



Stop The Fat Talk

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Women tell me all the time how much they hate their bodies. One woman said to me, “If I can’t stand to look at this,” she waved her hand over her stomach, “then how can I expect a guy to want to be with me?” I once treated a 13 year old girl who was more than one hundred pounds overweight. I’ll never forget the time she poignantly told me, “Bad things don’t happen to big girls.”

At my weekly barre class, the blonde woman standing next to me turned away from the mirror, making a face. “I’m so fat and gross,” she said in disgust. “I can’t stand looking at myself.” Her friend said, “You look great. I’m the size of a planet.” Both women were attractive, yet made themselves seem repulsive. Criticizing and ridiculing your appearance (or anyone else’s) is a type of verbal bullying called body shaming. Not only is body shaming bad for your self-esteem, it can negatively affect your waistline. When you make negative comments about your body, you may feel depressed, hopeless, or frustrated. If you eat for comfort, body shaming can actually make you gain weight, especially if you turn to food just to get away from your own mean voice. Losing weight takes time, but you can drop the fat talk in no time, using these four principles:

#1 Turn Your Inner “Mean Girl” Into A Bestie

“If you talked to your friends the way you talk to your body, you’d have no friends left.” A brilliant quote by body image expert Marcia Hutchinson. Example, my patient Cheryl ordered pasta and then regretted it. “I shouldn’t be eating carbs,” she said. “What’s wrong with me? I can’t stand myself.” I asked her to imagine a friend getting upset about eating carbs. Would she say, “What’s wrong with you? I can’t stand you.” Cheryl was horrified. “I’d never say that it’s mean.” Yet she had no problem being mean to herself. The next time you criticize yourself for what you eat or weigh, think about what you’d say to someone in a similar situation. In Cheryl’s case it was, “Ordering pasta is not a crime. You won’t gain weight from one meal. You’ll do better tomorrow.” When Cheryl turned her inner critic into a friend, she lost weight and kept it off. If you wouldn’t say something to a person you care about, don’t say it to yourself.

#2 Practice Self-Acceptance

You aren’t fat, you have fat. You also have finger-

nails. You are not fingernails. When it comes to “self acceptance” what “self” do you think of first? The one in the mirror? You are more than a number and a size. Consider what you like about your mind as well as your body: your humor, intelligence, warmth and more. Identify and, embrace those qualities; they are what make you the unique, likable, and lovable person you are. When you stop being at war with your body and start accepting your whole self, it’s easier to make healthy choices.

#3 What Is Weighing On You?

What you’re eating isn’t the problem, it’s what’s eating “at” you. What would you be thinking about if you weren’t thinking negatively about your body. What would be on your mind?

- Job security
- Finding the right partner
- Relationship concerns
- Family issues
- Parenting problems

Body shaming distracts from what’s worrying you. Instead, of focusing on what you weigh, attend to what is weighing on you.

#4 Break Up With The Scale

You cannot measure your value on a bathroom scale. Think to the last time stepping on the scale ruined your entire day. No piece of metal and plastic should have that much power over your life. Our weight naturally fluctuates, so don’t let your self-esteem fluctuate with your weight. Get rid of that scale for good. Throw it out. Better yet, smash it with a hammer before you toss it in the trash (this can be very satisfying). You’ll be amazed how much freer and better you feel when you stop weighing yourself. Hating your body does not lead to changing your body. The key to permanent weight loss is change your mind-set. These strategies will help you spend less time counting calories, fat grams, and carbs and more time living the life you love. ■

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