

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING A HEALTHY BODY IMAGE

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To begin, accept what is *not* in your control:

- 1) Accept your body's genetic predisposition. All bodies are wired to be fatter, thinner, or in between. That includes fatter in some places and thinner in others. Regardless of efforts to change it, your body will fight to maintain or resume the shape it was born to be. You may force your body into sizes and shapes that you prefer, but you can't beat mother nature without a tremendous cost.
- 2) Understand that all bodies develop and change developmentally in ways that are simply not in your control through healthy means: You may have some influence over changes of puberty, pregnancy and lactation, menopause, and aging by making healthy lifestyle choices, but you will not "control" these changes, no matter how much you try.
- 3) Never "diet." Hunger is an internally regulated drive and demands to be satisfied. If you limit the food needed to satiate hunger completely, it will backfire, triggering preoccupation with food and ultimately an overeating or compulsive eating response. "Dieters" who go off their diets only to binge are not "weak willed." They are warm blooded individuals whose built-in starvation response has kicked in - both physically and psychologically, going after what has been restricted. Scientific evidence has been available on this since the early 1950's, but most people are not aware of the biologically predictable (negative) results of "dieting."

Then focus your attention and energy on what you *can* do to achieve success and feel good about yourself:

- 4) Satisfy hunger completely with plenty of wholesome, nutrient rich foods chosen from the core of the food pyramid - *eat well!*
- 5) Limit sedentary entertainment. Move aerobically, if possible, on a regular basis. Just about everyone, regardless of size, can and should develop a reasonable level of fitness.
- 6) Understand that if you eat well and maintain an active lifestyle over time, your best, natural weight will be revealed. Set a goal to eat well and be active. Don't be swayed by whether or not this makes you thin. Healthy, well fed, active bodies are diverse in size and shape, from fat to thin and everything in between. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise, not even your doctor, who may be as caught in unhealthy cultural myths about weight as you were.
- 7) Choose role models that reflect a realistic standard against which you can feel good about yourself. If the "Ugly Duckling" had continued to compare herself to the ducks she'd *still* be miserable, no matter how beautifully she developed.
- 8) Maintain your integrity as a human being. In spite of advertisements seducing you to believe that "image is everything," NEVER forget that how you look is only one part of who you are. Develop your sense of identity based on all the many things you can do and the person that you are deep inside.
- 9) Become media savvy. Educate yourself about the hidden power of advertisements. Advertisers spend tons of money on strategies specifically designed to make you feel there is something wrong with you. Why? Would you buy their products if you didn't feel deficient in some way? Don't be "sold" this bill of goods.
- 10) Encourage your friends and co-workers to join you in developing a healthy, realistic body image. Use the collective energy your group would have spent on hating your bodies to make the world a better place.