

10 Tips

for Queer Women to Avoid Body Image Angst

- 1 Understand the societal pressures that link identity, self-esteem and appearance for women.** On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is a little and 10 is a lot) how much do you buy into the Body Myth that your self worth is dependent on how you look? How much do you believe that if you change your body you can change your life? Where do you experience these pressures in your own life? How can you get through them and grow from them?
- 2 Examine your own beliefs about what it means to be female and what it means to be queer.** Make a list of your 'shoulds.' Where do they come from? How many of them can you discard right away? Being aware of your 'shoulds' and not acting on them is the best way to move past them. Remember that 'shoulds' and expectations are disappointments waiting to happen.
- 3 Look at the places, situations and people where you feel safe and when you feel unsafe being queer.** How much does your negative voice kick in when you feel unsafe? Instead of berating yourself, try expressing the words and feelings outwardly. You don't have to do this directly. You can do this symbolically by labeling a stuffed animal "Homophobia" and telling it out loud how you feel. You can write letters about how you feel to the appropriate people and then burn them or throw them out.
- 4 Pay attention to your fat talk.** Remember that 'feeling fat' is not a feeling. Every time you feel fat, there is a real story waiting to be told. The more you can be real with yourself and with others, the less likely you will feel fat or take things out on your body.
- 5 Build a bank account of self-esteem points.** Make a list of your qualities, talents, skills and traits. Every time you don't measure up to how you think you should look, remind yourself of all the things you have going for you.
- 6 Examine your own beliefs and attitudes towards weight and shape.** Pay attention to what you say about your body and about other peoples' bodies. Practice acts of kindness towards your body. It's the only one you will ever have.
- 7 Find a physical activity or sport that you enjoy.** Remember to thank and appreciate your body for what it CAN do instead of what you want it to do.
- 8 Find a passion**—something that truly interests and involves you and gives you a sense of purpose. Look at the ways in which you can make a contribution to your community and to your family. Get involved in something that you truly care about.
- 9 Eat for energy, strength and enjoyment.** Remember that there are no 'bad foods' and that the body needs all kinds of foods including ones with fat. The key word here is balance.
- 10 Throw away the scale, get off your diet and get on with your life.**

“Relating sexually to another woman really helps you come to appreciate and love the sexuality of your own body even more. At the same time, however, it is really hard not to buy into the heterosexual paradigm of desire that constantly bombards us.”

Danielle Belanger and Alison Cooper have struggled with disordered eating. Read their story on www.jessieshope.org.



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Jessie's Hope Society
by Sandra Friedman,
Sala Communications Ltd.

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