

My Body, My Food, My Way

Quick Tips To Fit Into The Body You Were Born With

By Laura Cipullo, RD, CDE, CEDRD / June 27, 2012



One of the best parts about being a registered dietitian is hearing my clients' success stories and knowing that they were able to change their lives using a non-diet approach to their health.

Just yesterday, a client wrote to tell me her thoughts on one session we had, during which I educated her on the concept of "intuitive Eating." No longer does this client use a scale, and she

feels better than ever. She described the result like that of Harry Potter—magical.

Another client texted me two weeks ago to tell me that she never thought she could be a certain size by eating all foods, especially having recovered from an eating disorder. If ever there were proof that diets don't work, this is it. It is far more important to feed yourself with love and confidence, and to view food as fuel. This is the most helpful and liberating approach to creating personal balance and ideal health. In other words, rather than wondering day after day how to fit into a pair of skinny jeans from the 90's, ask yourself, "How can I accept and love the jeans I am wearing?"

Teenagers are among the most obvious victims of mixed messages, perhaps while watching mom try on clothing in front of the mirror or their best friends in the fitting room. There's also the fact that teens are exposed to myriad magazines, with homogenous photos and captions that define beauty in a single, often unattainable way. The avenues for comparing oneself to friends, family and even complete strangers are many and varied, and when combined, their comprehensive effect can be truly detrimental to their psyche.

As a registered dietitian, I like to emphasize the fact that everyone grows at a different rate based on different emotional and nutritional needs. Our genetics and our

environment affect our bodies, and while we can perhaps change our surroundings, we cannot—and should not try to—change our DNA.

Instead of longing for a body that is not genetically possible, look in the mirror and see yourself as a whole. You are not pieces or body parts; rather you are a beautiful young woman.

Start by saying, “I am okay. I am enough.” Then identify one or two things you like about yourself. Perhaps it is the shape of your ears or the color of your eyes. Whatever it is, simply give yourself credit and recognize that your body is ever-changing and possesses nutritional needs that may be different than that of your friends—let alone different than they were last year.

Next, think about all of your internal qualities. Perhaps you are funny, sensitive and shy. Maybe you are the life of the party in your small group of friends. Or maybe, you have just a few good friends, but they value you because you are sensitive and listen when they need your support. What does this mean in terms of self-worth? This will differ from one person to the next. Translate it. Recognize that you are worthy.

When it comes to maintaining a balanced and nutritious lifestyle, consider the concept of thinking inside your body rather than listening to the outside. While the idea sounds strange, the act is quite straightforward; all you have to do is identify when your body wants to eat and why.

There are three types of hunger: physical, emotional and behavioral. Are you eating because you feel physically hungry and need to fuel yourself? Or are you bored while doing your homework and just noshing to pass the time? The goal is, whenever possible, to eat for physical reasons only. Of course, it is okay to sometimes eat for emotional or behavioral reasons too, however, if you find yourself eating for this reason often, consider talking to your parent, your school counselor or a therapist.

Eating for physical reasons is easier than you think. Try:

- Eating regularly, meaning every 3 to 4 hours.
- Balancing each meal. Be sure to include the 3 macronutrients—carbohydrates, proteins and fats—in some form during breakfast, lunch and dinner. A mixed meal may consist of whole-wheat pasta with salmon and olives (a carbohydrate, protein and fat).
- Incorporating at least 2 of the 3 macronutrients when snacking. This might be an apple with hummus (a carbohydrate and fat) or crackers with cheese (a carbohydrate and protein).
- Not to deny yourself. If you want a cookie, just have it rather than trying to eat diet foods or 10 little things that probably will not satisfy you. In the end, you just end up eating the cookie anyway, so give yourself permission now and move on with it.

Following these parameters and consuming this combination of food regularly is important for a number of reasons. For one, it helps to keep your energy and mood stable throughout the day. In addition, by never allowing yourself to feel as though you are starving, you also prevent yourself from bingeing or eating until your belly hurts.

Getting yourself to the point of intuitive eating, when you eat for physical reasons naturally takes time. Approach eating with a mindset of body acceptance, and in time you will thank yourself. Work with the body you were born with, accept whatever you can, and feed your body appropriately. Doing so will actually keep your metabolism efficient, your energy high and your body in tune. This type of self-care will allow you to be your best through adolescence and adulthood!