

GENERATION *chic*

Inspired by YOU
Vol. 1, Issue 1

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RUNWAY TRENDS

ROLE MODELS WE LOVE

Plus size sensation
Jennie Runk gets
personal

HEALTH & FITNESS

Simple workouts for
your busy schedule

BODY IMAGE

Is obsessing over your looks
bad for your health?

Your Guide to
SNACKS
ON THE GO

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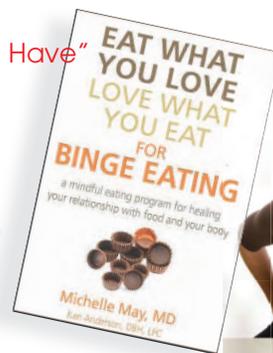
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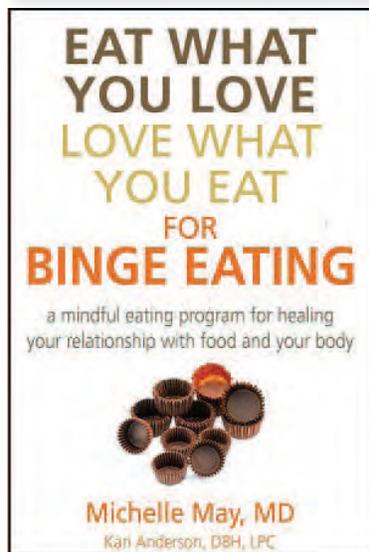
Excerpt from *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat for Binge Eating: A Mindful Eating Program for Healing Your Relationship with Food and Your Body* by Michelle May, MD and Kari Anderson, DBH, LPC (Am I Hungry? Publishing, 2014). Available from www.AmIHungry.com.

by Michelle May, M.D.

Your body is not an object to be admired and adorned—or despised and neglected. It is a precious gift that deserves your attention and appreciation. Admittedly, it may be difficult to imagine accepting yourself as you are right now. We've worked with many people who were highly successful in their careers or personal lives, but because of their feelings toward their body, they still felt that they were somehow inadequate. They wasted a tremendous amount of energy beating themselves up for this perceived fault. When you begin to accept and even appreciate your body, you can invest your energy in building relationships, accomplishing other meaningful goals, or simply enjoying your life. After all, you only care for the things you care about. But where do you start?

Start with acceptance. Mindfulness is awareness of the present moment without judgment, including accepting your body as it is right now. You may fear that if you accept yourself as you are, you won't make any changes. Generally, just the opposite is true. Harsh and judgmental attitudes toward yourself ultimately drive overeating and yoyo dieting. Accepting your body as it is right now allows you to make decisions about caring for yourself in the present moment, which is after all, the only moment you have any influence over.

Live for today. There may be some things you wish to work on, but when you get caught up in body hatred, you might delay practicing self-care, waiting until you feel that your body is more deserving. This becomes a self-perpetuating cycle. For example, avoiding social activities and isolating yourself can lead to emptiness—a void that is filled with food. Instead of putting your life on hold until you meet some arbitrary definition of beauty, or even health, remind yourself that this is your life.



Images/Michelle May

Don't measure your self-worth. Getting on the scale is meaningless and even harmful if you allow it to define your worth and determine your mood for the day. The numbers don't say anything about who you are and how you feel as you make changes.

Don't be weightist. Like racism and sexism, "weightism" is bias and discrimination based on certain external attributes. Unfortunately, weightism is a form of prejudice that is still tolerated in our society. You can decrease weightism in two ways:

First, rid yourself of your own weightist thoughts. You may not even be aware that you're having them until you notice that you feel shame about your body. Stop hurting yourself! Because these thoughts can be so damaging, work on replacing them with more realistic and compassionate messages. Substitute positive statements about body diversity. Examples of such messages include:

Bodies come in all shapes and sizes.
Health comes in all shapes and sizes.
Beauty comes in all shapes and sizes.
I accept and appreciate my body.

Second, don't buy into the weightist messages of others. Use positive self-talk

and set boundaries.

If someone judges me by my weight, it says more about them than me.

Weightism is no better than racism or sexism.

My self-esteem does not depend on the opinion of others.
Keep your comments to yourself.

Accept your genetic blueprint. Our culture often promotes unrealistic and unhealthy expectations about what bodies should look like. With every disparaging glance in the mirror comes the promise of "just one more diet." As long as you are at war with your body, it will be difficult to find peace with yourself and food.

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LOVE THE BODY YOU HAVE

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While it is important to eat a balanced diet and be physically active, genetics are a strong determinant of body size and shape.

Don't compare yourself. For all you know, the person that you envy is naturally thin, spends an unrealistic amount of time at the gym, or perhaps even suffers from an eating disorder. Instead of trying to measure up to someone else, learn to focus on your own strengths and appreciate your own uniqueness.

Focus on function. Your body is intricately designed, capable of performing complex tasks, doing great work, getting you where you want to be, and experiencing physical pleasure. In turn, you have the ability to appreciate it and care for it so it can function optimally.

Respect your body. In place of body loathing, develop "body respect." You don't have to like every part of your body to respect it. Respecting your body means treating yourself with dignity, caring for your well-being, and listening to your body's needs. Respectful body messages include:

My body deserves to be fed and taken care of.

My body deserves to be groomed and dressed nicely.

My body deserves to be touched lovingly.

My body deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

Nurture your body. Do nice things for your body such as getting a massage, using luxurious lotions, taking bubble baths, and updating your hairstyle. Treating yourself this way demonstrates that you are cared for and allows you to experience your body in more positive ways.

Dress in the here and now. Too often people continue to wear old, worn out, or outdated clothes because they are waiting for their body to reach a certain size before they buy new ones. Avoid wearing clothes that don't fit because they will make you feel uncomfortable and overly body conscious. Try new looks and experiment with new colors and styles of clothing that flatter your present body. Don't wait another day to develop your own personal style in clothing—and attitude.

Expect respect. Hold your head high and your shoulders back, speak in an assertive tone, and expect the respect you deserve. This body language encourages others to treat you with more respect, which in turn will help you learn to respect yourself!

If you are unable to accept and love yourself as you are now, it is unlikely that you will ever be satisfied with yourself no matter what changes you make. Instead of waiting for the body you've always wanted, learn to love the body you have. ■

