

Cornerstone FAMILY SERVICES .com
770.910.2753

Jennifer Vann, LMFT
Libby Chalk, LMFT
Shala Nicely, MS
Candy Rogers, LPC, ACS

With warmer weather here, many of us are heading out on vacation to beaches, pools and the like. Such locations typically encourage bikinis, shorts and t-shirts prompting a little anxiety for even the most confident person. For those of us with body image issues, these situations can create an even greater challenge. While it is easy for us to critique ourselves, we must remember that we are our own worst critics. The minor imperfections that we see are largely invisible or miniscule when viewed by another person. As the season for swimsuits and bikinis approaches, focus on buying clothing that you feel comfortable in and compliments your body. Remember that even models have imperfections that they have to manage. Most of all, remember your loved ones are drawn to your internal beauty.

CR

Body Image. What does that phrase conjure up for you? It seems that lately every where I turn there is another blog, another commercial that blares the message YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL AND YOU NEED TO KNOW IT! Those things make me feel better for 5 minutes or maybe half a day and then my mind goes right back to that place where thinking of body image is dreadful. Someone once said to me *accepting our own physical selves is probably the forgotten peak of Maslow's hierarchy*. And while that acceptance can seem a chasm away from my day to day experience what is also becoming true for me is that accepting my body doesn't mean obtaining perfection. Slowly, slowly, slowly I'm beginning to see that the people who love me experience my body image very differently than I do. That new Dove commercial with the sketch artist (realbeautysketches.dove.us) went viral overnight and so much discussion has started over the reality of how we see ourselves Why? I think, in part, because it taps into the secret hope we've always had that maybe people don't see what I do when I look into the mirror. Maybe they see laughter when I see crows feet or they see a soft pillow when I see a squishy tummy. Suddenly, what I hold as imperfections are lovely memories in a shared story. And so, while body image conjures up a whole host of thoughts and feelings for folks, I'm challenging myself to start thinking of body image as the way my body is seen by those with whom I love, not just by me. Perhaps then the "sketch" of myself will be a little more realistic.

JV

I don't know about you, but my body image is regularly assaulted by the things I see on TV, the things others have said to me and by bathing suit season. Where does the truth lie in all these messages I receive from myself and others? In *The Body Image Workbook*, Dr. Thomas Cash tells us that much of our body image is tied to our internal dialogue. This dialogue is ingrained and automatic, mindless and habitual. In other words, it happens all the time and we don't even know it's going on! Cash goes on to say that a change in body image will be largely tied to an increased awareness of and change in our inner conversations and our assumptions about ourselves. Our assumptions have their roots in insults we have received from others, family messages ("Look how pretty your sister is") and culture ("Thin is in"). Instead of challenging these assumptions, our natural tendency is to look for evidence that confirms them. Cash gives the reader tools to doubt their inner assumptions and recognize distorted thinking:

1. It's unfair to compare: pitting yourself against some extreme or unrealistic standard
2. The Magnifying Glass: focusing only on parts of your appearance you dislike and exaggerating them
3. Mind Misreading: "If I think I look bad, then others must think I look bad too. Others see me exactly as I see myself"
4. Emotional reasoning: Reasoning based purely on a strong emotion you feel your need to justify
5. Beauty-or Beast Thinking: Thinking of your appearance in extremes rather than on a continuum

LC

Join the International OCD Foundation's (IOCDF) Virtual Walk at <http://www.ocfoundation.org/walk/> to raise awareness of OCD and related disorders, including body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). BDD is a preoccupation with a real or imagined flaw in one's appearance which causes the person great distress. Last spring Denis Asselin walked 500 miles, ending his walk at the IOCDF OCD Rally in Boston, in memory of his son Nathaniel, who battled BDD and eventually took his own life when he was only 24 years old.

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