

3 ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR LOVING THE SKIN YOU'RE IN!

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INTRODUCTION

“The Body Positive taught me that loving my body could transform my life. Nothing has ever been so true! I can’t control everything that happens to me. What I can control, however, is how I feel about myself.”

—JESSICA DIAZ, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Imagine living in a world where people possess genuine self-love and are free to experience their own authentic beauty—a world where a compassionate, forgiving voice is consistently brought forth to counteract self-criticism, where having an appetite for life is both honored and valued. This is the world of The Body Positive. It is more than the name of a nonprofit organization; it is a state of mind and a growing cultural movement. The Body Positive offers people of all ages, sizes, sexual orientations, genders, ethnicities, abilities, and socioeconomic levels the opportunity to put down the burdens of judgment, comparison, and shame in order to cultivate a relationship with themselves that is built on a foundation of self-love and trust.

You might have been told that something is “wrong” with your body.

You might be caught up in the on again/off again cycle of dieting to “fix” your body because someone said that weight loss is the only way to achieve health and happiness.

You might think you're "weak" and don't have enough will power to "control" your body.

Perhaps you have been told that you can't be healthy unless you are thin.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

I was there.

I spent ten years of my young life at war with my body. My downward spiral started in my early teen years with the simple desire to lose weight because that was what all of my friends were doing. They innocently began dieting because they thought something was "wrong" with their bodies due to cultural and familial messages. Being younger than my peers, I was easily influenced by the actions of others. One day a friend suggested I purge my food. This action caused my dieting behaviors to quickly progress to a life-threatening eating disorder.

At the age of nineteen, my eating disorder forced me to drop out of college, dashing my plans to become a computer engineer. Thankfully, I overcame bulimia and eventually graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology. My sister Stephanie was not so lucky. Her obsession with thinness led to her death in her mid-thirties, leaving two young children without a mother and our family shattered and grieving. Stephanie's nightmare began in her late teens when she escalated her dieting behaviors by joining a popular commercial weight loss program. She underwent the typical weight loss/weight regain

cycle experienced by most dieters, and, not surprisingly, developed bulimia. Though we did not begin our eating disorders together, we soon bonded over our self-loathing.

My daughter, Carmen, was a toddler and wildly in love with her body when her aunt died. My fierce desire to protect Carmen and honor Stephanie's life led me to create The Body Positive, a nonprofit organization that gives people who are ready, the opportunity and resources to overcome conflicts with their bodies to lead happier, more productive lives.

I feel blessed to have participated in the lives of the many thousands of courageous people who have chosen to defy status quo by making peace with their bodies and taking ownership of their lives. I am grateful that my suffering over my own body and the pain I experienced from the loss of my sister weren't in vain. They are experiences that provided me with work I truly love and a way to make sense of what happened in my life.

I have written this eBook with the hope that it will inspire you to examine your current relationship with your body and take the steps necessary to *improve the connection you have with the amazing vessel that houses your soul*. No matter where you are on the spectrum of body acceptance/hatred, or if you are a professional or teacher who works with people who are struggling with their bodies, it is always possible (and valuable) to increase your own self-love and appreciation for your unique body.

There is no end point in this process. As humans, we are always learning and growing—if we so choose! Rather than feeling defeated by this realization, you can see it as freeing because it will allow you to let go of any desire you may have to “perfect” your body or life. The goal is to build a practice that allows you to have great love for your body just as it is in this moment—even if you desire to make changes—because it is the reason you are here on the planet. In your practice you will gather tools to work with on the days when your

critic comes to visit and you can't see your purpose or value. You will practice focusing your motivation for self-care on self-love rather than trying to turn yourself into a culturally-prescribed image of health and/or beauty.

Your body is your home. It is in your power to create a trusting and peaceful relationship with it.

This eBook introduces you to the Be Body Positive Model, which I created with my co-founder at The Body Positive, Elizabeth Scott, LCSW, CEDS-S. We developed our model to specifically address negative body image because it is the root cause of so many self-destructive behaviors. Our model allows for true success because we define success not as a static end goal of perfection, but as a way of living that offers you permission to love, forgive, care for, and take pleasure in your body throughout your lifespan.

Most of the writing and stories in this eBook come from my book, *Embody: Learning to Love Your Unique Body (and quiet that critical voice!)*. If you are moved by what you read here and would like more, I think you'll enjoy reading *Embody*, as thousands of people around the world have done since the book's release in 2014.



Here's what I hope you will take away from reading this eBook:

People's shape and size are predominantly determined by genetics. We can't change our DNA.

A balanced relationship with eating, exercise, and rest, with moderation as the driving principle, is the best way to achieve and sustain good health.

You are not a failure if you have been on restrictive diets and gained the weight back.

It IS possible to become the expert of your own body.

It IS possible to see and experience your authentic beauty and to practice self-love.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

This self-assessment is offered to get you thinking about your current relationship with your body and self-care practices and how you want this relationship to improve. While you answer the questions, keep in mind that there are no right answers.

Print out the worksheet on the next page and write down your answers before you continue reading. Or, answer them in a journal you create to be your “Body Book,” a place where you can privately and creatively explore your relationship with your body.

1. **Where do you think your feelings about your body come from? (For example: friends, family, your internal critic, your partner, media, etc.)**

2. **Do people close to you (partner, friends, colleagues, family, etc.) help you feel confident in your body, or do they make body confidence more difficult? How so?**

3. **Have you spent time on restrictive diets or exercising more than feels sustainable? If so, how have these experiences made you feel?**

4. **If you could pick one word or phrase to describe how you feel about your body, what would it be?**

5. **If you could pick one word or phrase to describe how you WANT to feel about your body, what would it be?**

THE BE BODY POSITIVE MODEL

The Be Body Positive Model is comprised of *five essential skills* or “Competencies” that promote a healthy, confident relationship to the body. When people become proficient—competent—at using these skills, they are able to care for themselves in body, mind, and spirit from a place of self-love and appreciation. The five core Competencies are:

- Reclaim Health
- Practice Intuitive Self-Care
- Cultivate Self-Love
- Declare Your Own Authentic Beauty
- Build Community

We have tested and refined the Be Body Positive Model since beginning our work in 1996, and have found our Competencies to be powerful resources that offer people the tools they need to improve physical and emotional well being. Pilot studies conducted at Stanford and Cornell Universities showed that people who participate in Be Body Positive groups experience meaningful and positive changes related to eating, body image, self-compassion, and social relationships. The participants continued to report positive improvements in all areas three months to eight months after the groups ended. Each Competency is supported by numerous independent research studies as well.



Today you'll be introduced to three of the five Competencies to help you get started in your process of exploration. I've included a short Body Positive Practice in each section. If you enjoy doing them and would like more, you'll find several practices at the end of each Competency chapter in *Embody*. You can work with the practices in the same journal where you answered the Self-Assessment questions. This is a fun way to continue your Body Book, where you can also add writing, inspirational quotes, and positive imagery, or anything else that supports your journey to loving the skin you're in.

COMPETENCY ONE: RECLAIM HEALTH

GOALS

- ✦ Uncover the messages that have influenced your relationships with your body, food, and exercise.
- ✦ Develop a weight-neutral, health-centered approach to self-care.

BENEFIT

Become the authority of your own body by sorting out facts from distorted societal myths about health, weight, and identity.

“We need to restore some sensibility to the pursuit of health. Many of us increasingly view ourselves as fragile and vulnerable, ready to develop cancer, heart disease, or some other dreaded disease at the slightest provocation. In the name of health we give up many of our enjoyments. The important point is that worrying too much about anything—be it calories, salt, cancer, or cholesterol—is bad for you, and that living optimistically, with pleasure, zest, and commitment, is good.”

—ROBERT ORNSTEIN, PHD, DAVID SOBEL, MD,
HEALTHY PLEASURES

Reclaim Health, the first Competency of the Be Body Positive Model, explores health from a weight-inclusive, pleasure-focused position, grounded in the study of human physiology. Extensive research supports the argument that measurements of physical activity and metabolic fitness, such as blood pressure, blood lipids, and blood sugar levels, are far better indicators of physical health than body size.¹ With this Competency, belief systems about health are transformed from moralistic, judgmental views of weight to a whole-person approach—based on sound evidence—that values a positive relationship with one’s body and long term, stable, self-care behaviors as primary to physical wellbeing.

You may have heard diets don’t work, but it is hard to believe if all you see in the media is an emphasis on thinness and the glorification of anyone who accomplishes this goal. Apparently, we should all be able to lose weight and keep it off with will power and self-discipline. Why, then, do most people on restrictive diets regain the pounds they lose—and often more?

The answer lies in the physiology of the human body. The body is genetically programmed to hold on to weight for evolutionary purposes associated with surviving during times of famine. In effect, the body cannot recognize the difference between a diet and a famine. When we go on a restrictive diet, our energy-regulating systems slow down in order to conserve every bit of fuel that comes in. Every calorie-restrictive diet triggers a famine response because the body senses a state of starvation. In other words, the more you diet, the easier it is to gain weight!

[1] Bacon, L., & Aphramor, Lucy. (2011, Jan. 24). Weight Science: Evaluating the Evidence For a Paradigm shift. *Nutrition Journal*. <http://www.nutritionj.com/content/10/1/9>

Through the process of reclaiming your health, you have the opportunity to become the authority—the expert—of your own body. This process begins by telling your “body story,” which means you consciously examine the messages you receive about health, weight, and identity that affect your current-day relationship with your body. Once you clearly identify the messages, you can begin to think critically about which ones work for you—and which ones don’t. If particular information is intriguing, try it out to see how it makes you feel. If you adopt a behavior that leads to better physical and/or mental health, and it is something you can sustain over the long term, keep it in your toolkit. From this same observant position, you can also identify the messages that trigger guilt or shame. If the information doesn’t make you feel better or is a behavior you can’t maintain over time, discard it and return to what you know to be right for you.

I want to be clear that I’m not telling you to ignore what your doctor or other health practitioners tell you. It is vitally important to conduct personal experiments, however, to find out if specific advice is appropriate for you. Over time you will get more closely in touch with your intuitive wisdom and be able to more easily discern how best to care for your unique body. And remember:

How you care for your body is more important than a number on a scale.

Sustainable, positive changes in eating and exercise behaviors are much healthier for you than fad diets and unsustainable (weight-focused) fitness programs that lead to weight loss/weight gain cycling.

Feeling shame or beating yourself up does not lead to improved self-care, no matter your size. Learning to love your body offers the opportunity for improved physical and emotional health.

The following story was written by Lily Stokely, ND, who came to The Body Positive after struggling for many years with body hatred. Within a very short period of time after learning about the Competencies, Lily knew her eating problems were gone for good. She created a Body Positive club and class at UC Berkeley where she led her peers in their process of positive transformation. She is now a naturopathic doctor practicing in Seattle, WA at her clinic, [Rooted Heart Healthcare](#). Dr. Stokely helps her patients understand the true meaning of health in their bodies of all sizes and shapes.

LILY'S STORY

Today I held a human heart in my hands. A 102-year-old woman who died of old age donated her body to my naturopathic medical school for study. I held her heart that beat approximately 72 times per minute, 103,680 times a day for 102 years. You know what surrounded her heart and fed it so generously for each and every beat? FAT! The heart's preferred fuel is fat! The layer of fat not only cushioned her heart, but fed it as well.

I was speechless as I stood there with the beautiful, pink organ in my hands. Tears welled up in my eyes and I was overtaken with complete and utter appreciation for the miracle of our bodies. I couldn't help but think of all the times I had hated my own fat, wanting it gone. After years of work to overcome body hatred, I now love my body—fat and all. Today, looking at that heart so perfectly created, my appreciation for fat was taken to a completely new level of awe and gratitude.

As I examined the rest of the body, I continued to find special design miracles and their uses for fat: cushioning tendons and ligaments, a protective layer beneath the skin, in the blood stream carrying vital nutrients, on our bellies shielding the organs that give us our life force, on our faces to make our distinct features. Fat is an essential element of our bodies that we can't live without.

I came home tonight and looked in the mirror: I saw my round, beautiful belly, my healthy cheeks and glowing face, my unique smile, my strong, cushioned thighs, and my happily beating heart. I told my fat I loved it from the deepest place of honesty I have ever experienced towards my own body. I want to live to 102 or beyond. I want to be healthy, happy, and have a heart that beats with love and vigor until the very last beat possible.

BE BODY POSITIVE PRACTICE: EXPLORE YOUR BODY STORY

This practice lets you consciously examine the messages that affect your current-day relationship with your body. The goal is to look at the messages to determine how they support—or don't support—a healthy, balanced relationship with your body and self-care.

INSTRUCTIONS

You'll begin by drawing your story as a flower. This flower offers a representation of another living and growing entity. Let go of any critical voice you may have about "not being an artist." Make it fun and creative by having lots of crayons, colored pencils, and/or pens on hand.

Roots: Begin by drawing the roots of your flower. Add in (or think about) the primary messages (both helpful and critical) you were given about your body from family, friends, your community, TV, magazines, doctors, church, culture, etc., when you were young.

- ✦ Where did you learn what was "acceptable" and "unacceptable" regarding your body?

Stem: Now, draw the stem of your flower. This is where you will explore your current relationship with your body.

- ✦ What do you currently believe about beauty, health, weight, eating, and exercise?

Flower: End by drawing the petals of your flower to show where you would like to be in your relationship with your body.

- ♦ How do you want your relationship with your body to blossom?

When you're finished with your drawing, take time to sit with it to see if anything else needs to be added. One way to deepen your experience with this practice is to share it with a trusted person. Ask this person to listen to your story without commenting; their purpose is to be your witness.



COMPETENCY THREE: CULTIVATE SELF-LOVE

GOALS

- ✦ Develop a practice of self-love.
- ✦ Employ compassion and humor as you leave behind the need for self-criticism.

BENEFIT

Gain confidence and free up energy to make life-affirming choices.

“Practicing self-love means learning how to trust ourselves, to treat ourselves with respect, and to be kind and affectionate towards ourselves.”

—BRENÉ BROWN, PHD, LMSW, *THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION*

The purpose of this third Competency, **Cultivate Self-Love**, is to develop and nurture a compassionate, gentle, and forgiving voice to guide and protect you. It is through a practice of self-love that you move away from self-criticism towards a more peaceful relationship with yourself. You learn to treat your body with the honor it deserves for the brilliant work it does to keep you alive. You build meaningful connections with others because you respect and value yourself equally as much as you do other people. Cultivating self-love raises your awareness in regard to how you talk to yourself and speak about yourself to others.



Embodying this Competency leads to increased confidence and a more positive, peaceful existence because you transform the critical voices that perpetuate insecurity and fear into sources of information that help you grow. Through a process of turning towards—instead of trying to run away from—your critical voices, you learn how they are hoping to protect you (misguided as they may be), and work with them to understand what your true needs are.

Research has shown that self-love is not a narcissistic pursuit, but instead a valuable way for people to see themselves as whole and worthy beings who deserve to be cared for and treated well. Dr. Brené Brown's extensive research on vulnerability, shame, and wholeheartedness led her to the realization that "a deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all women, men, and children." After analyzing the stories of thousands of people, she concluded that, "Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and grow; a connection that can only be cultivated between two people when it exists within each of them—we can only love others as much as we love ourselves."²

Since self-love is not based on our achievements but, instead, on our inherent worthiness, it creates a more solid foundation for emotional well-being than attempting to build self-esteem. Practicing self-love gives us tools to resist aggression from others. Rather than thinking that being kinder, more beautiful, or thinner will save us from the teasing, abuse, or critical messages of others, cultivating self-love offers a powerful resource to support the bravery and self-confidence needed to avoid internalizing destructive messages that weaken and demean our confidence and self-worth. Practicing self-love does not in any way mean you ignore your shadow side. Truly loving yourself means you honor and respect all of your emotions. The so-called "negative" emotions give us great opportunities to learn and grow.

I view the work of cultivating self-love as one of the most important tasks people can undertake. Just as self-loathing and body dissatisfaction can color every aspect of your life, so can self-love. Choosing it is like committing to a loving relationship. There are rough patches, of course, but the rewards are worth all the time and energy that goes into making it work.

[2] Brown, Brené. (2010). *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*. Center City, MN: Hazelden, 26-30.

I truly love the following story, written by Kelle J. of Northern California. Kelle came to her first Be Body Positive workshop in 2011, and, as you'll read, was at first highly skeptical of the idea of self-love. Over time, and with a strong commitment to herself to address the harsh critic within, her willingness to let self-love into her life expanded.

Living with self-love demands that you repeatedly dig deep inside to understand that you deserve to cherish yourself, just as you would cherish a partner, dear friend, or child.

KELLE'S STORY

When I first came to The Body Positive, my emotional self was buried beneath hardened layers of suffocating shame and grief. I had been in and out of therapy, recovery programs, and support groups looking for a way out of my self-loathing. Something in me wanted freedom, but each time I began to thaw, the emotional pain became too much to bear, and I made a run for the door. It felt impossible to follow the positive, constructive steps the therapist or program prescribed, reconfirming my deeply-held belief that I was so damaged that there was no possibility of redemption.

The Be Body Positive Model and community were different. When I first heard Connie and Elizabeth talk about self-love, I rejected the notion for myself out-of-hand; I had embodied my

shame for so long that I hardly had a self at all, let alone one I could love. I had a core belief that I did not belong in the world, which made me feel unique in my conviction that I was inherently flawed: Self-love is possible for you, but not for me.

However, what I also heard at The Body Positive was that there was no possibility of failure here; that the Competencies were not just another set of rules I would surely fail to follow. Instead, I was invited to engage in a process of trial and error where the “errors” were met with gentleness and represented learning opportunities—not evidence of my weak and defective nature. Most important, I didn’t have to get self-love “right” to belong in this community. What a gift this is! I am still chipping away at the geological layers of shame and self-loathing that sometimes weigh me down, but have been held with love in The Body Positive community long enough to witness the journey to self-love in others, and think to myself, “That could be me one day.”

BE BODY POSITIVE PRACTICE: LOVE LETTER

This simple practice is offered to help you see yourself through eyes of love. You're going to write a love letter—to yourself. Some people like to write to an oft-criticized body part (or their whole body if it's the target), first apologizing for criticizing it and then giving it gratitude for all it does each day. The body part can then have its say, expressing whatever comes up. Others prefer to write a freestyle letter, allowing their unconditionally loving voice to speak. Just remember to pick the form of writing that gives you the most joy. If you're struggling to find loving things to say to yourself, imagine that someone who loves you unconditionally is writing the letter, and let them speak.

Consider putting your letter in a self-addressed envelope and giving it to someone with instructions to mail it at a random moment in the future. Or tuck it in a drawer where you'll run across it from time to time. Write lots and lots of these letters to yourself. It's not an act of conceit—it's true self-care!



COMPETENCY FOUR: DECLARE YOUR OWN AUTHENTIC BEAUTY

GOALS

- ✦ Experience beauty as a creative, dynamic process.
- ✦ Inhabit your unique body with joy and confidence.

BENEFIT

Expand your imagination to behold authentic beauty in yourself and others.

“It seems so obvious that if we really appreciated what a gift it is to be alive in our bodies and how amazingly complex and intricate these bodies are, we wouldn’t be able to hate ourselves so well. We would recognize our own beauty not in an arrogant way, but simply as part of the beauty in this amazing world.”

—J. RUTH GENDLER, NOTES ON THE NEED FOR BEAUTY

The fourth Competency of the Be Body Positive Model, **Declare Your Own Authentic Beauty**, addresses the obstacles to seeing your own beauty and invites you to actively participate in experiencing the exquisiteness of our world. There is beauty everywhere, and we are *all* part of it.

You *declare your own authentic beauty* by choosing to see and express yourself in the moment, internal and external qualities combined, even if you want to make changes with your body—like having gender-affirming surgery. Exploring beauty through a Body Positive lens teaches you to have a dynamic, engaged relationship with the world around you. Honoring your body as you pass through different stages of life gives you access to true self-care because you don't confuse it with a desire to meet someone else's definition of beauty.

When you are blind to the depth of qualities that contribute to your beauty, you are more susceptible to harmful societal messages that promote insecurity and doubt. When you change your understanding of beauty into something that is non-competitive, all-inclusive, and celebratory, you can experience more beauty in the world around you expand your definition of it to include yourself as well. Seeing and experiencing your beauty is not an exercise in vanity—it is a necessary component of good physical and emotional health; it is a clear path to connecting to the divine nature of your human self.

Of course, we all have days when we can't see our beauty. The moments when you turn the difficult experiences of the world on yourself and see ugliness are your prompts to reach deeply for whatever it is that brings you back to knowing your beauty. And remember, searching for your flaws only leads to seeing more ugliness in the world, while meditating on your beauty (even finding just one thing about yourself to appreciate) allows you to see the magnificence that exists both in and around you.

For inspiration, check out the photos, videos, poems, and stories included in our [This Is Beauty project](#).

I think one of the best ways we can change beauty standards and acknowledge our own beauty is to shift the way we see. We've learned to criticize others and judge ourselves, as if there isn't enough beauty to go around. The following story by Maranda Barry illustrates that *beauty is everywhere—in our loved ones, in nature, and in ourselves—when we choose to expand our vision*. Miranda's story is one I love to read at public events because it moves people to truly see their own beauty—literally in minutes!

MARANDA'S STORY

At the age of fourteen, I really thought I was open-minded about beauty, but the appreciation was totally cerebral. I never actually felt the beauty in different sorts of bodies, never experienced it with my senses.

Just before graduating high school, I began interning with The Body Positive. I was going through what seemed like a million changes at that time, and, needing an outlet for my confusion, I got into visual art. I drew pastel landscapes of the Mono Lake Basin desert, created twisting patterns in the Stinson Beach sand, and made a variety of abstract watercolor paintings in my bed at night. The more weeks I spent with the self-loving, diversely-bodied individuals of The Body Positive, the more I grew to see them as works of natural art, and I examined them with the same close attention I gave to patterned sticks and the tender ridges on the inside walls of a bell pepper.

As a kid, I liked to soften my gaze completely until my eyes lost focus and things became abstract, Rothko-esque blobs, no longer defined by their everyday purposes. At seventeen, I discovered that by letting my mind relax in the same way, I could stop measuring beauty by how closely somebody fit the “ideal” and start going by pure visual intrigue. There were so many entrancing things I had completely dismissed!

Aside from their fascinating appearances, I found culturally-shamed body parts especially beautiful because of what they represented. Wrinkles, for instance, are unique records of every expression over one’s life delicately crinkling and creasing into deep, firm lines. My mother expresses embarrassment about the loose flesh of her belly, but it is a product of all the stretching that allowed her to give birth to me, the squishy softness a symbol of the strength and flexibility that parenthood requires. My best friend’s scars are another wonder, because they show the body’s amazing ability to heal, if only partially at times. My great uncle’s age spots show a long existence of growing and learning, having access to memories of a time that I know I can never touch. And noticing these parts on others makes me understand the true beauty in what I used to call my flaws. I love my funny ears that stick out, the intensity of my facial expressions, my straight hips and subtle curves, the fast-growing hair under my arms, and my short legs.

Like everyone, I am a natural wonder, deserving of awe. And it’s so much more fun to live with this knowledge, because I can actually experience the loveliness of those around me rather than acknowledging it vaguely with my head turned away. I see truly exciting things, and others feel delighted when I tell them what I see. We are breathtakingly beautiful when we let ourselves be.

BE BODY POSITIVE PRACTICE: MY BEAUTY IS...

Now is the time for an alternative—positive—way of thinking about and experiencing beauty. This practice allows you to explore the many facets that make you a beautiful human being.

INSTRUCTIONS

On a piece of paper or a page in your journal, write a word or statement to complete the sentences below. Write your answers only, not the sentence. Leave space for a few words in front (to the left) of each of your answers. Your responses can be about different parts of you, not just your body.

I feel beautiful when I...

Something about my body I've been teased about is...

Something I inherited from one of my most beloved ancestors is...

(It's okay if you don't know or feel connected to your ancestors—you can make them up! People who are adopted do this, and so do those who have been rejected by their families for different reasons, like being queer.)

I feel self-conscious about my...

I really appreciate my [add body part here] when I am...

I feel radiant when I am...

I love to...

I feel seen when I...

I feel unstoppable when I...

Now write, “My beauty is” in front of each of your words or statements to form a complete statement. Don’t worry if they are not grammatically correct sentences—you can fix them! Keep your list someplace where you can access it regularly as a reminder that this is your beauty. An important part of this practice is to recognize that your beauty includes the body parts you’ve been teased about, and the things that make you feel self-conscious or ashamed. It’s fun to do this practice regularly to see what emerges. Beauty is ever changing and dynamic.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Connie Sobczak founded The Body Positive nonprofit organization in 1996 after her sister Stephanie died from an eating disorder and faulty breast implants. Connie had healed herself from her own eating disorder in her early twenties, and Stephanie's death sparked her determination to change the world so that her daughter Carmen would never experience the pain of hating her body.

In addition to getting her book *Embody* published and producing educational films that won several awards, Connie's time is focused on working with school campuses, companies, and organizations like Amazon, Kaiser Permanente, ClifBar, Stanford, Cornell, Georgia Tech, and Girls Inc., to provide facilitator trainings, classroom curriculum, and online courses to keep the Body Positive movement going strong and to share healing tools with people worldwide.

Connie is truly grateful for her work, because she practices what she teaches every single day. Her self-love continues to expand and change, bringing her new levels of freedom and awareness. She still has moments of suffering, as all humans do, but with self-love as her protection, she is able to learn and grow from life's challenging experiences. Experiences like caring for her 92-year-old mom, managing a nonprofit organization during COVID times, and feeling

the pain from all that is happening in the world. Connie's passion is watching the light that emerges when the people she works with embrace and express their magnificent, authentic selves.

For more information about the author,
visit www.conniesobczak.com.



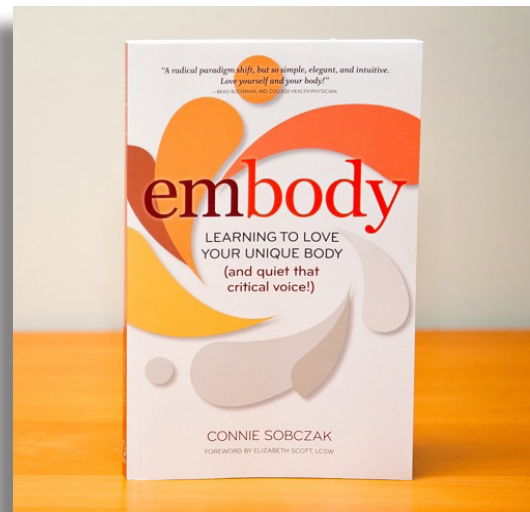
SO WHAT'S NEXT?

"I have just finished reading Embody. Wow! It was one of the best books that I have ever read on developing a healthy relationship with yourself. I particularly loved the section on self-love. After more than two decades of struggling with an eating disorder, I am in a solid place in my recovery. Embody has cemented this."

—JULIE M., EMBODY READER, AUSTRALIA

Now that you have been introduced to three of the five Competencies of the Be Body Positive Model, what's next? Where do you go from here? If you're intrigued by what you've read and would like more, there are many ways to connect with me:

Read [Embody: Learning to Love Your Unique Body \(and quiet that critical voice!\)](#). You'll hear my story about how I learned to live peacefully in my body and build a lifestyle that allows me to have a joyful, balanced relationship with food and exercise. You'll hear from a widely diverse group of people who share their stories of how The Body Positive connected them to their bodies.



Wise Woman Council: Add your name to the waitlist for my virtual women's* group, a safe space where you can let out a big exhale, and step away from all of your roles—spouse, parent, business owner, creator, contributor (to name a few)—as we reflect, share, talk, and inspire one another to *explore, reconnect, re-identify, and redefine* who we are and what we want in life.

“Connie’s work is profound and important. She shows us how to lift ourselves out of darkness and into a joyous, strength-filled light. I utilize the messages and tools I received in the Wise Woman Council almost daily—especially if I’m having a rough day. The ability to stop, take a moment to quiet my mind, and know that I have a choice in the matter really helps. I just practiced this today as a matter of fact. As I was getting ready for my day and thinking about what to wear, my mind started down the old tiresome road of ‘that’s too tight’ or ‘that makes me look...too young...too old...too this...too that.’ I was quickly able to catch myself and refocus on what the truth is about myself—and my body—and focus on what I love about it—and me. Such a simple and powerful tool! Connie’s teachings have helped ground me, lessen the noise in my head, and see beauty everywhere!”

—Katie McHugh, RN, Sonoma County, CA

* Women refers to gender-expansive individuals (cis women, trans women, non-binary, gender queer, and gender non-conforming people, and any woman-identified individual).



Be Body Positive Fundamentals: Sign up for The Body Positive’s online [Be Body Positive Fundamentals](#) course where Elizabeth Scott, LCSW, CEDS-S, and I deepen your experience with The 5 Competencies of our Be Body Positive Model through videos, worksheets, meditations, and more! If you’re a Master’s-level therapist or registered dietitian, you will receive 11.5 Continuing Education Hours for taking the [Fundamentals for Treatment Providers](#).

“Taking this course, I came away with some powerful truths and a-ha moments! I realized how much I still hold on to internalized societal standards and how my inner critic brings in moments of doubt, leading me to return to the belief that my shape and my body need to change to conform. My new mantra is that society needs to change, not the shape of my body!! So much wonderful stuff! I could go on and on!”

—Be Body Positive Fundamentals Course Participant



Be Body Positive Facilitator Training: If you're inspired after reading this e-book to teach others to cultivate self-love and a peaceful relationship with their bodies, food, and movement, check out The Body Positive's online, on-demand [Be Body Positive Facilitator Training](#). Get the comprehensive training and curriculum needed to create a culture-changing Be Body Positive program that will powerfully transform the lives of the people you work with. If you're a Master's-level therapist or registered dietitian, you will receive 21.5 Continuing Education Hours for taking the [Be Body Positive Facilitator Training for Treatment Providers](#).

"I absolutely commend the organization for representing all people by creating a gender-expansive space, sections on diversity and intersectionality, and representing multiple cultures. The live training videos helped to combat imposter syndrome and allowed me to see how the lessons are used in action. The main reason why I enrolled in the training was for the curriculum. Combining disordered eating concepts in any instructional form is challenging, especially if you are new. I appreciate that the material is already done for you and I can start spreading the message right away!"

—Janine Scheffler, Wellness Coach



In closing, I want to remind you that *you are fabulous and worthy of the very best life has to offer*—in relationships, in the way you treat yourself, and in all that you choose for your life. My wish is that you take time now to breathe, question, and reflect on your current relationship with your body. Review your answers to the Self-Assessment questions and the work you did with the Body Positive Practices for each Competency. Listen to your own intuitive wisdom to know what is right for you, and you alone. If positive change is what you want, I am here to support you in your journey to living comfortably in your body and knowing true self-love.

