

Body Image

Learning to Love Who We Are

The statistics are alarming. The majority of U.S. women--some estimate more than 80 percent--are unhappy with their appearance. At least 10 million young women, and 1 million young men have an eating disorder. Girls as young as 6 and 7 are expressing disapproval of their looks, and most fourth-grade girls are already diet veterans. Most unsettling is the fact that more women, and girls, fear becoming fat than they do dying.

Combating the Images

How do you see yourself? Are you content with the person looking back at you from the mirror each morning or do you frown in frustration?

magazine covers, others are trying to teach young girls to love their bodies, beautiful imperfections and all. One way to combat the Hollywood hype and to create an appreciation for the bodies we have is through hands-on massage and bodywork.

Why Massage Affects Body Perception

Being unhappy with our bodies has serious, and sometimes lifelong, ramifications. Feelings of unworthiness and self-loathing can set up a lifetime of self-deprecating behaviors. What regularly scheduled massage allows us to do is "get back" into our bodies and reconnect with ourselves. Massage can

*To be able to
fill leisure
intelligently is
the last product
of civilization.*

-Arnold Toynbee



Massage can help restore feelings of self-worth and nurturing--key for body image issues.

Unfortunately, many of us are unhappy with the person looking back. Whether it's lamenting about having a pear-shaped figure instead of an hourglass, or exhibiting more serious, self-hating body dysmorphic disorders, body image is under siege in our celebrity-fixated society. While Madison Avenue continues to airbrush photos of svelte, 120-pound supermodels for

help us release physical and mental patterns of tension, enhancing our ability to experience our bodies (regardless of their shape and size) in a more positive way. Just as it facilitates our ability to relax, massage also encourages an awareness of the body, often allowing us to more clearly see and

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identify destructive behaviors, including overeating or purging.

Massage also creates a sense of nurturing that is especially powerful when it comes to poor body image. Accepting the nonjudgmental touch of a trained therapist goes a long way toward rebuilding an appreciation and respect for your own body. If we find acceptance for who we are and how we look, we are giving ourselves permission to live comfortably in the skin we have.

The Value of Massage

Research shows that touch is a powerful ally in the quest for physical and mental health. Not only does it help us be more in tune with our bodies, it can also help restore a sense of "wholeness" that is often lost in our segmented, overscheduled lives. When we regain that connection, it's much easier to remember that our bodies are something to be cherished, nurtured, and loved, not belittled, betrayed, and forgotten.

Valuable for every age and every body type, massage and bodywork have innumerable benefits. Here are a few:

- Alleviates low-back pain and improves range of motion.
- Decreases medication dependence.
- Eases anxiety and depression.
- Enhances immunity by stimulating lymph flow.
- Exercises and stretches weak, tight, or atrophied muscles.
- Increases joint flexibility.
- Improves circulation by pumping oxygen and nutrients into tissues and vital organs.
- Releases endorphins--the body's natural painkiller.

Every Shape and Size

Whether a client weighs 30 pounds or 300 pounds, massage and bodywork therapists are trained to appreciate all bodies, without judgment, and to deliver the best care possible. As in any session, a therapist's goal is to create an environment that feels safe and nurturing for clients, all while delivering much needed therapeutic touch. For heavier clients, some minor adjustments might be needed in the delivery of the bodywork, but its nurturing, therapeutic, nonjudgmental role will remain unchanged.

Through the Scars

We also have to remember that a negative body image is not necessarily about those few extra pounds on the hips. It might instead be tied to the scars of past injuries and surgeries. Massage can help here, too. For burn victims, research has shown massage can help in the healing process, while for postsurgery breast cancer patients, massage and bodywork can reintegrate a battered body and spirit. In addition to softening scar tissue and speeding postsurgery recovery, massage and bodywork for these clients is about respect, reverence, and learning to look at, and beyond, the scars.

Finding the Stillness

Experts say that when the tissues start to let go and relax under a massage therapist's hands, profound shifts occur emotionally and physically. A softening happens, and the brain and body begin

to integrate again. The chasm between body and mind that created the eating disorder, or fueled the negative body image, begins to narrow. In her book, "Molecules of Emotion," Georgetown University Medical School professor Candace Pert explains that the body is the "actual outward manifestation, in physical space, of the mind." She says that if we generate negative energy in response to our appearance, it can eventually find its way into reality.

Self-acceptance, then, is paramount for living well, and massage/bodywork is a healthy path to get you there. Finding the stillness in a massage session allows you to just "be," without judgment. Partner that with the comfort that comes from allowing your body to be nurtured by someone else, and we begin to remember our value, regardless of our outward appearance, or what we perceive it to be.



Cultivating a positive sense of self, from the inside out, contributes to a life well lived.

Prevent the Afternoon Slump

Some Tips for P.M. Energy

Jerry V. Teplitz

If you're like most people, you've experienced the afternoon slump. You know the feeling -- it's only 2 p.m., yet you feel drained. Fortunately, you can employ methods to reduce the slump's frequency and shorten its duration.

DRINK WATER.

Your body uses water even if you're not exercising. If you wait until you feel thirsty, you're already dehydrated. Keep a water bottle handy all day.

AVOID SUGAR AND SIMPLE CARBOHYDRATES.

While a mid-afternoon candy bar may give you a quick rush, it actually worsens the slump. Instead, choose protein-rich foods and complex carbs.

EAT SMALL MEALS.

Have six small meals over the course of the day instead of three large ones. Big meals cause the digestive process to divert blood from your brain to use in the digestive track.

EVALUATE YOUR LIGHTING.

Most offices are lit with cool, white fluorescent tubes, which have a terrible effect on how people feel and function at work. A better option is full-spectrum, fluorescent tubes.

TAKE TIME FOR WALKS.

Walking gets your blood circulating, helps you breathe better, and stimulates your brain due to the increased blood flow. Take a 5- or 10-minute walk during the day.

MEDITATE.

Meditation is great for rejuvenating your body. By meditating for 15 to 20 minutes twice a day, you're keeping your body continually energized and rested.

TAKE TIME TO BREATHE AND STRETCH.

Deep breathing exercises give you an energy boost. Also, stand up and stretch to increase blood flow and stimulate the lymphatic system.

HANDLE NEGATIVITY.

Negative people and images can have a

draining effect on your energy. Make a conscious effort to stay positive.



Avoid the drain office settings can bring on.

Rhamnose

All sugars are not created equal

Shelley Burns

Sugar is often at the center of a lot of negative press. It is not uncommon to hear news of its detrimental effects each week--childhood obesity, diabetes, and behavioral disorders, to name a few. We even talk about the negative effects of sugar in the world of skin care, as it is known to cause glycation, a metabolic process that weakens the collagen and elastin responsible for plumping up our skin, leading to wrinkles and premature aging.

Not all sugar is created equally, however. In fact, one form of sugar--rhamnose--has intriguing skin benefits.

Rhamnose is a sugar derived from the cat's claw plant (*Uncaria tomentosa*). Scientific studies have shown that topical application of rhamnose stimulates

collagen production and thickens the epidermis, both in lab tests and in human trials. Rhamnose also has soothing and anti-inflammatory properties as an added bonus--fascinating, and certainly counterintuitive to everything else we know about sugar.

Rhamnose does not act at all like sucrose (ordinary table sugar) in the body. Sucrose is one of the so-called "fast sugars," along with dextrose, glucose, fructose, maltodextrin, and products made from them, such as corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, and invert syrup. All of these fast sugars contribute to a higher incidence of obesity and diabetes. Instead, rhamnose can play a role in ensuring proper cell and metabolic functions in the body--most importantly, allowing for regeneration

of the skin. Recently, skin care companies have taken rhamnose to the next level by including it in antiaging skin care products.

In addition to rhamnose, cat's claw has other immune-stimulating properties. It is used to treat arthritis and irritable bowel syndrome, and may also inhibit tumor cell formation. Pregnant women should avoid using cat's claw, though, as it can increase the risk of miscarriage.

Shelley Burns, a doctor of naturopathic medicine, completed studies at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, and has certification in complementary and integrative medicine from Harvard University.

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.

-Thomas A. Edison

Spring is here and reminds us change is really the only consistent thing in life. Get outside and enjoy some fresh air and move. Cultures where people move have long been known to enjoy better quality of life than those cultures where populations are sedentary. It has long been documented that massage is not just a luxury item, but has tremendous benefits for day to day living. Please contact the office or book your appointment online now on the Hours and Scheduling tab of our website: <http://motusmassagetherapy.com>, or book on our facebook page at www.facebook.com/motusmassagetherapy. Like our page while you're there and get \$10 off your next session. Thanks in advance and make this a great day because they don't happen by accident!

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