



My friends and I criticize our bodies more than we appreciate them. How can we become more body positive?

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Picture this. It's our 25th school reunion. The room is charged with the energy of young vibrant 40-year-olds! We are all intelligent, accomplished women professionals, stay-at-home moms and/or entrepreneurs. But, as I move around the room flitting from group to group, the most heard comment is not about the things we have achieved, rather it's about how someone is in such great shape, looks more attractive now or how someone has lost total control and has just 'let herself go' (read become fat!). Let's face it, we do judge ourselves and others by outward appearances, including weight.

KHAJURAHOO OR KAREENA—WHICH IS BETTER?

Centuries ago, the desired female body was curvy and full, think Khajuraho or Victorian! Efforts were then made to look voluptuous. Fast forward to today and being a size zero is seen as the epitome of attractiveness, think Kareena or Kate Moss. Efforts are now made to look reed thin and slender. So, where do we draw the line? Which is better? The answer is: neither. Draw your own image of what works for you. It's best not get sucked into idealized images of female beauty, be it curvy or skinny. If you do, you may fall prey to fat-shaming yourself or others. Work with your natural body shape and aim to be healthy and fit. The best appeal is not your dress size, it is your confidence and how you carry yourself!

DARK AND BEAUTIFUL—IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?

In our culture many have grown up with this deeply ingrained belief that beauty and fair skin are synonymous. Being a 'darker' myself who grew up in North India, I am a walking testament to the ridicule that one faces at a societal level. Sure, my family thought I was beautiful, but it was not enough! When I went overseas and I was complimented for my glowing bronze skin, I realized beauty has nothing to do with the colour of your skin. It is all about



How to Be a Body Positive Advocate

Proactively encourage yourself, your families and others around you to respect, love, and take care of their bodies, irrespective of shape and colour. Set your own personal standard that is driven by a need to be healthy rather than a need to meet the societal stereotypes of beauty! Be brave, be a rebel, and be free as you live your unique version of beautiful!

perspective. Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. And the most important eye is yours! Be comfortable in your own skin, own your colour with pride, and make it work for you!

SO, HOW DO I FEEL BETTER ABOUT MY APPEARANCE?

Well, the first step is to stop looking at others with a critical eye. Do not get swayed by the images portrayed in the media of what beautiful women are supposed to look like: thin, tall, fair, and wrinkle free! Instead look at

yourself and set a realistic goal that keeps you fit, healthy, and energetic.

Carry your size with confidence and style! Next, be purposeful and conscious of the cultural and social messages that wrongly link success and happiness to the size, shape or colour of your body. There is a multi-crore economy that feeds off these insecurities as it sells us products and treatments to make us more desirable. Being taller or skinnier is not going to make people like us better. This knowledge will help you embrace your own body and build a healthy self-image. 🍷

The Nielsen Global Health & Wellness Survey polled 30,000 online respondents in 60 countries and found that 49% believed they were overweight.

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