

Body Neutrality vs. Body Positivity

What others think of you doesn't matter because it doesn't change you. What you believe of yourself matters because it defines you.

-Anonymous

Body image is an increasingly hot topic in the United States. Based on research 70+ percent of women and 40+ percent of men are unhappy with their bodies. Dissatisfaction of our bodies can be reinforced through social media, family and peer comments, magazines, doctors, and a societal push for body perfection.

Body positivity was developed to counter the negative messages and constant body talk in society. Body positivity is the idea that we learn to love our bodies, and everyone deserves to have a positive body image. While many good things have come out of body positivity such as challenging our views on what a body should look like and empowering women to accept their bodies, it also is a seemingly unattainable task. Body positivity while meaning well still has us body talking, objectifying our bodies, and judging our bodies. The idea of “love your body” is not attainable every moment of every day.

As a person who has experienced body dysmorphia, body positivity felt insincere. The concept of manipulating my thoughts around a certain body part and making them positive, seemed difficult. I found that I ended up in front of the mirror still critiquing my body, spending a lot of time thinking about rewording my thoughts and accepting my body. Body Neutrality has given me much more freedom and success in accepting my body.

Body neutrality can be a more helpful way of viewing our bodies. The idea behind body neutrality is finding peace with our body and gratitude with what our body does for us. It allows us to focus on the activities and functions that are possible *because* of our body. We focus on our self-worth vs. worth based on what we see in the mirror. Body neutrality can be more attainable and less subjective.

The practice of body neutrality is taking a body part that you may not be happy with and ask, what does this body part allow me to do in life? If it is your thighs, you might say they allow you to walk, hike by the river, swim, snorkel, walk on the beach, paddle board, etc. You would think of the activities that you love doing and realize that your thighs allow you the freedom to participate in these activities. You focus more on what brings you joy and purpose and not on your body part.

Who we are as a person and how we live our life is more important than what we see in the mirror!!



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