

Everyone carries around an inner view of how he or she looks to the world. This is known as your body image – the way you see your body through your mind’s eye. Depending on whether your body image is positive or negative, it can support you on the road to success or pull you down the path to failure.

### What is Your Body Image

It’s visual, based on what you see when you look in the mirror. It’s emotional, based on how you feel about the way you look. It is kinesthetic, based on how you feel about and control your body parts. It’s historical, based on the way people have responded to your appearance throughout your life.

The way you see yourself depends to a large extent on how you think others see you. Most of us see ourselves as a caricature of who we really are. The mind’s eye presents a distorted image of the way you look. There are two common ways you can distort body image; by seeing a particular body part (nose, hips, thigh) as abnormal or viewing yourself as having the wrong size or shape. Either way you are doing yourself an injustice.

### Understanding Your Body Image

Examine your own feelings by asking yourself a few simple questions:

- Are you often self conscious about your appearance?
- Do certain body parts tend to dominate your thoughts? If so, which ones?
- Do you often compare your looks to others or to those of models?
- Do some body parts seem dramatically different from one day to the next?
- Do people say you look better than you think you do?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, you need to set some new goals for yourself. Think about how you feel about your body, and then write down how you would like to feel about it.

### Setting Goals for a New Body Image

When you select your goals, keep your list short and manageable.

- I will stop demanding perfection.
- I will stop setting up unrealistic standards for myself of how I should look.
- I will stop criticizing my appearance and look for my good points.
- I will learn to love my body and treat it with respect.

Be patient. Remember that it took many years to develop your body image, therefore, don’t expect your self-perception to change overnight.

To succeed at body love, you must first acknowledge that you and your body need to establish a new relationship. Then you need to learn concrete ways to change your body image.