

# BOOST YOUR BODY IMAGE

*with four healing strategies*



Start the healing journey here with four empowering ways to change your mind about your body.

Welcome to Redwood

Hello! I'm Alyssa - Mother, Teacher, and Certified Nutrition and Health Coach. I'm thrilled that you've taken this step to work on your holistic health. By the end of this guide, you will be equipped with four strategies to get you started on boosting your body image, for life.



## WHAT DOES BODY IMAGE MEAN?

Your body image is your personal relationship with your body. It's dynamic in nature and fluctuates as a result of both internal and external factors. The four aspects of body image are; **perceptual, affective, cognitive, and behavioural.**

- Perceptual body image is how you see yourself.
- Affective body image is the way you feel about your body.
- Cognitive body image is the thoughts that you hold about your body.
- Behavioural body image are the actions you take based on your perceptions, feelings and thoughts.

Recognising these four body image aspects means you'll be able to start practising paying attention to what's going on for you with your own body image relationship as you implement the following strategies.

It's helpful to understand that we *do* get to have control of our relationship with our bodies, and we can change our beliefs, feelings, thoughts, and actions if we have a negative body image. I used this information in healing my own body image and I know this will work for you too if are consistent with putting them into practise. So let's start doing that now with these four supportive strategies.

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*Create a New Neural Pathway*

*Reject Society's Body Standards*

*Be Who You Say You Are*

*Self Care is Crucial*

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*Your goal as you implement these healing strategies is not to believe your body is perfect, but rather, to move toward body acceptance, respect and love. It is entirely possible to shift your mindset about your body regardless of your weight, shape or size.*

## Create a New Neural Pathway

If you want to change your mind about the way you see and feel and think and act toward your body, you first need to know about neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity means that your brain is adaptable and malleable, with the ability to change in response to thinking. The most helpful way of explaining how you're going to use neuroplasticity in boosting your body image is through an analogy of a sugar cane farm. The farm is your brain. Now imagine that one neural pathway or well-worn path through a sugar cane farm is a current thought about your body. For years, you've followed this well-worn path, it's familiar, almost comforting, but it's also the source of your poor body image. Every negative thought, every critical glance in the mirror, every comparison to unrealistic standards has contributed to deepening this well-worn path. With patience and consistency, you can create a new, positive neural pathway, leading you to a healthier body image.

### Tips for implementing this strategy

**Reflection and Self-Awareness:** Start by becoming aware of your current thought patterns. Take time each day to reflect on the negative thoughts you have about your body. Write them down if it helps. .

**Pausing the negative thought:** When you notice you're having a familiar thought about your body, stop and pause. Remind yourself that you are now walking a new pathway, that feel difficult because it is not yet well worn, but it can only become a worn pathway if you use it often. Replace the negative thought with a positive one or a peaceful one that shows your body the respect it deserves. If you're unsure about what to say, think of what you would say to a dear friend in that moment.

**Mirror Affirmations:** Stand in front of a mirror and look at yourself. Challenge those negative thoughts by saying positive affirmations out loud. For instance, if you often criticize your body, say, "I am beautiful just the way I am," or "My body is strong and resilient." Repeat these affirmations daily, even when they feel uncomfortable or untrue at first.

**Gratitude Journal:** Start a journal where you jot down things you appreciate about your body every day. It could be something as simple as the way your smile lights up a room or how your body allows you to hug your loved ones. Try not to focus your thoughts on weight, shape or size in this exercise.

**Visualization:** Imagine the new neural pathway as a clear, inviting path through the sugar cane field. Visualize yourself walking confidently along this path, feeling happy and at peace with your body. The more vividly you can picture this, the more powerful the impact on your brain.

**Support System:** Share your journey with a trusted friend, family member or counsellor. Discussing your challenges and progress with someone who understands can provide valuable insights and motivation to continue.

*Consistency is Key - understand that forging new neural pathways takes time and persistence. Be patient with yourself and keep practicing these techniques daily. Over time, the dense sugar cane will start to yield, and your new path will become more accessible.*

## *Reject Society's Body Standards*

In a world heavily influenced by media, pop culture, and advertising, it's no surprise that we're bombarded with images of a specific body ideal. In many Western societies, there's an obsession with a particular body type – typically thin, toned, and often unattainable for most people. This cultural influence creates a vicious cycle. Women internalize these unrealistic beauty standards, leading to poor body image and dissatisfaction. They embark on diets and fitness routines in an attempt to fit the mold, only to find themselves perpetually dissatisfied because they're striving for an ideal that doesn't align with their unique bodies. The first step to breaking free from this cycle is recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all definition of beauty. By rejecting society's narrow standards, you can start the journey toward embracing your body as it is.

## Tips for implementing this strategy

**Curate Your Social Media:** Start by unfollowing accounts on social media that promote unrealistic beauty standards or make you feel unworthy as you are. Surround yourself with content that celebrates body diversity and self-acceptance.

**Mindful Media Consumption:** Be discerning about the media you consume. Consider whether certain magazines, TV shows, or movies perpetuate the thin ideal. Choose media that portrays a broader range of body types and promotes self-love.

**Positive Self-Talk:** Challenge your inner critic by practicing positive self-talk. Replace self-deprecating thoughts with affirmations that celebrate your uniqueness and value beyond appearance.

**Community Support:** Seek out communities or support groups that align with your goals of body positivity. Surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals can be empowering and uplifting.

**Practice Self-Compassion:** Treat yourself with kindness and compassion, as you would a close friend. Remember that nobody is perfect, and imperfections are what make us human.

**Set Realistic Goals:** If you have health and fitness goals, make sure they are about feeling strong and healthy rather than conforming to a particular look. Focus on how your body performs and how it makes you feel, rather than how it appears.

*Rejecting society's body standards is a liberating journey toward self-acceptance and improved body image. It's about taking back control of how you perceive your own beauty and worth. By consciously choosing to embrace body diversity and challenging cultural norms, you empower yourself to decide what beauty means to you, paving the way for a more positive and authentic relationship with your body.*

# Be Who You Say You Are

Alex Hormozi wisely said, "*You don't become confident by shouting affirmations into a mirror, but by having a stack of undeniable proof that you are who you say you are.*" This quote encapsulates a profound truth about confidence, especially when it comes to our bodies. True body confidence isn't solely derived from changing your appearance; it's about becoming more self-assured through your actions and behaviours, particularly those that improve your overall health and well-being.

Conditional confidence is a trap many people fall into. It's the belief that you can only feel confident in your body if it adheres to a specific look or size. This conditional confidence is fragile because it depends on external factors that can change. If your self-worth is tied solely to your physical appearance, your confidence will waver as your body naturally changes over time. To foster authentic body confidence, it's essential to shift your focus from how your body looks to what it can do and how you feel. This transformation occurs when you take concrete actions to improve your overall health and well-being. When you set meaningful goals and follow through on them, you accumulate undeniable proof of your capabilities, boosting your confidence.

## Tips for implementing this strategy

**Set SMART Goals:** Define specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for your health and well-being. For example, rather than setting a vague goal like "lose weight," aim for something specific like "exercise for 20 minutes four days a week" or "eat 3 main meals and 2 snacks - no more skipping meals".

**Break Goals into Daily Actions:** Once you have your SMART goals in place, break them down into daily actions. These small, manageable steps make your goals more achievable. For instance, if your goal is to exercise regularly, your daily action might be a 15-minute morning workout routine.

**Track Your Progress:** Keep a journal or use a tracking app to monitor your daily actions and progress toward your goals. Seeing the positive changes you're making in your life provides undeniable proof of your commitment and capabilities. *(This strategy is not recommended for tracking eating habits in the form of calorie/kilojoule counting.)*

**Celebrate Achievements:** Celebrate your victories, no matter how small they may seem. Every step toward your goals is a win that contributes to your confidence. Reward yourself in meaningful ways to reinforce your positive actions.

**Seek Support and Accountability:** Share your goals with a friend, family member, or coach who can provide support and hold you accountable. Having someone to share your journey with can be motivating and inspiring.

**Embrace Self-Compassion:** Understand that setbacks and challenges are a part of any journey. Be kind to yourself and avoid self-criticism when you face obstacles. Use setbacks as opportunities to learn and grow.

**Mindfulness and Gratitude:** Practice mindfulness and gratitude to stay present and appreciative of your progress. Focus on how you feel, your increased energy, and improved health rather than fixating on your appearance.

*By setting and achieving SMART goals, taking daily actions, and celebrating your progress, you accumulate the undeniable proof that you are actively working towards becoming the person you want to be. This unshakable confidence in your ability to follow through on your intentions extends beyond your body, affecting how you perceive yourself as a whole. As you build this confidence, your body image becomes a reflection of your self-assurance, independent of external standards, ultimately leading you closer to becoming the woman of your dreams.*



# Self Care is Crucial

In the pursuit of improving body image and fostering a positive self-image, self-care emerges as a powerful ally. However, it's essential to understand that self-care goes far beyond the stereotypical images of beauty salons and bubble baths. True self-care involves supportive actions that address the root causes of poor body image, helping individuals move closer to body confidence and a peaceful mind. Self-care is a holistic approach to nurturing your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. It's not merely a temporary escape from reality but a daily practice that supports you in achieving and maintaining balance. At its core, self-care is about regulating your nervous system, particularly activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which in turn impacts your mindset about yourself, and your relationship with your body. If you can prioritise a regulated nervous system, you are setting yourself up for success with improving your body image.

## Tips for implementing this strategy

**Limit Screen Use:** Constant exposure to unrealistic beauty standards on social media and in advertising can contribute to poor body image. Limiting screen time and curating your online environment to include body-positive content can help reduce negative influences.

**Prioritise Sleep:** Ensure you get 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night. A well-rested body and mind are better equipped to handle daily challenges and maintain emotional stability.

**Nutrition:** Focus on nourishing your body with wholesome, balanced meals. A diet rich in nutrients not only benefits your physical health but also supports emotional well-being. The gut-brain connection means your diet plays a huge part in your mental and emotional health.

**Movement:** Engage in physical activity that you enjoy. Regular exercise boosts endorphins, reduces stress, and enhances body confidence by improving physical strength and overall health.

**Connect with Others:** Building and maintaining social connections is essential for emotional well-being. Spend time with friends and loved ones who support and uplift you.

**Mindfulness and Meditation:** Incorporate mindfulness practices and meditation into your daily routine. These techniques can help you stay grounded, reduce anxiety, and foster self-acceptance.

**Journaling:** Keep a journal to express your thoughts and emotions. Writing can be a therapeutic way to process feelings and gain insight into your body image journey.

**Gratitude Practice:** Cultivate gratitude by focusing on the positive aspects of your life and body. Regularly acknowledging what you're thankful for can shift your perspective.

**Seek Professional Help:** If poor body image and related issues are deeply ingrained, consider seeking support from a therapist or counselor who specializes in body image and self-esteem.

*Incorporating self-care into your daily life is a continuous journey toward body confidence and improved mental well-being. It's about recognizing that caring for yourself is not indulgent; it's necessary for maintaining a healthy and balanced life. By prioritizing self-care practices that activate your parasympathetic nervous system and support your overall well-being, you can create a more peaceful mind and cultivate a positive body image that stems from self-acceptance and self-love.*

**If you get value from this guide and you want more in depth support, please reach out to me via email or my website, or sign up to THE PEACEFUL PATHWAY online course, designed for women ready to heal their body image and food relationships, for life.**

**Peace out,  
Alyssa**



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