

Thank you, body!

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"Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live." -Jim Rohn

Not a day goes by that I'm not humbled by the amazing inner-workings of my body--the way it runs on autopilot and knows exactly how to heal and renew itself in times of disarray in order to bring me back to balance. This is of course most apparent with accidents or illnesses, but I'm also grateful my body knows how to overcome the little mishaps...like when I sprain my ankle from tripping down the steps at the post office, or jab an eye with a mascara comb. (Yeah, don't you even try to pretend whacky things like that only happen to me!)

There are gazillions of functions going on in our bodies at any given time. There's the respiratory system, digestive system, circulatory system, muscular system, endocrine system, skeletal system, reproductive system, lymphatic system, immune system, and urinary system. We're made up of cells that rejuvenate on their own accord, hormones that are in constant talks with each other, and muscles that continually support our activities. Complex systems are at work, whether we're sitting at our desks, exercising, or even just sleeping, when our bodies are like silent factories in the night. And beyond normal day-to-day moments, have you ever thought about what happens inside your body when you indulge in one cocktail too many? Can you say, "Thank you, liver and lymphatic system!?" Our bodies put up with a lot of #^% from us, and I'd say it's time we gave thanks; give justice where justice is due. One way we can show our bodies respect is to take care of it. I know, that sounds like a trite statement, but in reality, many of us take better care of our belongings than we do of ourselves. For instance, if you own a car, you probably make sure it gets serviced on a regular basis, and you wouldn't think of fueling it with anything other than proper gasoline. Yet in this fast-paced world we live, we put our bodies second, taking care of ourselves just enough to get by. That's like running on fumes!

Make a pact with yourself today to take your self-care up a notch. You don't have to think in drastic measures--the "baby steps" philosophy can work wonders, both for today and for the long run. Slight tweakings are the start to busting out of habitual patterns that have become such a part of you that you're no longer conscious of them. Make it a priority to be mindful of your daily choices and actions.

What might ensue is what I like to call the "Crowding-Out Theory." Instead of focusing on the foods you can't eat, or the things you should or shouldn't do, start with minor positive shifts, ones you deem manageable. Before long, the good habits you've incorporated into your life will leave less room for the not-so-good ones. Believe it or not, one tiny positive change can lead to an entire axis shift.

A tip: only YOU know if there are changes you need to make for yourself. Don't look to magazines, friends, the latest diet book, or a plastic surgeon for the answer. Look within.

Speaking of looking within, the human body is more than its biological entities, the body is also imagined. It's easy to focus on what's lost in the aging process (wrinkle- and cellulite-free skin, head full of hair, etc), or to have attachment on what you don't have (the "perfect body," perhaps). But welcoming, embracing and respecting who you are now is the most empowering thing you can do for yourself.

Try to ignore the societal pressures to look a certain way. What you may think is a flaw might be exactly what others find endearing in you. And how about those cultures in which men lust after large-figured women? It's all relative.

Beauty comes from internal approval, not disapproval. Self-love is the first key to being a healthy, happy human being. Honor your body, realize your strengths, accept your flaws. Check in now and then to make sure you're treating yourself as good as (or better!) than those you love.

Once you've wiped out any false ideals, be proactive in ways that benefit both body and mind. Find a way to move your body that you enjoy (you can even avoid that nasty word, "exercise!"), seek out simple ways to upgrade your food choices, begin to think about how environmental toxins might be affecting you on a cellular level. Continually thank your body and it will continually support you. Sprained ankle, scratched cornea or whatever...