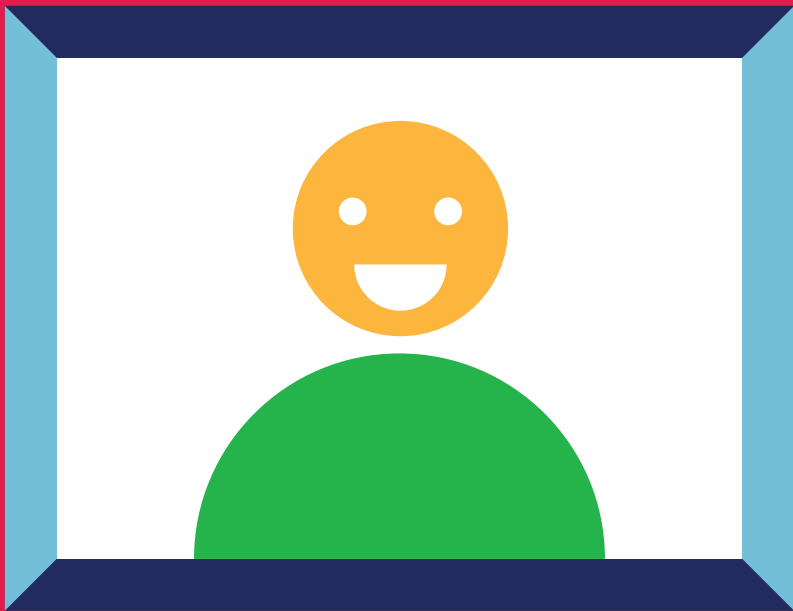


# Your Body: The Whole Picture



Our body image is the picture we all hold of ourselves in our own mind. Sometimes our body image can make us feel self-conscious and unhappy about how we look and appear, especially in front of other people.

Body image is something that's built up from a young age, layer by layer through our own personal experiences which may include bullying, criticism or feeling different to other people. Airbrushed images that fill our TV screens and magazines can all add to feelings of unhappiness.

Think about the people and situations that might have had an affect on your body image, both recently and right back to your childhood. Confronting these experiences can help you to learn more about yourself and take positive steps forward.

Any negativity around our body image is likely to have an impact on other areas of our life, including successful weight loss. We may begin to feel unable to enjoy certain activities including those that might help us to lose weight such as walking, jogging or swimming. Building relationships might be another area that is difficult to enjoy, especially when it comes to sex and intimacy, due to the fear of being criticised or judged.

Take a minute to think about some of the situations and opportunities you might be missing out on because of your body image. Being more aware of these situations can help you begin to change your habits and make the most of new opportunities.

## Moving Forward

It may take some time to see a change, but there are many ways that we can begin to shift the way we see our body and to feel more comfortable and content in our own skin.

An important part of your weight loss journey will be gaining confidence and feeling comfortable with looking at your body and weighing yourself. Although avoiding these situations might make life easier in the short-term, in the long-term you'll never get the chance to confront and dispel your fears which will end up making these feelings even more difficult to shake off. To make your weight loss journey a success try to be realistic about how much weight you want to lose and remember to take it one step at a time and be proud of each move you make in the right direction. By taking this approach you will increase your feelings of satisfaction and help build your motivation to keep going.

## New Thinking

Changing your thoughts and mind habits is one of the biggest challenges you can overcome on your weight loss journey. When negative thoughts have been repeated enough times you can convince yourself that they are 100% true, but this is often your mind playing tricks on you.

Using positive thinking and noticing all of the good things about your body, you can begin to break the pattern of negative body image and begin to see yourself in a new way. Here are just a few examples to get you thinking:

### Negative



*"There's no point buying any new clothes because I will look terrible in them."*

*"No-one will ever find me attractive because I am overweight."*

*"Only slim people are happy and successful."*

### Positive



*"I can buy something that will make my best features stand out and no-one will notice the bits that I don't like."*

*"People can be attracted to others whatever their weight and anyway, the kind of people that I'd like to get to know won't judge me just on how I look, and my personality is just as important as what's on the outside."*

*"My happiness is in my hands and I'm thankful for all the things that my body allows me to do."*

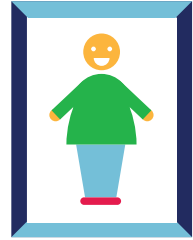
Can you think about some of your beliefs and how you could turn them into something positive and motivating? Remember the compliments you've received from others to get you started and think about something positive every day.

## The Whole Picture

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Look at your whole body rather than just the parts you really dislike to get a more balanced view of how others see you and how your body works as one.

To help you feel more positive take a few moments to focus on your breathing and feel your body working and recognise all of the positive things that it does for you each day.



## Be You

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Although it may be challenging, try not to compare yourself to other people and the images that you see in the wider media. Most often the people around you won't be anywhere near as critical as you are of yourself so remember this when you're out in public or socialising.

It's also good to remember that your body is only one part of your identity and, just like you do to others, people will be noticing your personality and your values as well as your body shape.

## Take a Chance

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Putting yourself out there into situations that take you out of your comfort zone will often make you realise that your fear was nothing to worry about in the first place.

You can ease yourself into this by taking small steps towards your goal and remember that you and your body deserve to have fun and be treated well!

