

## Female Body Image

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*Body image is a popular topic for health professionals, psychologists, sociologists, and feminist scholars. Through the ages, the ideal female body image has shifted, depending on the status of women in society. The current ideal body image of women seen so often in the media is the "waif look" - thin, few curves, and boyish. At the other extreme, another popular image pushed by the media is the "Barbie Doll" look, sculpted through plastic surgery or other artificial means.*

Many women struggle with the gap between how their bodies look to them when compared with the projected "ideal" that bombards them continually through television, film, magazines, and billboards. Eating disorders, dieting, and diet aids are often the "answer" chosen to try to remould their bodies to meet the standards of society's "ideal".

To really tune into her body, a woman needs to shift her focus away from what society is telling her to look like. As Gloria Steinem so eloquently said, "Change the self-consciousness of a spotlight **on** the body for the self - confidence of a light radiating **from** the body". (Revolution from Within, 1996, pg. 224.)

Your daily experience of your physical body is intimately connected with your ideas and beliefs about your worth and personal value. You inwardly form your body image in line with your beliefs, ideas, and thoughts. Quite literally, **you live and perceive in the body of your chosen beliefs**. By working with your thoughts, beliefs, and feelings, you can reshape your body and restructure your body image.

The first thing you should do for your body, is to **feed it a regular diet of nurturing positivity**. Learn to really tune into the uniqueness of **your** body. Being oneself is a rare and challenging path to tread. 21<sup>st</sup> century women have learned to live outside of society's stereotypes of women, and have discarded the old worn - out attitudes of what women should be like.

Look very hard at **what** and **who** you'd really like to be - deep down in your heart and soul. **There is Truth in this inner vision**. Write down how you'd **truly** like your body to look, to feel, to act, and to move. The feminine or receptive way of changing your body image is to attract to you, what you **really** want. Once you know clearly what is best for YOU, learn to assert yourself consistently in your life. Really BE in your body - **feel it, savor it, love it, use it to express your inner self**.

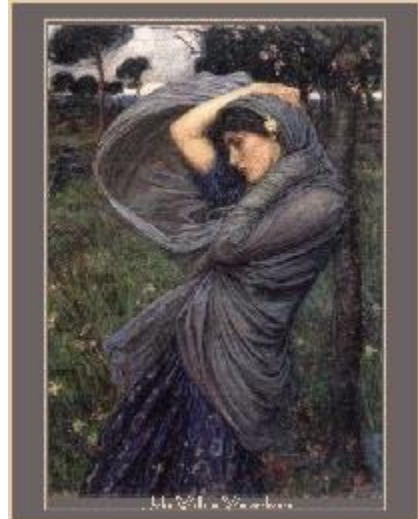
Your body is a very sensitive instrument - sensitive to the thoughts, emotions, and words that you express through it. In metaphysical studies, your body is surrounded by several subtle or energy "bodies", - layers of energy that radiate from your thoughts, emotions, Spirit and Soul. One of these layers, called the **etheric body** serves as your perfect energy template through which your body continuously renews itself. When the body image that you have of yourself in your mind, matches this etheric template, your body is guided to grow according to your own unique, dynamic pattern. If your mind's image of your body is not in tune with your etheric template, you'll likely feel alienated from your body, out of tune with it, and feel ashamed of parts of it. By tuning into your perfect template, you'll learn to no longer compare your body to the stereotypic standards supported by the status quo.

Connect your mental body image with your perfect etheric template. Your physical body recreates itself daily, around your chosen body image - it can be influenced by your mind, your thoughts and beliefs. When you are able to transform the mental image of who you are, your body will learn to shape itself in that new image.

## Explore Your Body Image

Sit quietly in a tranquil place where you can spend some time in privacy. Prepare to write down your thoughts and impressions on paper - perhaps in a journal.

Now focus your attention on your body - notice how your body is feeling at this very moment. Notice your posture, where you sense any pressure, tension, discomfort, or pain. Do you feel any stiffness or heaviness? Now mull over these questions:



1. What parts of your body feel loose, free, and comfortable right now?

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2. Does your posture feel natural? Why?

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3. If someone was observing you right now, would you change the way you are holding your body? Why?

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4. When you think of your physical appearance, what 3 descriptive words come immediately to mind?

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5. When you consider your physical health at this moment, what 3 descriptive words come to mind?

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6. Consider what a "perfect" version of your body would be like. Describe this body.

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7. Is the perfect body that you described much different from your body right now?

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8. Is the perfect body that you described similar to the "ideal body" of women in the media? (TV, ads, films)

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9. What kind of body image best suits **your** ideal body - the body that would make **YOU** happy?

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10. Can you accept this self - directed body image as your own?

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11. What would happen if you felt comfortable and relaxed in your body - if you truly loved and appreciated it every moment of your life?

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12. How can you create this as your reality?

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