

Weight Loss Surgery News

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Body Image and Depression – A very real connection

Persons with low self-esteem are more likely to develop depression. Since low esteem often accompanies the poor image that obese people have of their body, feelings of depression are not uncommon.¹ Women more frequently suffer from a negative body image than men, even women who are not overweight, though men are not exempt.

In her book, *Women & the Blues*, author Jennifer James offers this view, "Beauty has for so long been an essential definition of a woman's value that few women see beauty within themselves. There is always something wrong with us."²

She suggests people with low self-esteem stand in front of a mirror with clothes on, and make a list of the all the things about their appearance that they like and don't like. Do you love your eyes? Great. How about your great smile or your pretty hands? These belong on your "like" list.

Divide the "don't like" list into things you can try to do something about (hair color, clothing style, weight) and things you cannot or that you don't want to change (height, varicose veins, size of your feet). Then look at the "change" list and take some action on each item. She says if you don't do something about an item within a few months, move it over to the "cannot or won't change" list. In other words, don't beat yourself up. It just leads to more feelings of depression.

In the process of taking action, it's important to stay positive and to remember no one is perfect. It's also important to be patient and to realize old patterns of behavior, including how we see ourselves, are not easily changed. James suggests we sit down and have a meeting with our body as a means of taking control of the six thousand cells inside. She also says we should make friends with our body in all ways and recommends exercise as one of the best methods. Engaging in even moderate exercise (walking, swimming) on a regular basis can lift our mood and improve our body image. Be sure to check with your doctor before beginning any type of exercise program.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1 National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, Understanding Adult Obesity (document online).
Available from <http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/pubs/unders/htm#psychosocial>
- 2 James, Jennifer. *Women & the Blues*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1988), pp 34-38.