

Be Your Own Bae

The secret to loving your body is loving yourself. Easier said than done? Here are four tricks that will make you see your body in a new light. BY JILL ANDREW

How we look plays a big part in how we feel about our bodies, sure, but there are two words that can make a big impact: self-care. What is it? It's a buzzy term used in mental health circles that means caring for yourself (surprise, surprise) and the steps you take to do that. As women, our needs are often met last, after taking care of our families, partners and work, but being selfless doesn't always do a body good. Here are four ways to do self-care that will make you body-confident.

TAKE A KUNDALINI CLASS

Kundalini yoga, the kind that teaches you about "being in the present," might be just what you need, says yogi and body-positive coach Demetria Jackson, owner of Demetria Jackson Yoga in Toronto, whose studio welcomes a variety of body sizes. "Yoga helps us accept parts of ourselves we have been conditioned to believe are unlovable," she says. "I feel more free [doing yoga], and it's not in spite of my body, but because of it." Yoga helps to de-stress, calm and strengthen that body-mind connection. "It's a workout, a therapy session and meditation, all-in-one," says Jackson. Her favourite moves include child's pose, but it's achieving the challenging ones, like Sarvangasana (shoulder stand), that make her feel like a boss.

MAKE A DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT

How many times have you put off scheduling a doctor's appointment? It's time to book one now. Notisha Massaquoi, executive director of Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre in Toronto, says that when we take control of our health we take control of our self-

worth. "We have to stop glorifying being busy. Being busy shouldn't be an indication of our importance," explains Massaquoi, adding that it can affect our health when we don't have time to prioritize it. "We need to practise daily self-love and, when dealing with our health, we need to ask questions until we are satisfied with the answers we receive."

RETHINK YOUR SQUAD

If your circle of friends is more reality TV crowd than supportive crew, it's time to make over your squad. Samantha Cochrane, manager of girls' mentoring at the Canadian Women's Foundation, sees first-hand the impact a positive group of women can have on each other. "We learn to collaborate, support and build community together, and that is the blueprint for becoming confident and self-assured women," she says. If we surround ourselves with those with similar self-worth instead of people who try to cut us down, judge us or hold us up to some unrealistic beauty ideal, we are much more likely to like ourselves and our bodies.

GET NAKED AND DANCE

My last tip, for those who have the chutzpah, is something I do daily—a naked mirror dance. Before I get dressed each morning, I focus on my beautiful uneven breasts and think of my tummy scars as a symbol of my resilience from winning past health battles, and I dance to a rhythm in my head. Even if you don't dance, next time you head into the shower, I beg you to congratulate your body for all it's pushed you through. If I can admit in a national magazine that I dance naked, you can thank your body.

IT STARTS WITH YOU

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