



weight management psychology

Sarah's Story

Since I can remember, I've always felt uncomfortable in my body and unhappy with my appearance. It's never been about my features, but always with my size: particularly my legs, arms, hips, and stomach. When I look at myself in the mirror, or when I 'check' my body by pinching the fat on my waist I feel hopeless. I'm fit and healthy, and even though I have lost around 25kg, I can never seem to get to a size that I am happy with.

Well, that's not entirely true. A couple of months ago I was at my lowest weight ever; I wasn't eating very well (having maybe one coffee and one smoothie a day), and I was also on a new contraceptive pill (which, contrary to most women's experiences, seemed to help me lose weight). I weighed 64.5kg, and I remember seeing that number on the scales and seeing my body and for the first time in my entire life, I actually felt content and happy. I've also struggled with restrictive eating, but at this weight, not eating enough didn't really bother me: it meant that I was light and I felt good and people complimented me on my weight loss. However, I went off the pill because it was making me too emotional, and now my weight is back up at around 66-67kg with eating according to my hunger cues.

Being at a higher weight than my perceived 'optimal' is frustrating. On one hand, I know that I'm healthy and fit and that my weight seems to like to sit at this point. On the other hand, although it takes a lot of stress and a lack of food to maintain, being at that lower weight feels fantastic. I felt so good, but also unhealthy and unsustainable. Last week, I went through a lot of stress and decided to forgo meals so that I could get drunk and forget about the stress (something that I have never done before). But I went back down to that size that I was happy at; my jeans were loose and my stomach was flat, the rolls of my stomach when I sat down weren't so big. I was unhappy because of the stress, but at the same time I was incredibly happy with my size. Now, I'm eating normally and my size has gone back up, and I feel healthier, but I also feel big and bulky and that I take up too much space, and that I'm not very nice to look at. Sometimes I feel like it's a choice between being unhealthy and happy with my weight, and healthy and unhappy with my weight. It's really frustrating, and I don't know what to do about it. I think I know, realistically, that size doesn't really even matter that much. I know that healthy and happiness are the most important things. But for me, it's different. I feel happy when I'm slim, so is it a trade-off between health and happiness?

My body image is at its worst when I'm in public. Sometimes I have good days, but as soon as I go out and see other people, I feel uncomfortable again. I don't know if it's me comparing myself to them, or if they just remind me of what I don't look like. And I feel so confused, because I don't think size makes you a good or bad person, but when I see girls who are slim I feel so inadequate. Likewise for when I catch my reflection in windows; I can be feeling great, but as soon as I see my reflection that good feeling comes crashing down and I want to disappear. It seems so illogical, for my happiness to be based on my appearance, but it is, and I can't seem to help it.

I often feel confused with my body image because of what other people say about my appearance. My boyfriend and friends tell me that I look slim and fit, but most of the time I don't feel it. Sometimes I wonder if I'm actually seeing the right reflection in the mirror, if my body actually looks how I see it, or if I'm seeing something that my brain is making me see. Like, I don't know if I actually look like this.