

## STARTING THE NEW YEAR WITH BODY POSITIVITY

*Contributed by Mandy Enright, MS, RDN, RYT*

Are you thinking about attempting another diet this January? Once again telling yourself, "This time things will be different." What if instead of trying a new diet this year, you try a new mindset? This year, ditch the diets in favor of trying something new: body positivity.

What is body positivity, you ask? Being body positive means that you support, love, and accept your body for how it is. Body positivity challenges how society views bodies to help others build confidence and acceptance of their own bodies. Society often sets unrealistic body standards in the media, and we set unrealistic standards for ourselves through comparisons. A healthy body is one that you can look and feel comfortable in.

### Body Positivity vs. Body Neutrality

These two terms may sound similar yet address different aspects of how we consider our own bodies. Body positivity emphasizes how your body looks, while body neutrality focuses on appreciating your body for what it can do. Body neutrality tells us to appreciate our bodies for being capable of amazing things. An example of body neutrality is saying "My body is so wonderful that it allows me to keep up with two young children."

Body positivity is focused on loving how your body looks. The body neutrality movement was started in an attempt recognize our capabilities as humans. Either way, the emphasis is to draw attention away from the concept of dieting and feeling like you must fit into a certain body type to be accepted. We often put so much emphasis on our bodies that we start to equate successes and failures with our weight and appearance. Taking a more body-positive approach can provide freedom to simply focus on you.

### How to Become More Body Positive

Research shows that those who practice body positivity have improved mood and an overall reduction in negative thoughts. Practicing body positivity can also help reduce stress that we feel about our bodies or dieting. Here are a few ways you can start improving your body positivity:

1. Appreciate all that your body can do.
2. Keep a list of qualities that you like about yourself.
3. Remind yourself that you are beautiful; it is not simply skin deep.
4. See yourself as the whole person you are.
5. Surround yourself with positive people.
6. Don't let the voices in your head convince you that you or your body is 'bad.'
7. Wear clothes that make you feel good.
8. Do something nice for yourself!





## Tips to Encourage Health and Well-being

Body positivity is one way to support your mental health, but we can also support our mental and physical health in a variety of ways. Instead of taking the approach of focusing on what you can't do or eat, put more focus on what you can do more of for yourself that supports your overall well-being. This includes:

- Stay hydrated by making sure you are drinking enough water throughout the day.
- Practice good sleep hygiene by winding down at the end of the day and unplugging.
- Get movement throughout the day – any movement is good movement!
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Practice mindfulness – find some time in your busy day to find peace.
- Take breaks throughout the day to clear your mind, reset your focus, and improve your mood.
- Set boundaries for yourself to allow time for your own self-care.



Remember – positive habits don't happen overnight. Aim for consistency, not perfection when trying to create or change a habit. Pay attention to your thoughts – if you find yourself slipping into old habits or putting more emphasis on your body and appearance, try to reframe your thoughts to be more positive. Instead of thinking, "I'd be happier if I could just fit into my skinny jeans," reframe the thought to "I've been focusing on eating more fruits and vegetables each day and I'm proud of the change I've been making." Remember that body positivity starts with YOU!

***Will you be practicing body positivity, body neutrality or both? How will you support your mental and physical health this coming year? What positive habit can you focus doing more of this year?***



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