

Live Well Be Well

Let's Talk Loving Your Body

Introduction

Welcome to Live Well, Be Well! A podcast where we speak candidly about all things health and well-being! My name is Christine Glissmann and I'm a Health Educator in Health Promotion Services here at UC San Diego.

On this episode of Live Well Be Well, we'll be discussing body composition, body fat, and body positivity. All the bodies today.

So we hope you get inspired, we hope you feel connected, and we hope you discover new ways to live your best life. Let's get started!

My educational background is Exercise Physiology and Nutrition, so I have worked with clients in a lot of different settings and services- from Health or Wellness Coaching, personal training, body composition analysis, etc. Regardless of the service, a significant amount of time is spent unlearning. Unlearning all those things that the media, the fitness industry, diet culture, and doctors have perpetuated. In my undergrad, I learned the rules about health and our bodies. In graduate school, I learned all the exceptions, which are actually more common place than the "rules". I wish you could see me right now because I'm doing all the air quotes.

So, today, I'm going to talk about some of the things I had to unlearn and how you can reframe your reality to help produce your desired future.

I want to first say that there is nothing wrong with wanting to look better, however there is a point when "wanting always interrupts being". I don't know the author to that, but they nailed it. What that means to me is that the constant desire to look, feel, or be different robs us of the joy and love we could find in this moment. In this body.

Accepting you as you are, your body as it is- is not synonymous with giving up. A positive body image is not linked to disengagement in healthful movement or eating patterns, or a reduction in self-care. In fact, research demonstrates that a positive body image may actually increase participation in health related behaviors. So, loving and accepting yourself now might actually help you meet your desired body goals. Before

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we get into if weight loss should even be a consideration, let's define body acceptance and love.

One conceptualization from the research is as follows, "An overarching love and respect for the body that allows individuals to (a) appreciate the unique beauty of their body and the functions that it performs for them; (b) accept and even admire their body, including those aspects that are inconsistent with idealized images;(c) feel beautiful, comfortable, confident, and happy with their body, which is often reflected as an outer radiance, or a "glow;" (d) emphasize their body's assets rather than dwell on their imperfections; and (f) interpret incoming information in a body-protective manner whereby most positive information is internalized and most negative information is rejected or reframed. (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010, p. 112)"

Notice that nowhere in that definition did you hear that you need to be completely satisfied with all aspects of your body. It is ok to have goals related to changing how our body looks, however and there is always a however, are you making those goals because you want to become a more healthful, glowing version of yourself or because you don't like what you see? Because the latter has huge implications for both our physical and mental health.

Before we dive deeper into what needs to be reframed, let's talk some science. First, discussing the concept of an ideal weight. An ideal weight does not come from a standardized weight chart. Let me explain why. Growing up our parents/guardians and us became very familiar with standard growth charts when visiting the doctor's office. These growth charts would project the growth of healthy children in optimal conditions and were meant to be used as a reference to determine if the child was undernourished or to help screen for potentially inadequate growth that might be indicative of adverse health conditions. Again, these charts were meant to be a reference, however somehow down the line they became the standards. What this perpetuates is the idea that there is one ideal for that age, which starts the cycle of othering body types and shapes that do not fit this ideal- often times labeled as unhealthy. This just isn't true. Each person does have an ideal or set point range, but it is individualized and not meant to be a comparison to others. The ideal or set point range changes throughout the lifespan and is determined by genetics and current lifestyle. Most people won't know the exact ideal weight range- however one can assume you are at your ideal weight when you are not trying to do anything to control your weight. Essentially, your weight is relatively stable. We can obviously have a decent amount of fat on us and be stable weight wise and that would be your set point that is reflective of your current lifestyle. Your ideal weight would be a stable weight when participating in

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the recommended nutrition and fitness guidelines such as eating a relatively low-fat (less than or equal to 20% of total daily calories) diet, consuming a fiber-rich diet abundant in fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and being physically active. This range is going to be different for everyone and is not indicative of health differences between people. All shapes and sizes can be healthy. Health is more related to lifestyle than our body composition. In fact, there is no established criterion for percent body fat and health risk.

Now, the research does characterize between “**good” fat versus “bad fat” aka subcutaneous and visceral fat (which lines the internal organs).** Genetics plays a factor in fat accumulation, but again the lifestyle is going to play the largest role and obviously be the most controllable. If you want to increase your visceral body fat do these things: do not be physically active, consume a diet high in particularly saturated fat, refined sugar (so man made substances) a diet low in fiber, the consumption of a lot of alcohol, smoke or vape, and subject yourself to as much stress as possible without any attempt at reducing it. THAT is the way to increase your visceral body fat and to have a large impact on your health, both mental and physical. If you want to become more healthy or sustain health then do the opposite of those things.

Cash, Santos, and Williams (2005) coined and studied positive rational acceptance, which entails engaging in adaptive mental and behavioral activities, such as positive self-care and rational self-talk, that reflect the acceptance of body image-related threats. Examples of threats to body image include being teased about weight, seeing advertisements containing dieting messages and/or models who conform to media appearance ideals, being told to go on a diet, conversing with someone who begins to engage in body talk, being weighed at the doctor’s office, and realizing an article of clothing has become tighter in the waistband. During body imagerelated threats, individuals high in positive rational acceptance may remind themselves of their good qualities and tell themselves that the situation will pass or may not be that important.

positive body image to include self-worth and appreciation for the functionality and diverse appearances of the body (

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Closing

So that concludes this episode of Live Well Be Well! If you like what you heard and would like to learn more about topics related to health and well-being, there's much more to come! Be sure to check out our website hps.ucsd.edu and follow us on Instagram and Facebook under @UCSDHPS. Stay tuned for our next episode of Live Well, Be Well.

Until next time, be kind, be true, be you. And remember, to be well is to live well.

General notes and guidelines:

- The easiest way to record group episodes is through Zoom; solo episodes can be through programs like Garageband, Voice Memos, etc.
- The episode should be around 10-12 minutes in length
- Be sure to develop and finalize your script in this Google Doc - this document will serve as a transcript for your episode.
- If you make any mistakes when recording, NO WORRIES! Just let us know in the audio that it needs to be edited out “please edit that last section out - re-recording that section now” (or something along those lines).
- **Once you have recorded your episode, please send your audio to Renee, Christopher, and Bria (rdellacqua@ucsd.edu, cspurling@health.ucsd.edu, bhamlet@health.ucsd.edu). We will insert the opening and closing music, make any edits as needed, and schedule its release date.**
- Have fun with this! When you have fun and enjoy what you're saying, it'll radiate through your voice!