

Mirror, mirror on the wall, will you be my friend?

I was at a baby shower this weekend when one woman protested against having her picture taken. When her friends insisted that she join the photo, she resigned “I don’t like pictures anymore, I gained weight and my face is fat.” The room full of 30something women sighed in unison and responded on cue: “That’s not true.”

So many women struggle with poor body image and low self-esteem today. Their self-deprecating comments demand sympathetic compliments and weak protests from friends and family. But, it’s no use because our compliments fall to deaf ears. “Our” negative thoughts become “our” reality.

Unfortunately, this is not just a 30-something problem. Young girls face enormous pressures from school, magazines, and television to be thin. It is easy for them to believe that their appearance is more important than their talents and abilities.

Parents, teachers and caregivers all play an important role in building a child’s self-confidence around their abilities, rather than focusing on their appearance. Most importantly, children learn by example, so we must walk the talk and role model multi dimensional living - relationships, purpose, and health.

How is your body image? Are you friends with your mirror? When you see your reflection, do you inspect your “problem” areas that you would like to trim, tone, lift and make disappear altogether? When someone pays you a compliment, do you believe that it is true? Or, do you believe that store windows are a cruel joke made to enlarge your rump as you walk by? If so, we can all take a lesson from Tyra and Kirstie.

Tyra Banks and Kirstie Alley recently made public appearances in their bathing suits and exuded self-confidence in their curvy figures. I applaud these women for being role models to others, who would like the freedom to feel sexy in their size 14 jeans. They have taken the first step to building a strong body image by stopping the negative self-talk. After all, the stories we tell ourselves eventually become our lives. Here are some tips to get you started in believing in yourself:

- When you look in the mirror, think of something that you like about your body and then walk away. Do not dwell in front of the mirror.
- Keep a compliment list. Every time someone gives you a compliment, write it on your list. When you are having a bad day, read the compliments.
- Change your attitude. Do not talk about being fat or making changes to your body.
- Do not try another diet. Focus on active living and normal eating.
- Do not weigh yourself every day.
- Your friends are a powerful influence. Keep company with friends who have good self-esteem and are respectful of others.

It is a challenging process to change how you think, but positive thoughts will foster positive feelings. As you become less critical of your own body, your self-confidence will bring a bounce back into your step. We owe it to ourselves and to our happiness, to make friends with our mirror.

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