

Body Image & Self-Perception



You are a whole person - not a reflection, number or comparison

The way you see yourself is shaped over time

Comments, criticism, trauma, illness, disability, ageing, gender expectations, social media and masking can all affect your inner picture of yourself.

Notice the critical voice

It may speak in absolutes: "I look wrong," "Everyone is judging me," or "I must change before I can live." A thought can feel powerful without being a complete or fair description of you.

Comparison changes the lens

Photographs, mirrors and social media show selected moments, angles and edited images. Repeated checking, reassurance-seeking or avoidance may briefly reduce anxiety but keep attention fixed on appearance.

Try body neutrality

You do not have to love every part of your body today. Begin with respect: "This is my body." Notice what it carries, senses, communicates and helps you experience without demanding gratitude or positivity.

Make room for your whole self

Identity also lives in your values, humour, knowledge, relationships, creativity, culture, kindness, boundaries and survival. Appearance is one part of you; it is not the measure of your worth.

A gentler practice

- Catch the judgement and ask: Whose standard am I using? Would I speak this way to someone I care about?
- Reduce accounts, conversations or mirror-checking that repeatedly leave you feeling smaller.
- Choose clothing, movement, food and care for comfort and wellbeing - not as punishment.
- Write three qualities you value in yourself that are not connected to appearance.

Please ask for support

Speak to your GP or a mental health professional if appearance worries take over your day, cause repeated checking or avoidance, affect eating, work, relationships or stop you doing things you value. BDD and eating disorders are treatable.

Urgent safety

If you may harm yourself or feel unable to stay safe, call 999, go to A&E or contact urgent mental health support.

You do not have to change your body before you are allowed to live your life.