly. Don't do it compulsively or to lose weight—do it to feel good.
21. Think back to a time in your life when you liked and enjoyed your body. Get in touch with those feelings now.
22. Look at family photos. Find the beauty, love, and values in those bodies and faces. Hold them close to your heart.
23. Ask: If I had only one year to live, how important would my body image and appearance be?
24. Make a closet inventory. Do you wear clothes to hide your body or just to follow fashion trends in lockstep? Keep the clothes that give you feelings of pleasure, confidence, and comfort.
25. Beauty is not just skin deep. It is a reflection of your whole self. Love and enjoy the person inside.

From: The Body Myth: Adult Women and the Pressure to Be Perfect (Margo Maine and Joe Kelly, John Wiley, 2005)

Dr. Margo Maine, cofounder of the Maine & Weinstein Specialty Group, is a clinical psychologist who has specialized in the treatment of eating disorders for over 25 years. Author of The Body Myth: Adult Women and the Pressure to Be Perfect (with Joe Kelly, John Wiley, 2005), and Father Hunger: Fathers, Daughters and the Pursuit of Thinness (Gurze, 2004), and Body Wars: Making Peace With Women's Bodies (Gurze, 2000) she is a senior editor of Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention and board member of the Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action, and of Dads and Daughters. A Founding Member and Fellow of the Academy for Eating Disorders and a member of the Founder's Council and past president of the National Eating Disorders Association, she is a member of the psychiatry departments at the Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital's Mental Health Network and at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, having previously directed their eating disorder programs.