ALL BODIES ARE GOOD BODIES

EDITOR'S NOTE
The name of the title font in this issue is Awesome As F**K. Because we are. The concept of loving ourselves should be second nature, but it is silenced quickly, harshly, and sometimes irreversibly. Unattainable beauty standards are forced into our subconscious before we can even recite the alphabet. White, thin, straight bodies are portrayed in mass media as the standard. We question our self-worth before we question the garbage on TV. We often strive for normal, without striving to define that for ourselves.

Body positivity at its most basic means all bodies are good bodies. It is an incredibly important movement for everyone, not just women or fat bodies, because we all deserve self-love. The more we appreciate all bodies, the more likely the whole spectrum of body colors, shapes, sizes, and styles will be represented in media, which will in turn help people accept and love more types of bodies. Beauty standards are society's body image. To change them we have to reject hateful and judgmental ways of thinking, practice compassion and appreciation, and above all preach love. The stories and resources in this zine aim to support you.

VERONICA

BODY POSI MIX / ANGELA CONWAY

taking control of designing your body image
SHEER MAG - BUTTON UP
stiff-arm-ing anthem to life's lacerous onlookers
FLOWER GIRL - STOP STARING
ode to fluorescent lighting and swimsuit season
SLEDDING WITH TIGERS - NOT, SO BODY POSI AFTER ALL
when conformity's corda's seen a little too tight:
HOLE - CELEBRITY SKIN
for rolling with your 'rolls' and baring all at the beach!
PEACH KELLI POP - NUDE BEACH
celebrating beauty in all bodies
SALT-N-PEPA - I AM BODY BEAUTIFUL
MY FATHER'S FACE
By Alexandra Hubert

When I was born, I am told, there was an overwhelming consensus by visitors of one thing - I was definitely my father's child. Despite my wrinkly raisin newborn appearance, it was quite apparent that my face was my father's. The eyes, the chin, the mouth... but most of all, the nose. On his face, I wouldn't say my father's nose was anything incredibly out of the ordinary. While it was certainly one of his most dominating features, as a full grown man, it fit his face fine. It did not, however, fit on the small pasty face of a little girl.

"Big Nose" is not a very clever nickname. It really didn't take any work for kids to come up with it, but I guess they didn't need to put any further effort in, because it did the trick. I spent my whole life hating my face. Hating that nose. Hating that I would never be considered beautiful by anyone because my bulbous features did not fit into the box labeled "pretty". I was certain that no one would ever love me. I would never date, never get married, never have a family.

I dreamed of the day when I would be old enough and well off enough to fix these terrible mistakes on my face. The day I could look like all the other girls. The day when I would no longer look just like my father. My parents even considered paying for the surgery when I was a teenager so that I could get on with my life. So I would stop hating the face I saw in the mirror everyday.

Kids can be cruel, and the things they say can stay with you forever. In 6th grade, I introduced myself to a new kid in class to try to make him feel more comfortable. He immediately responded, "Oh my god! Your nose is so big! You could fit a train through it!". I'm 30 and that kid's first impression of me will be in my brain until the day I die. But I grew up and I've learned a bit about what's actually important in life.

I learned that you are more than your appearance, and people that only focus on that aren't worth your time anyway. I still didn't like my face, but I understood that I was cheating myself out of becoming a better person by always focusing on that. And I learned that there is something more important about the way I look than how attractive I am.

In the winter of 2010, without any warning, amid a series of tragic events, my father passed away. Losing an immediate family member is like losing a limb, and my limb was cut off in the middle of a Wednesday while I was on my way out the door to an appointment. No big goodbye, no gathering of loved ones, just a phone call in the middle of the day and "CHOP" it's gone. The weeks and months that followed were hard; of course. It's difficult to reconcile your mind with the idea that you're never going to see that person's face again. But then, one day, I did see it. Just in my peripheral, in a reflection on a window. And I saw it again, in my rear view. And I started to see it every day in my bathroom mirror.

Every day I get to see my father's face. His eyes, his chin, his mouth... and his nose. Every day I get to see what he looked like when he smiled, when he laughed, when he cried. Every day I am reminded that he is a part of me and who I am. And I know that the rest of my life I will never forget what my father's face looked like. I am so thankful for that. That, to me, is beautiful.

---In 2011 my daughter was born. The first thing the doctor said was "She has her mother's hair". My husband, with a winking smile, responded, "and her mother's nose."---

RIOTS
Not
DIETS
I REFUSE TO HEAR THE WORD "FAT"

By Meredith Galyon

I heard it all throughout my childhood and teenage years; it was a term thrown at me to make me feel terribly about myself, for no reason at all other than that I was an easy target.

A kid in sixth grade told me I was as big as his bathtub. An ex-boyfriend in high school told me he didn't regret breaking up with me because of how fat I'd gotten afterwards. I've had e-fucking-nough of the word "fat" as an insult.

I refuse to be friends with people who project their own body issues onto me. Body dysmorphism is a real thing; I've suffered from it myself. But at what point do I have to sacrifice my mental health to cater to someone who has no grasp of how damaging their behavior is?

I refuse to be friends with anyone who is afraid of being fat. How can I have a relationship with you, knowing that my body size is your biggest fear? When you shit-talk other women who are fat, but are still smaller than me, what does that make me? Am I disgusting too? Or am I different because I'm your friend? I want to believe that, but I don't. How can I hang out with you knowing that you're judging me for everything I eat and everything I wear?

It took me long enough to look myself in the mirror and truly believe that I am beautiful, even at a size 12 (or larger at this point, I honestly don't even know). I don't need your approval, but I don't need your indirect critiques, either.

I know I should feel sorry for you and try to help you, but I guess I am selfish. I've been too hurt by your remarks and it's left me too hardened to be sympathetic. I hope one day that you realize you have a problem, and that you get help for it. I hope that you can stop hating yourself.
MY FAT BODY IS NOT YOURS
By Veronica Burgos

There is a silence to being fat. An expectation of uncomfortable smiles and apologetic nods. There is a grace to being the literal elephant in most rooms. I move through life much like a trained dancer works a stage. Carefully. Deliberately. Exposed, with a soft blank face. The difference in my daily life and their performance is they are asking for the spotlight, asking for eyes to be glued to their body's every move. They want your criticism, your opinion. I do not.

My fat body is not an invitation.

Let's talk about what fat is. Fat is a descriptive word, but it's not a feeling. No one feels fat. If you have ever said that, thought that, heard that, you were witness to a gross misuse of our dear English language. Fat is not a synonym for unattractive, lazy, sad, dumb, or the lesser. Fat people are all around you. Some are healthy, some are not. Same goes for thin people. This is a hard concept to grasp for some. It goes against everything we are taught about the obesity epidemic and the stereotype of the fat slob. The possibility of health at every size is real. It's more common than you were taught to think.

My fat body is not an epidemic.

Focus all you have on this one goal. Change your lifestyle. Try your best. Save your life.

I used to patiently listen to it all, take it to heart, and always walk away from these conversations feeling several things: (1) that I am a failure, (2) that my continued relationship with this person is incumbent on me correcting my fat failure ways, (3) that I must admit that I look unacceptable, (4) and that loving myself was something I could not possibly do until I lost weight.

Now I know about fat phobia, health myths, and the fact that even if they were 100% right and 100% wrong that it would not really matter. It's my body, and none of their business. Mine has to be the one and only opinion that matters when it comes to my self image. My health only affects me. Judging another body under the guise of health concerns is weak. Troll someone else.

**My fat body is not a negotiation.**

They stare; sometimes with mouths agape, wide eyed, completely inconsiderate of the fact that I am a person standing in a line just trying to pay for my groceries. They point; then they turn to their table companions, share some whispers, and one at a time everyone at the table across the restaurant turns to look at me, at me. A fat person daring to eat in public. They scowl and sometimes are even so bold as to run me through that shopping scene in Pretty Woman. But I have money to spend in here. We don’t have anything for you, and we don’t want you stretching out anything you might try on. They assume I have diabetes and high blood pressure, I can’t get laid, that I constantly smell, that I cry myself to sleep, that I have no friends, that I hate myself. They laugh without realizing that they are actually laughing at themselves.

Older women are particularly disgusted with my body type, and seem the most comfortable with sharing their unprovoked opinions. Years ago, I sat on a park bench in New York to eat my lunch next to a woman in her 70’s. She studied me a little too much as I ate my sandwich. As I turned to flash my angrily perplexed can I help you look she said, “You know, in my day, a woman of your size would not be caught dead eating in public.” I literally ran away.

Hate is just a reflection of the hater. That park bench woman could have been jealous. Maybe she felt oppressed by the social norms of her day. Maybe that was a poorly chosen opener to a conversation about how things are changing. Maybe the interaction could have turned positive. I’ll never know what her motivation was, but I can say for sure that it had nothing to do with me.

**My fat body is not an embarrassment.**

Most commentary I receive about my size is subtle. The backhanded compliment is a sneaky little shit of a sentence designed to appear to be a positive comment, but really it just makes you feel confused and judged. “Your new haircut slims your face,” translates to you have a fat face. Thanks, I know, so what? Or, “I wish I had the confidence to show my legs off, like you are, in such a short skirt.” Again, thanks for noticing that I am awesome, but what this really means is that you are calling out my legs for not being up to beauty standards.

You think your insults are correctly placed consequences. After all, I did this to myself with Cheetos, right? Maybe I did, maybe there is more to that story. In any event, why must we fight?

**My fat body is not a war zone.**

Unwelcome body commentary is uncomfortable and rage inducing. I am past the point of being shocked by its intrusiveness, its ignorance, or its righteousness. And, way past the point of thinking it is ever going to stop. In my younger years I mostly responded with a painful half smile while others ripped my body down, taking my insides with it. I apologized for people that should have been apologizing to me. I almost craved the taste of shame.

I’m 34 now. I consider myself a fat activist. My feet are firmly planted wherever I choose to press them, but I still lose my head in occasional clouds of insecurity. Body positivity, the fat acceptance movement, and all the beautiful self loving people of size that put their bodies and hearts on display through the interwebs have given me such strength and wisdom. Yet, I still struggle against
internalized beauty standards. I still think twice before answering pool party invitations, before wearing tight clothing, before trusting compliments and relationships. I know my worth goes beyond my size, but I have not yet figured out how to deal with the attention my body attracts.

I posed this question to a close group of girlfriends the other day, "how do you deal with unsolicited body comments?" We are a sassy lot, so the first round of responses went something like, "just tell them to fuck off!" That often suffices, especially when the comment is some bro yelling fatty out of a car window. But, a more nuanced approach is often necessary, not just for the commenter or the context of the environment, but for ourselves. What is the point of fighting hate with hate? I don't always have the energy, but when I can I try to engage people a little further. Ask them why they felt the need to comment, ask them what is the point? Maybe that goes south and is more trouble than it is worth. Maybe they don't deserve a gentle lesson. I don't know.

All I can say is that comments be damned. I no longer have conversations about other bodies, because the point of them always seems to be making someone feel superior and thus another inferior. I am slowly retraining myself to look beyond bodies, to value people for their contribution to any given moment of life, and to practice compassion instead of criticism. Value comes from within. I don't let people in that space anymore, and I do not attempt to intrude on others. I am starting to get brave enough to confront others when they turn judgmental. These people are often my friends, which makes it an extra risky confrontation, but I think also the most worthy. Out of respect for my body positive self I refuse to be complicit in body shame, and I just want all the people I love to join me.

My fat body is not broken.

I am no longer interested in being a good fatty. I wear what I want, which sometimes includes tight clothing that shows the visible outline of my big belly. The clothes that go on my body are there
for me. I no longer make a point of discussing my food choices so as to appear to smaller people that I am doing everything in my power to become one of them. I do workout, I do bench triple digits. I can run a mile without falling over. I love myself enough to train my body to do those things so I can enjoy activities I like, nothing more. The opinion, praise, or approval of others where my gloriously fat body is concerned are unnecessary.

My fat body is not yours.

I AM NOT MY BODY, AND MY BODY IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

By Buick Audra

The thing about being thin, is that everyone thinks they're allowed to comment on it. In my time on Earth, I've been what most consider thin. I am five feet, seven inches tall, and I'm somewhere between a hundred pounds and a hundred and eight pounds on any given day. I always have been; it's the way my body is built. Because of that, I have received four distinct brands of commentary about my body:

1. Inquiry. This when people say things like, "How do you stay so thin?" and, "Are you naturally thin, or do you work at it?" I am expected to answer such questions, regardless of what I might be doing in my own life in that moment.

2. Concern. This is typically presented as sincere distress, and often carries notes of shame with it. I am expected to suddenly feel afraid or upset that I look like do. I should change my lifestyle and behaviors to make other people feel okay about my body.

3. Mocking. As a thin person, I get mocked for my diet, clothing sizes, breast size, and even appearance. I am expected to be a good sport and to play along. I should be good-natured about it, because after all, thin is good, right? I'm "lucky," and should therefore allow for whatever lumps I get.

4. Praise and comparison. This is the most dangerous type of commentary, in my opinion, because it is supposed to make me feel good - and sometimes allow someone else to feel badly about their size or shape next to me. I am expected to counter with statements which deny the compliment, and compliment the other person's body in turn. I should make them feel better about
themselves.

The first thing I want to say, is that I am not interested in what another person thinks about my body. I suppose I once was, when I was younger and more dependent on outside approval. That season is long over, and being thin is not something I spend any time thinking about or working on. Being attractive to others is pretty low on my list, in general. I am concerned with living a life that is both purposeful and fulfilling. I am concerned with being healthy, in my mind, spirit, and body. I am concerned with continuing to learn new ways to apply what I know and believe while still being teachable. I am currently concerned with keeping my Swedish Ivy plant alive; she doesn't look good. I am an artist, songwriter, guitar player, vocalist, author, producer, engineer, and thinker. The size of my pants, or the weight of my form is so boring in comparison. When we are reduced to a shape or size, we are limited. I refuse to be limited.

That leads me to the second thing I want to say, which is that my body is no one else's business. What my body looks like to another person, or how it makes them feel, has no bearing on me or how I should feel about myself. What my parents' respective builds are is no one's business. What my diet is is no one's business. Is it true that I was born to slender humans, and have been vegan for twenty-three years? Indeed, it is true. However, what I eat on a daily basis, or what my genetic stamp is are mine to know. When I receive uninvited comments about my body - almost always from other women, I'd like to add - it's both surprising and depressing to me. And frankly, I don't have the energy to respond in the above ways. Someone's discomfort around my body is a reflection of their ideas of self, not mine. Keeping that in mind, I try to be kind when I wriggle away, but I don't engage in discussions about my body today. I need neither the compliments nor the advice. thank you.

The most important thing I ever did for myself was get into a life practice of valuing myself based on who I try to be. The other options all have traps built-in to them. If I try to value myself on my accomplishments, I will fail. On my appearance, I will fail. On my relationships, I will fail. On outside approval, I will most assuredly fail. If I stay focused on the simple ideas of what I am trying to do here and who I am trying to be, the rest becomes substantially less important. It loses power. And when I'm accepting myself, and have my self-worth in check, I can be of service and be a friend to others.

...but, only if they leave my body out of it.

Here Now

Perfectly Okay
"You should eat a cheeseburger." If I had a cheeseburger for every time I have heard this statement, I'd be able to open up a McDonald's of my own (except I'd use real meat of course).

Now that I'm getting older, I struggle with facing myself in the mirror and seeing the weight gain age brings along with a slower metabolism. As a former athlete and dancer, working out was just considered practice, a mandatory process that was all a part of the fun. Now I have to actually make myself get out of bed, drive to a gym, and do a sweat dance with the Grim Reaper himself? Ha, no thanks! However, each time I see pictures of society's new sexy: the hourglass Jessica Rabbit body, I feel 100 pounds heavier. I can't rock certain crop tops like I used to. I mean, I can if I was confident enough, but I'm still at a point where I'm not 100% comfortable with my body and the way it's changing.

I'm a Virgo with OCD, so perfection and symmetry has been an absolute must for me personally. I used to wear my pants loose and low on purpose to hide my ass growing up. I was embarrassed because I felt it stood out on my tiny frame, so I felt awkward. Eventually, I embraced it but didn't feel "balanced" enough. Therefore, I decided to get a boob job in college. This will definitely help give me that hourglass shape, right? Ha, wrong.

It's been a few years now and while I'm still battling my inner physical demons, I realize that everyone's body is different. I have a short torso and long legs, no amount of surgery will ever make me look like World Star Hip Hop's next video vixen, and I'm totally okay with that. I'm able to see other girls with "better" bodies (by society's standards) and not feel intimidated, but instead embrace them as my fellow sister because their inner body demons could be similar to mine. Who am I to label another as "body goals" and feel envious? I'm just as much human as her with a sound mind, soul, and body—that is currently hungry. So with that being said, love yourself, love your body, and as for me? I'm going to go grab myself a cheeseburger.
GROWING BODY-POSITIVE FRIENDSHIPS: TIPS FOR CULTIVATING A COMMUNITY OF AFFIRMATION AND SUPPORT

By The Nebula

DON'T: Give compliments based on physical appearance, especially uncontrollable aspects.

"You look so great- have you lost weight?"
"Ooh, you're looking better- you're gaining weight!"

Comments focusing on weight changes, which may be intentional or unintentional, are uncomfortable for everyone and can be especially triggering for eating disorder survivors, or provoke someone to consider unhealthy weight loss methods.

"Wow- you don't look 30 yet, you look so young!"
"You'll do great in the professional world- you don't look like you're only 20!"

Hormone fluctuations, biological protein buildup and breakdown, and other age-related changes occur on a unique timeline for every individual, meaning there's no such thing as 'looking your age'; because no age has a specific 'look.' Pointing out differences in aging only serves to alienate people from their age-similar peers.

DO: Give compliments based on the ABCs: attitude, behavior, or choices.

"It's so good to see you again! You look like you're feeling better."
"Congratulations on your first 5K! You've made so much progress as a runner."
"Did you do something different with your hair? It looks on point today!"

Attitudes, choices, and behaviors are all things we can usually control. Noticing the effort and good judgment that went into these decisions, or the positive way we feel around people, are all things that usually make people feel good about themselves. (A good compliment should boil down to "I like who you are" or "I like how you are," not just what you look like.) Of course we see how people look: it just shouldn't be the only thing we notice.

DO: Accept compliments!

"Your wing-tip eyeliner always looks amazing- I have no idea how to do that!"
"I knew you could sing, but holy crap! Your karaoke blew me away!"

And you should say... "Thank you." (Or "I know!" if you're feeling cheeky.)

We call this the 'Thank You Challenge': for the next week, anytime someone gives you a direct compliment, just say "Thank you." (Unless it's harassment, because fuck that shit.) Because we try to present our best side and hide what we consider our flaws, we can often be left thinking we don't deserve others' compliments, or that they don't know the 'real' us. Let yourself remember that you are noticed and appreciated rather than denying compliments. Though, and you may find that your inner voice notices and appreciates you more often too.

DON'T: Assign moral values to food.

"Oh we're in trouble... that cake looks sinfully delicious."
"I try to eat lots of avocado, since it's a good fat."

Food has no moral value. It is nourishment for your body. Each food has different kinds of nutrients. Some are more nutrient-dense than others, but it doesn't make you a better person to eat them, just as it doesn't make you a worse person to eat less nutrient-dense foods. Healthy nutrition is about balancing nutrients while finding pleasure in eating, not shaming yourself for "bad" food and feeling pious about "good" food. Let yourself enjoy the process.
DO: Point out mindful details you notice about the food you're eating.

"Mmm, I just love the way the coconut milk balances out the spice in this curry."
"Mmm, the spongy texture of this dessert is a bit surprising, but I like it anyway!"

We often eat mindlessly, distracted by conversation or entertainment media. Good company is always a great way to enjoy a meal, but enjoying the food itself—like the experience of eating itself—requires an effort to be mentally present to the experience at hand, which takes most of us some practice. When you remember to eat mindfully, noticing aloud the sensations food brings you and the reactions they provoke invites others to do the same.

DON'T: Comment on others' diets or food choices.

"Oh wow, I haven't seen you in a while— you look great! What are your diet tips?"
"Mmm, your burger looks so tasty, but I could never order something that heavy."
"Wait— are you going to eat THAT?!"

Remember, weight loss may be due to an eating disorder or other medical condition. But even if it is intentional, what other people are eating is none of your business (unless you're trying to cook for them, in which case you should ask about food preferences, not diet). In order to promote body positive community, we need to stop the perpetuation of diet culture. Every person is perfectly capable of choosing how to feed themselves; your input can come across as judgment unless your opinion is specifically requested.

DO: Spread the word when you're feeling the love for your own body!

"Damn, I look so fine today! Look at my sweet hips in these leggings."
"You know, I'm really starting to like my full eyebrows these days."

Chances are good that many of your family and friends aren't modeling great body image. How many times have you heard your mother, sister, best friend look at themselves and say they don't like how they look? In order to break body-negative patterns, we have to be intentional in creating new body-positive patterns. Anytime you notice your inner voice appreciating your own body, say it out loud, even if you're alone! You deserve to hear your compliments to yourself, and your friends and family are lucky to have a role model like you. Slowly but surely, we've noticed these changes spreading to our close friends, and we're proud to help create a body positive community around us.

The Nebula is a constellation of queer feminists across the country dedicated to practicing and spreading radical connection, emotional honesty, and love for ourselves and each other.
THIS WEEKEND I SAW MY REFLECTION
IN A FULL-LENGTH MIRROR AT A HOTEL.

IT IS WHAT IT IS, I GUESS.

A TEMPORARY SHELL
A SOFT MACHINE
SOME BABY I KEEP
FEEDING.

IT'S EASY TO FIND THINGS TO DESPISE

WHAT ARE BOOBS SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE?

ALONE

ODD FAT DISTRIBUTION

BONY ASS FINGERS

BUT WHY DO I BOTHER?

Art by Cassie Lopez
I have a love/hate relationship with my curves. That disconnect between how I feel in my body and what I see in the mirror is what keeps me from loving. I look at my body and struggle with seeing the image of my mother.

My extra weight means that my extra zips and bra all hurt me that she can't. Now, any further, that I'm too, too, too, too, too, too. I struggle with my extra zips and bra all hurt me that she said it's relative to her.

HUGE TITS can be such a pain, man! I look in the mirror and struggle with the fact that even though I feel healthy and strong, it doesn't reflect what media and society shows me, what I think of my body, and how I change. I may seem insignificant, but it's not.

Another year has passed, without being better, and I still get surprised when I see a picture and don't recognize myself. It's not always that I look at myself and think, "Ugh, gross! I hate my weight!" I try not to think that way, because Body positivity is important to me. It's not at times, I feel like I've snapped into a body that is not mine.

My Body is strong; it carried me 500 miles across a country on a bicycle. I am a huge kick and cannot wait to carry my own children on them someday. The extra fat on my body naturally makes my muscles bigger, which means I can lift shit high into the air.

I want to see a therapist someday and get advice on my weight. The struggle with it because as a Pansexual, I didn't want my only reason to be to lose weight and become "better," but that I just wanted to feel like myself again. When I tried to explain it to her, she told me that it evidently wasn't a good enough reason, because here I was, not changing and remaining unmotivated.

Do you see me? Do anyone care? I walk my dog, play a day, then eat raw food galore, and my daughter can have ice cream for dinner, and a blueberry muffin for breakfast that is twice her serving size. Other people's expectations of body perfection don't help either.

After some soul searching and looking back at the last 3 years that have been filled with my lowest lows and my highest highs, sometimes in the same week, I felt like I was lost again. It was exhausting. I have to be the best person I can be in my new career, my ongoing marriage, and changing friendship dynamics, but that I need to feel like myself 100%.

I get frustrated with the lack of control I have over my life during a chronic illness. This bladder disorder and digestive issues cause me to not fit into my pants. I'm always unbuttoning the top button, and it's embarrassing. "Wow!" I'd laugh it off, because unless I want working out to be a part-time job, there's not too much I can do about it until I find some answers about my health. I'm going to a couple new doctors in a week, so I'm hopeful.

THERE IS MORE TO LIFE ... health being one of them. My WEIGHT is a collection of memories, good and bad, and it may always be a struggle. But someday it will be a struggle. I'll always win. Body positivity helps me let go and say, "It's ok. I am enough." It reminds me that my body is just fresh and Gone, Đed, vital of course, but not the sum of who I am or what I'll be. It's ok to work on body changes while you work on body acceptance. It's ok to admit failing prey to bullshit beauty standards. It's ok to ask for help when you're falling down over ourselves. It's ok to dig out to monitor our weight, to throw our scale out, to dance in our underwear, to be modest, to care about whatever we want as long as it's what we want. Just choose yourself with love.

So here's to finding myself again, in every aspect of my life!
I AM A SOMEWHAT FUNNY-LOOKING YOUNG MAN

By M. Yarbrough

With time I have found it liberating, even ennobling. Importantly, our world grants these advantages unevenly, and to men more gladly than to women. I will return to this. Anyway, as a man, I add my voice to those calling for body acceptance for everyone (and it's good for men too).

As a somewhat funny-lookin' young man—some sort of mestizo or quadroon or late bloomer or Chinaman, smaller but obviously still strong—I have found that I am freer to be my true self. Yes, my soul is free to exult and laugh and dance and delight in whatever my caprices originate, unbound to expectations of what comely must be and homely never is. I don't feel the pressure to be aggressive or chauvinistic the way say, a conventionally athletic looking man does. My ethnic or whatever group memberships I may have are inscrutable, and my presentation is confusing, so that people must accept whatever I do. It's great. I don't have to listen to a certain kind of music. I don't have to have opinions of a certain kind, or think a certain way based on what others will accept as legitimate based on what I look like—and if you don't believe this pressure is omnipresent as Earth's atmosphere, you're kidding yourself.

So many beliefs about the body destroy your freedom to be your truest self, and wit your imagination of what identities and possibilities are available to you. So many of our beliefs about the body in turn destroy others' freedom to be their truest selves, and our treatment of others etiolates, rots their imaginable identities and possibilities. We are lashed by our own heartstrings (Nabokov) to cruel structures, and we love it.

Some of my most impactful experiences with this came from the hegemonically misogynistic, white supremacist, classist mentality of pretty students at an elite college in the South (this pattern apparently rules at elite schools anywhere)—who were already prettier than even any modeling shoot (not an accident. Thanks,
society). But they would bear it not with poise, but with poison. Somehow they could immediately discern my spirit smiling freely in the sun, through their prison bars of pretty, elite expectations. They saw this small and offbeat looking kid, and I saw their immediate sneer at my smiling irrepressibly at anything I pleased, and my play, and weird hair, and weirdness, and random poor clothes and saying whatever and being whoever I want. Or they killed the image and the gaze would pass through me as if through air (I cannot find the original author of this phrase). I saw immediate, desperate hatred, displaced onto me from their world's acid images and ideologies that had eaten away at what could have been their snowflake. I saw that the expectations of elite, beautiful society put their souls into a blender and squirted them into a uniform and pretty container, where all interactions are condescension contests between skeletons desperately howling and clutching whatever would consolidate their position at the top of society.

So there were almost no punks among the students at this school, and I pitied them. Apparently people with 'good' cheekbones/shoulders and parents with cash must have elite preferences and conventional opinions, associate only with their ilk, hate the poor and unwashed, and love mutilating their own limbs.

So, what? I simply hope that readers see that the nature of body prejudice is not just division and denigration between groups. Just as tragic are body expectations that you bring to yourself that impoverish your freedom to shape your own destiny and way of being. And just as tragic is the violence we inflict on others' self-determination when we allow others to be only stereotypes.

Now, I have been able to find liberation rather than subjugation in my uncommon features because I am a "man", and because of male privilege, and because of misogyny. Women and others who deviate from the normative shape in certain other ways do not have such a privilege. They are more readily met with disinterest, and their imagination of how brilliant will be their efforts to make themselves is an acorn in hostile mud. Not sure what else to say about this, and this is in part because I haven't lived it all. I would rather someone who's lived it to show us rather than attempt to describe this oppression with my privileged voice. So that is that.

If you are "pretty": change the workings of power. Relinquish power, show others humane ways to accept it, then reverse it, and search fiercely for ways that stereotypes and cruel workings of power pollute our world. If you are "not": smile, and don't believe it. I hope you may see that it's a cruel game that you don't have to play. If you are a "man": you need body acceptance too. Men's body prejudice supports misogyny, men's sexual and emotional frustration, men's poor relationships with women, and even men's violence against women, a topic for another time.

The world I want is one where the infinite moiré-like patterns of the shifting soul are beautiful no matter which body they come from. In the body-accepting world, men and women are freer to love themselves and each other. Let's make it.
SEEING YOU / HOPE VON GUNTEN

THE FIRST TIME I SEE YOU, I NOTICE THE WAY YOU SPIN YOURSELF IN TWINKLING LIGHTS OUTLINING YOUR CELESTIAL BODY, THE WAY YOU ADORN THE VASTNESS OF YOUR SKIN WITH FLEETING TRAILS ETCHED IN GOLDEN SHINE.

I NOTICE HOW YOUR ARMS WRAP FULLY AROUND ME, PRESSING THE AIR FROM MY LUNGS, SECURING ME IN A THUNDERJACKET HUG, AND HOW YOUR LEGS DANCE DEEP INTO THE NIGHT WITHOUT TIRING.

I NOTICE HOW YOUR SMILE RADIATES TO THE FURTHEST REACHES OF THE ROOM, HOW THE CURVES OF YOUR LIPS DESCEND ON MINE IN A KISS AS SOFT AS YOUR BODY. THE GENTLE CONTOURS OF YOUR MUSCLE AND FAT FIT PERFECTLY TO THE SHARP ANGLES OF MY BONES.

I NOTICE HOW YOUR BODY TAKES TWICE THE SPACE OF MINE AND HOW YOUR SOUL IS EXPANSIVE FILLING ALL THE SPACE YOU INHABIT. YOU ARE NOT SHY TO BE WHOLE.

LATER THAT NIGHT, WHEN I INSIST YOU BRING MY BODY TO YOURS, WHEN WE ARE UNCLOTHED, SKINS TOGETHER, I TELL YOU YOUR BODY IS GLORIOUS. YOU SEEM SURPRISED.

BUT OH, MY LOVE, THIS IS SIMPLY THE TRUTH OF YOUR BODY I NOTICE.
FUCK SAM:
OR 4 FOLKS WHO CHANGED HOW I FEEL ABOUT BODY HAIR
By Jamie Lee Marks

1. Janis
About 14 of us were at a backyard potluck in a small, Southern city riddled with Spanish moss oak trees. It was 95 degrees. We were eating vegan brunch.

"I love Tara's body hair. I love her pit hair, her leg hair, her everything," Sam said.

(Sam—tall, tan, blonde. Tara, short, thin, brunette. White.)

Tara: "Yeah, I never feel like I have to take any of it off. I mean why should I let the patriarchy get to me like that?"

Sam: "Ugh, such a radical." Kisses her.

Me: *Right on.*

I was Tara's roommate—and loved being her friend. She got me into a bunch of cool shit—and I had often heard her partner, Sam, love on her body hair. He stroked her pit hair, kissed her. They made love loudly in the house. I was pumped on love. I was pumped on them. It was nice hearing that some straight-identifying men not only "tolerated" body hair—but got turned on by it.

After brunch, as my best friend Janis and I were riding downtown together on her tandem she shared that she was really upset by these remarks. Her—tall, curvy, Afrioletina.

"Only girls like Tara, like you you with light straight hair, hair that's easy to remove, hair that's not curly—only you guys get to look hot when you have body hair. When feminist men say they like body hair, they never mean like mine. If I let my hair grow like that in summer, it would be a totally different thing.

And am I not a feminist?"

I didn't know what to say. This was the first time that I understood race as related to the "I'm empowered by my body hair!" feeling I used to have. What did it mean that mine took 2 months to grow in full under my arms, and hers took only a day? What did it mean to live in a culture where whiteness still largely influences our notion of beauty, including feminist body hair aesthetics? What did it mean for Tara to link her body hair choices to feminism, even though my best friend wouldn't have the option for her hair to grow in like that—in neat little rows, slowly?

And what the fuck did it mean that Sam felt the need to comment on it?

I was fucking in love with Janis. But we could never make it work (we tried).

2. Paulo
I lived with someone a year later. He was my partner in everything. We stayed up fucking and talking about socialism. He asked me to let my hair grow, and grow. He was my first Sam. It was very hot—until he shaved me for trimming once. "I don't like to feel like I'm fucking a little girl."

"Dude, nothing is going to make me a little girl. What?"

"No me gusta," he said. I don't like it. "No luces feminista." You don't look like a feminist.

OH. OKAY. The pressure to conform to a body hair aesthetic to look feminist enough for my straight, male husband felt a hell of a lot like the pressure to shave or wax it off. I felt from the straight dudes I used to date in high school. No thanks.

I keep forgetting that men get to decide the limits of what feminism can look like. Was Paulo like Sam? Fuckkkkkk that. I couldn't help but wonder—would he like my pussy hair if it were like Janis? I was still fucking in love with her. We never did make it work.
3. Janis, again
We tried to date, once. Janis and I made love. She never would let me go down on her. She wouldn’t let her parents know she might be into grrrls. The last time we made out I asked in her ear, she said “no, no, I can’t. I don’t want you, you know, up in there. Please don’t push me.” I thought “fuck Sam.”

![Why Are You So Offended?](image)

We broke up. It sucked. It still sucks. I never really do stop loving people.

5. Me.
I’m here. I’m 31. I still want to feel in control of my body hair. I feel sexy when I have longer armpit and leg hair. I’ve dyed it. I love it. I also feel sexy when I’m smooth, hairless. I like taking pictures of myself and looking—either way, I just have to be in control. It’s been 5 years, or more, since someone asked me to do something with my body hair. I’m happy, I’m loved.

I still love Janis, too—and think of her anytime anyone talks about how womyn’s body hair should be. It’s not that fucking simple. She doesn’t—I don’t, we don’t—need armpit hair to be a feminist, and or need to be shaved to be sexy.

4. Mark
At 23 I started dating the fratty punk dude I had a crush on at age 18. I didn’t mean for it to happen. I was recently divorced and we ran into each other at a house show. I still thought he was hot, we hung out, we started kissing. Oh, well. By that time—as a course of habit—I had started waxing sometimes, and letting it grow other times. I felt like that moment—the deciding—was the part that made me feel in control. That dude and I fell in love. He liked it bare, liked it hair, he just liked me. We dated for 4 years.

One day my leg hair was, in his words “too long.” He said he didn’t feel up to sex that night. Oh, okay.

Another day when I went on his computer to order us Chinese food a page “Shave College Sluts” popped up. He refused to talk about it. Got mad that I saw it.
“NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY ASIAN PEOPLE ARE SO SKINNY” - SAID MANY WHITE PEOPLE WHILE USING CHOPSTICKS.

By SueAnn Shiah (@sueannshiah)

In my culture, mums and aunties will greet you with a “You’ve lost weight” or (more commonly for me) “You’ve gained weight!” Your grandmother openly says to you, "You’re so fat!” and then proceeds to lecture you on how you should change your diet and how not to eat that American food. These are all their special way of showing how much they love you.

The reality is that while this sounds horrifying to the average American, Well perhaps I should clarify—White Americans. I actually don’t really mind this. In many ways, I like this attitude better than that of White Americans, tiptoeing around the topic of the body with shame, fear, and trembling (coincidentally the way White Americans also act when it comes to the topic of race). It’s because they’re afraid of offending somebody, but the response to that would be, why do you think I am offended by that? Why are you offended by that?

White Americans hate to speak openly on how anyone’s body looks different from anybody else’s (that includes their skin tone). It’s amazing that people are so squeamish about vocalizing any of it but everyone knows exactly what things they’re ashamed of. Because it’s on the TV, in movies, plastered on billboards and magazines. We’re all enculturized to have very specific expectations for our bodies.

I don’t look like the stereotype of an Asian woman. I’m taller (than the average Asian woman) with wide hips and big boobs. I have broad shoulders, naturally curly hair, I, some days would be described as “chubby” and on other days “obese”. I am 100% Han Chinese, but white people often ask me if I’m mixed. I do not look like my mother (who is my biological mother), who is thin, has straight hair, stands 4 inches shorter than me, and is small chested.

I am regularly subjected to two different standards of beauty that I fail.

There’s the racism and misogyny that I face as an Asian woman with my fetishized “yellow” body. But I also don’t look the way colonialism patriarchy paints and idealizes me. I’ve struggled for years to feel like I am one of the Asian women whether or not my body looks like it. I’m never going to look like the white women I see everywhere, and their beauty standards are never going to come close to me.

I’ve found peace and hope in just talking about our bodies. I am by no means okay with everything in my body, but at least I can talk about those things. I think a lot of the silence is rooted in a mysticism and worship, by breaking it down and discussing the reality of our bodies as they are in their marked, blotchy, flabby, and flawed ways, we’re tearing down the shrines of body images we all quietly are told to worship.

So if the color of my skin isn’t something to be ashamed of? Then we should be able to talk about it.

And if the size of my hips, the amount of fat on my body isn’t something to be ashamed of? Then we should be able to talk about it.

6. about that racist joke....
STRUGGLING WITH AN EATING DISORDER?

Check out these local support groups! Renewed support groups will provide you with a sense of community and be a helpful supplement to your recovery treatment plan.

FSF is a free support group for family members and friends who have a loved one battling an eating disorder. FSF groups are intended to be a place for participants to share their thoughts, feelings, challenges and triumphs in a safe environment.

- **Audience:** Parents, siblings and friends who have a loved one battling an eating disorder
- **Meeting Time:** First and third Mondays of every month from 7:00-8:00 p.m.
- **Meeting Location:** Renewed office (2120 Crestmoor Rd, Ste 3000, Nashville, TN 37215)
- **Registration:** Please email Kathy Gaston gastornkathy@aol.com

CO-ED is our free eight-session group designed for college-aged women who struggle with disordered eating and body image concerns. Participants learn coping strategies that help them manage stress and navigate the college environment in helpful ways. The group is facilitated by Courtney Grimes, LCSW and takes place in Nashville, Tennessee.

- **Audience:** College-aged women
- **Meeting Time:** Every other Monday from 1-2pm
- **Meeting Location:** 4205 Hillsboro Pike #314, Nashville, TN 37215
- **Registration:** Please email Courtney Grimes, LCSW courtney@renewedsupport.org

More information about the partners in recovery buddy program, the body project (helping teens and young women to resist the pressure of society's beauty standards), and art therapy can be found at renewedsupport.org
A MEDICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF HEALTH AT EVERY SIZE
by Hope von Gunten, RN

#1 RESPECT body diversity!
While the medical debate over the risks and benefits of fat is ongoing, this should never be allowed to detract from a political and ethical argument for equal and fair treatment for people of all body types. Fighting a "war on obesity" has only resulted in a war on obese people, alienating people who have an equal right to compassionate healthcare as much as any other person of any size. (By the way, I am of the opinion that using "obese" should be limited only to those occasions you stumble upon a surprise hive. Get it—"oh, bees"? Okay, yes. I am secretly a dad joke ninja in addition to a body-positive nurse.) Respect is critical to the success of any health care relationship between providers and patients. Judgmental health care providers literally put their clients health at risk. Only by embodying respect and empathy can a health care provider transfer their knowledge and skills to patient empowerment to create lasting health improvements.

#2 Compassionate SELF-CARE
"Eating in a flexible and ATTUNED manner that values pleasure and honors internal cues of hunger, satiety, and appetite"
Culturally, women are often assigned moral value based on the extent to which they deny themselves pleasure. (Just think about how young women are praised for virginity, and older women for the sacrifices they've made for family or career.) However, there is nothing morally wrong with enjoying the pleasures of food.

We have built-in biological mechanisms for communicating hunger and satiety (fullness) cues, including hormones released from the digestive system (ghrelin for hunger, leptin and peptide YY for satiety) and electric signals from the hypothalamus in the brain. Essentially,
hunger and fullness are determined by a conversation between our brain and our stomach. But other messages from our brain, like emotions, stress, or value judgements about our appearance or behavior, can override these signals. By eating mindfully, noticing all the sensations food brings us as we eat and digest it, we prioritize listening to our body's messages about food. Eating several smaller meals a day can also help train your mind and body to recognize more subtle changes in hunger and satiety, and lets your body know it can always count on you to feed it (so do not hold onto unnecessary calories “just in case”). Trust your body, and it will begin to trust you.

“Finding the JOY in moving one’s body and being physically active”

Whatever your physical abilities are, celebrate them with movement! Too often, we associate the word “exercise” with a grueling gym routine we'd prefer to avoid, but joyful movement is an activity we should seek out. What ways of moving your body make you happiest? Personally, I love anything graceful that feels like dance or acrobatics. You might enjoy the swiftness of running or biking, the power of kickboxing or weightlifting, or the serene rhythm of walking or swimming.

Regular physical activity has amazing benefits for your physical and mental health. Sure, it does reduce fat and associated health risks, like diabetes and high cholesterol; recent studies found that exercise plays a greater role in weight loss than nutritional changes. But there are plenty of positives independent of its impact on weight. Physical activity releases endorphins, which improve our mood and help counteract depression, along with norepinephrine, which helps our brain deal better with stress. For those of us who have anxiety, exercise decreases our sensitivity to its physical symptoms, boosting our resilience against panic. Regular movement also reduces the physical ways we carry stress in our bodies, including reducing muscle tension and cortisol, a stress-related hormone that is also linked to weight gain. Exercise actually improves self-esteem all on its own—even more so if you choose to exercise outdoors, as it turns out. It also protects from heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure.

Chances are that you’ve already heard about the health benefits of physical activity—did your eyes glaze over there for a minute? That’s because weight loss and health improvements are often held up as the only motivations for exercise. And while health is an excellent goal, it’s hard to enjoy the wonderful physical abilities of our bodies if we’re focused on exercising to change parts we dislike instead of simply enjoying the feeling of movement in and of itself.

#3 Critical AWARENESS

“Challenging scientific and cultural ASSUMPTIONS”

Part of shifting to a Health at Every Size mindset is critically examining the messages we receive from society and the scientific community. Cultural messages that larger people are lazy, unhealthy, not beautiful, and lack self-control are not only plain incorrect generalizations, they lead to the devaluing of large bodies. In order to care for your health, you must first believe that your body and health are worth caring about. And let’s say it one more time for the kids in the back: there is nothing morally wrong with enjoying the pleasures of food. In fact, you should enjoy all the pleasures that come with the wondrous experience of being human.

It’s also important to understand that while current scientific methods are the best way we have of learning more about the world around us, conclusions from individual studies are not incontrovertible facts. Next time you see a news item claiming that “a new study reveals” some
surprising information about size and health, go look at the actual study (if there's no link, a quick search on Google Scholar including the authors' last names and year published is usually the best way to find scientific journal articles). The abstract, or summary, at the beginning of the paper should list the premise, methods, and conclusions. Learning to look at scientific information with a critical eye is an important skill for all healthcare providers to learn, but it's important for everyone to learn how to analyze the sources of this information too in order to challenge scientific assumptions. The entire field of fat-positive scientific research actually came about due to public demand and challenges to prevailing scientific assumptions from body-positive activists. Continuing to speak out against these assumptions really does make a difference!

"Valuing body knowledge and people's LIVED EXPERIENCES"

"Lived experience" is a concept that we often bring up in a social justice context, but another common context is the research approach of phenomenology, which attempts to describe a concept as it is experienced by individuals rather than as defined by detached researchers. In both the research and social justice contexts, lived experience is valued because it brings to light real-world impact and restores agency to silenced and unheard voices to define their own experience. Healthcare professionals would do well to seek out more phenomenological studies to better understand the experiences of patients of all sizes, particularly those dissimilar to their own. (And while body-positive health research has been focused on larger sizes, we should also demand more research on smaller sizes too. As a chronically underweight woman myself, I have often heard utterly ignorant comments from fellow healthcare colleagues laden with inaccurate assumptions about my health and choices.)

In order for healthcare practitioners to truly engage with all patients regardless of size, we must be aware of and make an effort to lay aside cultural and scientific assumptions and instead center patient experience. The recent evidence-based shift toward focusing on "client-centered care" in nursing and medical schools demonstrates the medical community is beginning to recognize the importance of respecting each person's expertise on their own body and self. Increasing mindfulness during eating and physical movement has been shown to cut down on stress and increase body knowledge, and is something everyone can practice to improve their mental and physical health regardless of size. Above all, every person is the best expert on themselves, and should be trusted to know themselves better than any healthcare practitioner.

The Health at Every Size initiative was founded by Linda Bacon, PhD, who has authored two books on the medical science supporting these principles. All supporting evidence listed in this article was independently sourced by me. Hope van Gunten, RN. For more about Health at Every Size and to demonstrate your commitment to its principles by signing the HAES Pledge, visit http://haescommunity.com/. Italicized quotes contained in this article are cited directly from this webpage.

Disclaimer: Just because I'm a nurse doesn't mean I know anything about your own individual health, dear zine reader. This article is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of a qualified health care provider with any questions about your own health or medical condition.
BODY-POSI RESOURCES

Articles
bustle.com/articles/116456-7-little-ways-to-be-body-positive-toward-yourself-every-day
queerfatfemme.com/2014/04/18/six-strategies-to-not-care-when-people-stare-at-you
yourwelcome.wordpress.com/2011/04/12/losing-weight-staying-fat-positive
tinybuddha.com/blog/learning-to-love-your-body-4-steps-to-self-care
everydayfeminism.com/2016/01/conscious-trolling-is-bullshit/
bustle.com/articles/18872-15-disney-characters-that-are-actually-body-positive
bustle.com/articles/7877-13-body-positive-tumblr-blogs-you-should-follow-
because-self-love-should-always-be-on-your

Books
Reasons to Be Pretty by Neil LaBute
Only Ever Yours by Louise O'Neill
Things No One Will Tell Fat Girls by Jes Baker
She's Come Undone by Wally Lamb
Eleanor & Park by Rainbow Rowell
Beautiful You: A Daily Guide to Radical Self-Acceptance by Rose Molinary
Fat Activism: A Radical Social Movement by Dr. Charlotte Cooper
Gabi, a Girl in Pieces by Isabel Quintero
Hot & Heavy: Fierce Fat Girls on Life, Love & Fashion by Virgie Tovar
Heal at Every Size: The Surprising Truth About Your Weight by Linda Bacon
Children's book list: amightygirl.com/blog?p=10912

Podcasts
Wellness Wonderland Radio
Bad Fat Broads
Mind Body Musings
Fearless Rebelle Radio
The Recovery Warrior Show
The Podcast

Blogs
definatiale.com
gabxfresh.com/
theloveyourselfchallenge.tumblr.com
curiousfancy.com

Fashion, Support, FB Pages, and MORE
themilitantbaker.com/2016/02/the-master-body-positive-resource-list.html

ALL WOMEN NEED TO DO TO GET A BIKINI BODY IS TO PUT A BIKINI ON
your standards confuse me

But they won’t destroy me

Nashville Riot Grrrls was founded in 2014 in response to the boys only club culture of Nashville’s music/art scene. Our mission is to build an inclusive community of Riot Grrrl feminists to challenge the patriarchal status quo. We are equal parts a social group, an activist group, and a community support/resource group.

We invite you to learn more and connect with likeminded grrrls on our Facebook page. And, more importantly, come out to a meeting as this is where the real work and FCH takes place. All are welcome!

We come from the True Funk Rock Soul Crusade... We are different from other groups; some may be more organized or academic. We are not for everyone and that is okay. We come from the philosophy of anarchism. We reject hierarchy. We reject elitism. We reject any box you may draw around us. The black and white way of thinking is lost on us; we are, we crave, and we RIDI for all the colors.

Girls to the front.

Let’s have a strength based focus instead of ripping each other down in constant criticism. Let’s meet people where they are in their feminist journey; no one is expected to have a women’s studies degree. Let’s create, craft, write, promote, and rock together. Let’s be friends and accomplices in Riot Grrrl Revolution.

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Love the Skin You're In!

Nashville Riot Grrrls... Smashing the Patriarchy Together Since 2014