



Body positivity. Body appreciation. Positive affirmations. Buzzwords you may frequently hear when talking about eating disorder treatment. But, for most seeking treatment for an eating disorder, these don't come easily. For those struggling with an eating disorder, it can seem downright impossible, even silly, to look in the mirror and say something positive about your body. *"I don't believe it, so why would I even say it?"*.

However, you don't necessarily need to always love your body; what's more important is that we learn to accept our bodies no matter what they look like. Changing the way you feel about your body and shifting toward body acceptance are important parts of eating disorder recovery and necessary for truly achieving self-love.

And you know what? It is OK and even normal to *not always love our bodies*. Our bodies change all the time and will continue to change as we age, mature, experience stressors, start a new activity, have a child, etc. Sometimes we might like them, other times, we might not like them as much. Sometimes our bodies are just "average" or "OK". **And that is OK!**

I read this the other day and it really stuck with me: *"You can't hate yourself into loving yourself"*.

Negative and critical self-talk, using extreme language when describing your body, engaging in body checking behaviors, restricting, purging, over-exercising – all these types of behaviors come with the false promise of happiness and body satisfaction.

However, hating yourself may get your body to change, but it will not make you love yourself.

Those things don't create self-love. Those things fuel self-hate and create a cycle of even more negative thoughts and disordered behaviors. The very behaviors you engage in in order to achieve self-acceptance and happiness are destroying your life and maintaining your disorder.

So instead of tearing yourself down in the mirror, try saying a neutral statement about yourself. If it's difficult to find something you like, how about find something that's OK about your body? Something you accept about your body? Or something that you appreciate about your body?

This is me and that's OK.

I accept my body.

I am OK in my body.

I accept me just how i am.

Engaging in neutral self-talk can change the experience of looking in the mirror, which in turn can reduce the disordered thoughts and behaviors that usually follow.

Continuing to talk to yourself in a kinder, more neutral way can help to restructure the negative thoughts you've held about yourself for a long time and rewire your brain to respond in a different way. As your thoughts and behaviors change over time, you may find your reflection in the mirror changes as well.

Katie Jones, LIMHP, NCC, CPC
Omni Eating Disorder Program Director