



# BODY & SOUL

HOW TO LOOK GOOD NAKED? IT'S A MIND THING AS MUCH AS A BODY THING, SAYS PERSONAL TRAINER LUCY FRY

Bodies? They're everywhere. Whoever you are, wherever you live and whatever line of work you're in, you cannot get away from the human body. Firstly, you walk around in one. Secondly, everybody else walks around in one. And thirdly, there is always one, staring back at you when you look into the mirror.

And where a body goes, food goes. Bodies and food are the best of friends, and the worst of enemies. We eat to live. If we eat too much, we gain weight. If we eat too little, we get too thin. What's more, if we burn off energy by moving around a lot, we can eat more than if we sit still. Simple, right?

But it's not that straightforward. Particularly (though not exclusively) as women, our relationship with food is often far from simple: we need it, we want it, we love it and we hate it. What's more, if you take a straw poll among your friends you'll probably find the prevailing attitude is that, to look good naked, we have to exercise non-stop and make huge sacrifices when it comes to eating.

But the truth is quite the opposite – over-exercising and under-eating can lead to huge problems, physically, mentally and emotionally. Generally speaking, looking good – by which I personally mean having

a healthy body-fat percentage and being comfortable in your own skin – is all about moderation. Sure, it takes a little bit of determination and hard work, both in relation to exercise and eating, as well as your own psychology, but it isn't about perfection (which, let's admit, is pretty dull anyway).

Jennifer, 21, suffered with bulimia in her teens. She says: 'It was the combination of psychological help and actually doing something positive and practical for my body that really made the difference to my recovery and helped me reclaim my life. I will admit that it was a real struggle sometimes, to keep breaking those old patterns, over and over, until they slowly disappeared.'

Invariably, the path to contentment is more like a mountain range than a Roman road. It takes time, effort and faith, and there will always be bad days. I should know – I've been there: anorexic at 14, bulimic at 16, a quick trip to a treatment unit at 17 (unsuccessful), still struggling with it all at 25. Only now, at 28, am I beginning to actually look in the mirror once in a while and say to myself that yes, I really do like what I see.

So here's some good news: it is possible to find a happy medium – a

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way to look in the mirror and like what shines back, without having to exercise to excess, starve, purge, or spend thousands of pounds on cosmetic surgery.

If you are struggling with a distorted or negative self image, try steps one, two and three, in no particular order:

## TRAINING

Exercise in general is a great mood enhancer as it releases feel-good chemicals called endorphins which will help to keep you relaxed, focused and happy as you go about the rest of your life.

To lose body fat – if that’s what you want to do; because you don’t have to lose fat to look good – you need to lift weight. Resistance training will make your body develop muscle effectively. Muscle metabolises body fat, even at rest. So by doing weights your body will be getting leaner even while you sleep. It will also increase your bone density, making your body less prone to the many problems of an ageing skeleton.

Top tip: if you want to lose body fat you should be doing resistance training, as well as cardiovascular ‘interval’ style training, twice a week (four times in total).

Cardiovascular exercise is anything that gets your heart and lungs working. Our bodies work in two zones: aerobic and anaerobic.

Aerobic exercise uses oxygen and your breath will remain relatively steady (eg. easy jog).

Anaerobic exercise is when your body works without taking on oxygen (eg. sprinting). Obviously you can only keep this up for a short period of time (anywhere from six seconds to a minute and a half, depending on how hard you work and how fit you are) before your body needs to stop or slow down and repay the oxygen debt. This is why after very hard exercise you have to take deep gulps of air.

By working hard and going into your anaerobic zone you will raise your ‘anaerobic threshold’. That means your body will adapt so you’ll be able to work harder in the future without going into your anaerobic zone. This is why fit people get less out of breath doing

everyday activities.

In short, it’s important to keep pushing yourself and do interval training that takes you out of your comfort zone. But you should also spend time doing gentle exercise like walking and taking the stairs too, because every little helps...

## NUTRITION

The best thing you can do for your body, besides exercise, is feed it the food it was designed to eat. That means natural, non-processed food. Our bodies haven’t evolved quickly enough to cope with things like E numbers and trans fats. Bodies like fresh vegetables, fresh meat, nuts, grains, nothing with an ingredient you’ve never heard of or can’t pronounce. Cooking from scratch is worth the small amount of effort it takes.

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Eat breakfast to kick-start your metabolism. A good foundation means it is working on all cylinders for lunch and dinner and will be better able to process those meals. Enjoy three well-balanced meals a day and two healthy snacks (eg. fruit) and you should keep your metabolism stoked and your body and brain happy. Also, be sure to eat lots of different-coloured fruit and vegetables. Not only do they look good, they’ll make sure you’re getting a wide variety of vitamins and minerals in your diet.

And remember, moderation at all times. If you fancy a chocolate pudding once in a while, don’t feel guilty. We all know that the more you deprive yourself of something, the more you crave it. Diets are bad. They make people unhappy, irritable, and most of all, they don’t work.

I dieted for over a decade, for most of which, I felt tired, hungry and alone. Little did I know the damage it was also doing to my metabolism. You have to eat to look good, perverse as that may sound to a generation brought up with skeletal cover models. Regular eating keeps the metabolism raised, because the body is being constantly fuelled. Conversely, if it senses that it is being starved, it will retain fat reserves.

## PSYCHOLOGY

When it comes to the mind, we are all individuals. One person’s disorder is another person’s bad day. Similarly, it is difficult to know where a manageable, temporary issue begins and an obsessive, debilitating illness ends. Everything is on a spectrum. But if food or body issues are dominating your life or becoming unmanageable, then the likelihood is that you have a problem. Many people suffer from dysmorphia, anorexia, bulimia or other related issues, without admitting it or seeking help. If you are in any doubt, visit your GP, who should be able to refer you to a therapist, and do not begin any exercise programme without advice from a professional. Exercise too can be extremely addictive, and over-training (especially when combined with under-eating) can be very damaging to physical and mental health.

Therapy can work wonders. Provided you are honest, that is. Struggling with food or body issues is nothing to be ashamed of, but any therapist, trainer or nutritionist needs to know your history if they are to help you fully. Also be aware that finding the right therapist is like finding the right job, home or lover. It can take time and failed attempts, but when you do, it is seriously worth it and what’s more, you will know.

There are plenty of different types, but Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is one that is commonly used when treating eating disorders, body issues and depression. It is a talking therapy that helps to identify and challenge the unhealthy and dysfunctional beliefs that lie behind both distorted body imagery and extreme methods of weight control. It can then help to replace those beliefs with healthier, more functional ones that begin to correct those distorted body images and help manage those unhealthy weight control regimes.

Daniel Fryer is a London-based cognitive behavioural therapist and hypnotherapist. ‘CBT and hypnosis can be used together or separately,’ he says. ‘They are highly effective in breaking down people’s unhealthy beliefs not only about body shape and weight, but also about diet and exercise. They can also help you to build in healthy eating patterns and manageable exercise routines as well as improve both your wellbeing and your confidence.’

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## Useful websites:

[e-fit.org.uk](http://e-fit.org.uk)

[inhypno.co.uk](http://inhypno.co.uk)

[b-eat.co.uk/Home](http://b-eat.co.uk/Home)

[bacp.co.uk](http://bacp.co.uk)

[nutripeople.co.uk](http://nutripeople.co.uk)

### Did you know?

Fat and weight are different things. Often when people say they want to lose weight, what they really mean is that they want to lose fat.

On the scales, a pound of fat and a pound of muscle are the same. On a human being, they look very different. Therefore, it is better to rely on (tape) measurements and body fat percentage than weight readings when starting any exercise programme.

# FITNESS

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Feeling good in your own skin: priceless

