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Body Neutrality

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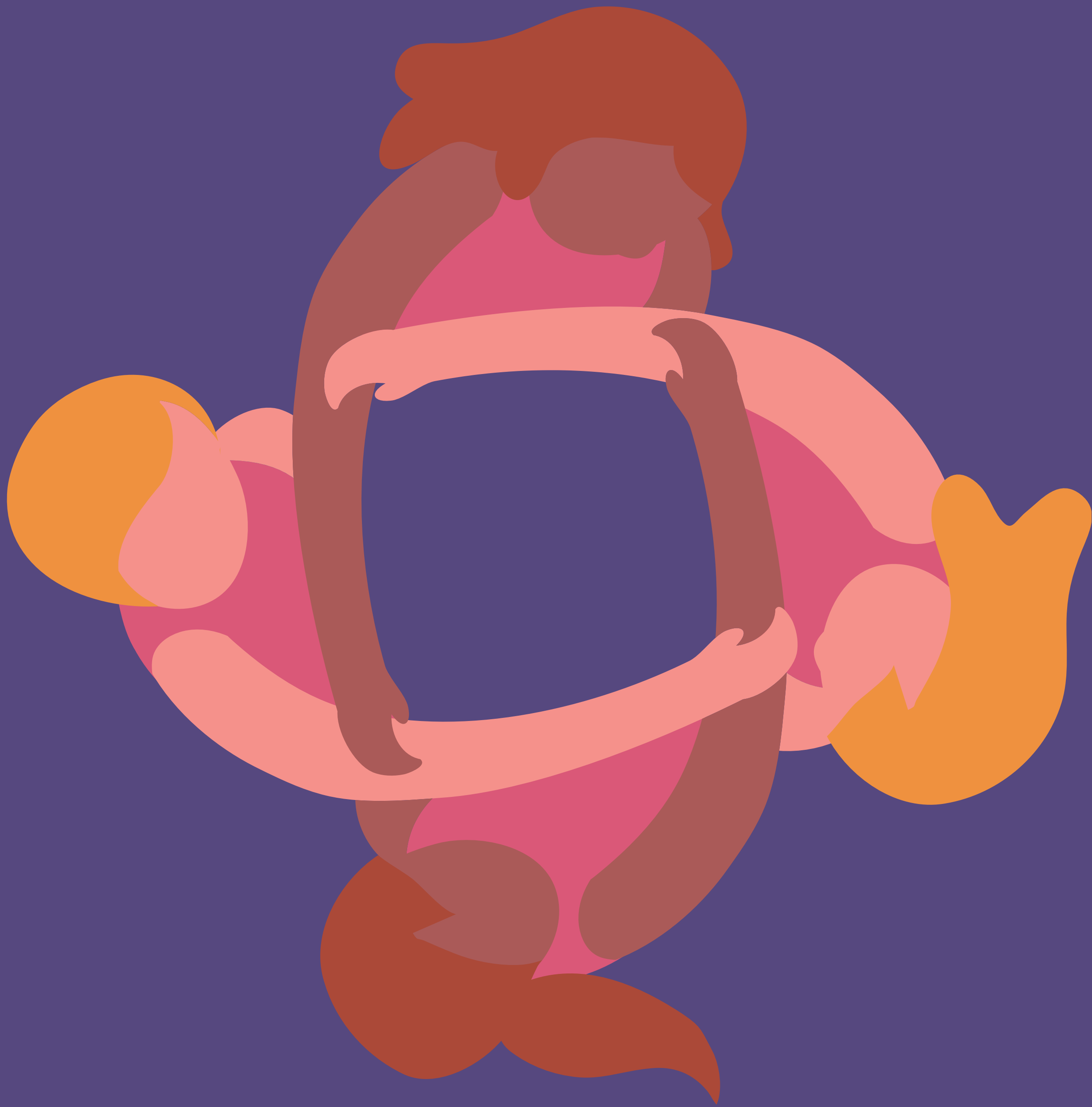


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BODY
NEUTRALITY

Accepting your body and appreciating
what it does for you

What is Body Neutrality?

In a society where there is a new diet trend every week, body neutrality helps us direct our focus from looks to functionality. By changing your mindset and habits, you can create peace with your body. You do not have to love your body to be happy with it.

Your self-worth is much more than your body image. Your body is only one small part of who you are. Your body houses your mind, your spirit, and your heart, keeping them safe and carrying them through the world.

Appreciate how it takes care of you and in return take care of it. Even if you do not love your body, you do not have to hate it either.

You do not have to fit into society's unrealistic beauty standards in order to care for and appreciate your body.

Body neutrality can also help reduce weight stigma and support the fat acceptance movement.

The fat acceptance movement aims to reclaim the word fat and to end body size discrimination. Both movements wish for people to view fat neutrally, not good or bad. Fat does not equal unhealthy.

By focusing on functionality we can be more accepting of our own bodies as well as others.

Appreciating other's functionality helps keep us from judging them on their physical appearance.



Why Do We Need Body Neutrality?

- 53% of American girls are "unhappy with their bodies" by age 13, and 78% by age 17
- 40–60% of elementary school girls are concerned about their weight
- 45.5% of teens report considering cosmetic surgery and 43.7% of women over 60 report considering cosmetic surgery
- 46% of 9–11 year-olds have dieted
- 1 in 100 females between the ages of 12 and 18 have anorexia
- 90 percent of those who have eating disorders are women between the ages of 12 and 25 (National Organization for Women, 2014)



Beauty is a social construct, and being beautiful in society's eyes often gives you privilege. Women's worth should not be based on an unattainable beauty standard.

Throughout our lives, we learn the importance of beauty. The messages telling us that as a woman, beauty is one of your most valuable assets, are frequent and pervasive. Stories we are told as children equate pretty to good and ugly to evil. The feminine beauty ideal is nearly everywhere you look. If not born "beautiful" a woman is expected to spend her time, money, and effort, in an attempt to achieve it. Today, the standards of beauty have become so high they can only be achieved through plastic surgery and photoshop. When women do not live up to this unrealistic standard, they often feel shameful through no fault of their own. Beauty \neq Worth

Many products directed towards women aim to sell them the feminine beauty ideal. Advertisements often focus on a common insecurity of women and offer a product promising to help make them "beautiful", profiting off their insecurity.



Advertisements and magazine covers often feature women who have been photoshopped to better fit the feminine beauty ideal. Women frequently photoshopped to look thinner, brighter, and smoother.



When it is not disclosed the images are photoshopped, it gives the illusion that they have met the unrealistic expectations, even though the photos have been heavily altered. This leads people's body image to deteriorate, including children and teens.

Body Neutrality vs. Body Positivity

Although both movements ask us to go beyond traditional beauty standards, they have a few differences.

Body Positivity

- Every body is beautiful
- No longer represents WOC, trans people, disabled persons, and non conventionally attractive plus-sized women
- Attempts to expand societies notion of beauty
- Used by corporations to sell products

Body Neutrality

- Bodies do not need to be beautiful
- Is a movement that includes all different bodies. Appreciated by many people with disabilities and trans people who may feel frustrated with their body
- Rejects labels

The body positivity movement tells people to love their body and that every body is beautiful. For people who do not want to love their body or cannot see it as beautiful, body neutrality is the movement for them. Many brands have now taken over the movement for their own agenda. They have become more inclusive in advertising but claim your confidence and body positivity will come to you when you buy their product. Body neutrality focuses more on how you feel than how you look. Instead of changing the beauty standards, body neutrality ignores them.

How to Practice Body Neutrality

1. Eat intuitively: when you are hungry, eat. When you are full, stop eating.
2. No restricting, dieting, or calorie counting
3. Choose meals that you enjoy, and that you digest comfortably
4. Wear clothes that you like and that feel comfortable
5. Mute or unfollow social media accounts that make you feel a type of way about your body
6. Exercise to feel good, not to lose weight
7. Pick exercises that you enjoy doing
8. Neutrally acknowledge how your body functions well: "my legs can walk around the neighborhood"
"my brain can solve math problems"
9. Acknowledge how your body may not work well without shame: "I cannot lift heavy things" "my body does not digest dairy"
10. Do not comment on others bodies

Practicing body neutrality helps you have a healthy relationship with your body without trying to force body love. Focus on accepting your body and how it serves you. Listen to signals your body gives you, and do what makes you feel good.



Bibliography

About Us. (2020). Naafa. <https://naafa.org/about-us>

This site gave information on the fat acceptance movement. The National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance is an organization that strives for fat people to be free from discrimination and to be fully accepted by society. It supported my claim that Naafa and the body neutrality movement have similar values.

Alleva, J. (2021, May 18). Appreciating What the Body Can Do May Lower Weight Stigma. Psychology Today.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mind-your-body/202105/appreciating-what-the-body-can-do-may-lower-weight-stigma>

This article discussed a study about appreciating functionality and how it can reduce the stigma around weight. The study concluded that people who look at functionality are less likely to judge based on weight.

Baker-Sperry, L., & Grauerholz, L. (2003). The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales. *Gender & Society*, 17(5), 711–726. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243203255605>

This article discusses how the feminine beauty ideal is throughout the stories we are told as children. This supported my claim about how we are taught that beauty is important and how ingrained beauty ideals are in our society.

Davies, S. (2020, September 14). Concept: Body Neutrality. The One Woman Project.

<https://www.onewomanproject.org/blog/2020/9/9/concept-body-neutrality>

Davies explained how body positivity is not for everyone as the focus of the movement is still on the body. The article also explains how the body positivity movement calls for self-love and this may not be for everyone. Body neutrality and how a positive body image does not equal happiness was also discussed.

Goldwert, L. (2011, July 24). AMA takes stand on Photoshop; Medical association: Altering contributes to unrealistic expectations. Daily News. <https://www.tribpub.com/gdpr/nydailynews.com/>

This article talked about how pervasive Photoshop is and the effects it can have. This supported my claim that we need body neutrality because of the unrealistic standards set by Photoshopped women in magazines and advertisements.

Lusengo, A. (2020, June 25). Body Positivity vs Body Neutrality. Her Campus. <https://www.hercampus.com/school/uct/body-positivity-vs-body-neutrality>

Lusengo discusses the differences between body positivity and body neutrality. She gives the origins of the body positivity movement and talks about how it has changed through the years. This supported my claim that body positivity no longer includes all people.

National Organization for Women. (2014, November 29). Get The Facts. <https://now.org/now-foundation/love-your-body/love-your-body-whats-it-all-about/get-the-facts/#:%7E:text=Body%20Image,the%20time%20girls%20reach%20seventeen.>

This page gave statistics relating to body image and eating disorders. This helped to support my claim that people should move towards body neutrality, because many girls and women have a poor self-image.

Raypole, C. (2020, January 20). How to Shift from 'Body Positivity' to 'Body Neutrality' — and Why You Should. Healthline.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/body-neutrality>

This article helped me better understand what body neutrality is about. It gave insights into why it was started, who it is for, and how to practice it. It also gave a good comparison of body neutrality and body positivity.

Shruti, S. (2019, August 31). Body Neutrality—An Alternative to Body Positivity. Feminism In India.

<https://feminisminindia.com/2019/09/02/body-neutrality-alternative-body-positivity/>

Shruti talks about how body neutrality is a good alternative to the body positivity movement. She explains that how you look should not determine your life and that body neutrality can help you reject labels.