

# Self-Loathing to Self-Loving

*Be happy with your self!*

**Arlene K Unger, PhD**

Clinical Psychologist (PSY)  
Cert. Wellness Coach  
Cert. Nutritionist  
The Center for Empowerment  
Dana Point, CA 92629

**Being happy in our own being and body is more about self-acceptance, self-love and having a positive body image** than it is about crash dieting, obsessive worry and excessive exercise. Having a positive body image comes from self-love. Changing the way we view or imagine ourselves is possible when we move toward opportunities to nurture ourselves and away from our daily excuses. Although it is commendable to maintain a healthy diet and regular workouts, unconditional love is what makes us feel at home with ourselves regardless of where we are in life. Self-love is essentially self-acceptance that has been acquired through persistent, self-loving attention.

Total self-love can be achieved but, as soon as we lose a job, gain weight or go through a break up, self-doubt creeps in. In life things can and do go wrong without notice. Thinking of things that go wrong as healthy challenges instead of attacks on our dream to be perfect can mitigate self-doubt. When we are not comfortable with ourselves we are forced to rely on others to reaffirm our attractiveness, potency and "loveable-ness".

Self-doubt can lead to us being hyper-focused on a body part that has gotten out of shape, thus feeling flawed. Instead of being obsessed with our physical desirability we need to **redirect that attention to the risks of aging, poor diet habits and too little exercise**. Most of us have struggled with our body image from one time or another. Being open to life's repeated lessons and learning to love ourselves without any exceptions are the fundamentals of self-acceptance.

Often we elect to be around people who adore us, but **a dose of reality and gentle criticism can help heal an ailing self-image**. The truth is that what we see in movies or in glamour magazines is not what we typically see in the mirror. Most of us will never be a perfect size 3 or 4 regardless of what we did in the gym or what extreme measures we take.

**Even if we are not the perfect size, we can still achieve perfection in our attitude and body image. The key is to praise ourselves for what we are doing to change unhealthy habits into healthy ones. When we begin to embrace a loveable image of ourselves regardless of our size our journey of self-nurturance begins.**

To help support a mind, body and spirit connection, try the self-nurturing steps below. They are designed to help you find your ideal body image and lovingly accept yourself for who you really are.

## **Self Nurturing**

### **Eating Wisely**

- ✓ Start with a healthy breakfast
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids
- ✓ Fortify yourself with lots of veggies, fresh fruit and whole grains
- ✓ Limit salt, sugar and fat intake
- ✓ Stop fad dieting
- ✓ Watch your portions and read food labels
- ✓ Eat outside of the red zone before 9PM and after 6AM

### **Exercise Regularly**

- ✓ Try Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates or any other organized program
- ✓ Join a local gym
- ✓ Cross-train with a coach
- ✓ Enroll a fun cardio class
- ✓ Power walk with a friend
- ✓ Walk up and down the stairs if that's all you can handle

### **Enlighten Your Spirit**

- ✓ Journal
- ✓ Garden and weed
- ✓ Meditate
- ✓ Stretch
- ✓ Hike and take nature walks
- ✓ Expand-Your-Mind at the library, museum, concert, etc.
- ✓ Learn something new
- ✓ Attend lectures
- ✓ Enroll in a class or workshop
- ✓ Read a new book

### **Seek Emotional Well Being**

- ✓ Join a support group
- ✓ Volunteer
- ✓ Find a hobby
- ✓ Be creative
- ✓ Make a decision you've been putting off

### **Accept & Love Yourself**

- ✓ Schedule routine medical appointments
- ✓ Pamper yourself with a spa treatment
- ✓ Look in the mirror and smile
- ✓ Accept no more excuses