



# ReAL BodIEs



I N H E R T S

EVERY BODY FOR EVERYBODY

## Support and self care advice for your body image.

**In this guide, we're going to explore different therapeutic techniques, exercises and self-care activities which can help you with your body image.**

**We hope you'll find some of the activities and actions within this guide can help you to build a personal 'Wellbeing Toolkit' to help you to cope and manage your mental health.**

**Keep an open mind whilst you're reading and once you have worked through the activities, take what works for you. It's your toolkit, your recovery, your healing.**

**You know what's right for you.**

## Self care

Practicing things like self-care and self-compassion can help build a better relationship with yourself and improve your perception of your body image.

### Find your own version of self-care

Self-care can be anything that allows you to unwind and spend some time doing things that bring you joy or calm. We all can get swept up in the business of life and need time for ourselves to recharge. Self-care is different for everyone, so you can find what works for you. Our suggestions here are just that - suggestions! Feel free to take what you need from this, but we'd still encourage you to push yourself out of your comfort zone and give things a try, even if it seems like it won't work, or seems a bit silly!

## Journaling

Writing things down can have a therapeutic effect as it's a great way to process what's happening and how you're feeling - especially when those emotions are too hard to say. It can be a release, and a place of safety, knowing that nobody else will read it.

By keeping a journal, you can also look back on negative days and negative times and see that they don't last forever. You can also see how your thoughts and feelings change over time. Honour the small victories!

Many of us might see keeping a journal as a big task that requires creativity, but remember - it's only for you so it doesn't have to be perfect. Spelling doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what it looks like. Letting go of this pressure to be perfect here may also help us reduce perfectionism towards our bodies.

## Mindful Movement

Exercise is not a punishment. It can be fun and doesn't have to be in the typical ways of working out - it could involve taking a stroll in the park, gardening, playing football with your friends/family, swimming and yoga. It could just be moving to music in any way you like or are able to. Notice if you're tired and need to rest - honouring this feeling will support your overall health and wellbeing. Focus on moving in ways that highlight how much you enjoy it, rather than how you look whilst doing it, or trying to change your body.

If going to exercise classes or to gyms, try to find instructors who don't body shame or encourage weight loss. Comments like "let's burn those calories" or "shape up for Summer" are not helpful and only encourage weight stigma. Find fitness professionals who will help you move your body for enjoyment, not punishment.

## Monitor your social media usage

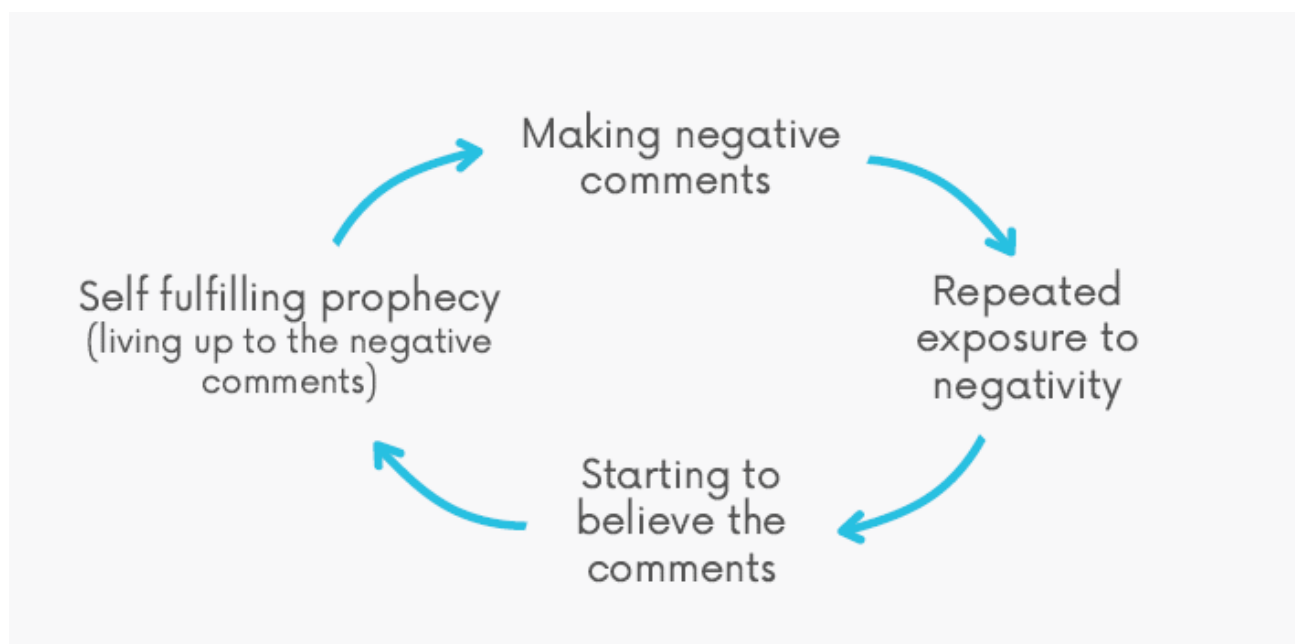
Social media can be a fun distraction and a way to connect with people. But, make sure the accounts you are following are positive for your mental health.

Join communities or follow accounts that can help you work on your body image and confidence, such as body acceptance advocates and positive mental health accounts.

For more advice on how to manage your social media usage and protecting your body image and mental health, visit [www.justtalkherts.org/RealBodies](http://www.justtalkherts.org/RealBodies)

## Practice positive self-talk

This starts by reducing or stopping the negative way you talk to yourself. Sometimes it can become second nature to make negative comments about yourself so actively stopping those comments can help break a vicious cycle:



This can be quite tricky at first because the way you speak to yourself is likely to be the way you always have. When you struggle to think of something more positive to say to yourself, consider what you would say to a friend or loved one. This may help you find a kinder way of speaking to yourself.

## Self-compassion tips

Here's some other things you can try to become kinder and more compassionate towards yourself:

**Practise mindfulness.** Calmly notice what is happening - what you're thinking and feeling in this moment. Try not to judge or react to these things, just notice them. If judgemental thoughts appear in your mind, think of them as passing clouds and try not to pay them much attention.

**Be gentle with yourself when things go wrong.** When something goes wrong or you make a mistake, practise talking to yourself like you would to a good friend. You probably wouldn't criticise a friend for a mistake they made, you would more likely comfort them, so try to extend that same kindness to yourself. Mistakes are things that help us learn.

**Allow yourself to be imperfect.** Give yourself permission to get things wrong sometimes and to not be perfect. Remind yourself that you can be imperfect and still be a good (in fact, great), worthy person.

**Learn to say 'no'.** If you feel you say 'yes' to people when you don't really want to, practise saying 'no' more often. There are ways to say 'no' and still respect others. You could say, for example, "thank you for asking me, but I'm focusing on making more time for myself at the moment".

**Build good relationships.** Spend time with people who treat you well, who respect you, and who appreciate you as a person. If there are people in your life who make you unhappy, consider telling them how they make you feel and setting some boundaries.

## Thank you!

We hope you have found this body image advice useful.

If you want further information around eating disorders, check out the First Steps ED website: [www.firststepsed.co.uk](http://www.firststepsed.co.uk)

For more information about Just Talk's 'Real Bodies in Herts' campaign and how to look after your mental health, visit: [www.justtalkherts.org](http://www.justtalkherts.org)



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