

## MY BODY MY SELF

**If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred.**

~ Walt Whitman ~

BODY ~

The body is an integral physical material of an individual. The biggest 'collective obsession' is with the body. So many people suffer from low self esteem due to the way they look; from big super stars like Sir Elton John to ordinary people like you & me. We constantly compare ourselves to others, our weight determines how good we feel, our weight affects our relationships. Often times we are embarrassed about our body weight and find it difficult to undress. We find difficulty in accepting compliments and are forever apologizing for the way we look, projecting lack of love & respect for SELF .

Cultural focus on the body has been extreme. The media, fashion, cosmetic & diet industry all promote a beauty standard that *does not come naturally*. These advertisers make us believe that our bodies need constant improvement. This makes us obsessed with body image. The media portrays unrealistic standards that perpetuate social norms that are based on misinformation. (Did you know the average woman wears a size 14!?) ~ We participate in certain behaviors and hold particular beliefs that negatively re-enforce a poor body image. Many of us create eating disorders because of these negative feelings, living out a self fulfilling prophecy. Developing a healthy relationship with food and one's body is extremely important.

**You don't have a soul, you *are* a soul, you have a body.**

~ C.S. Lewis ~

Our body is the *vessel* of our soul. With self love & self respect we can banish these old beliefs and create a 'high opinion' of the body. Consider this: The body consists of trillions of cells. These cells are all working together for the *maintenance* of the entire organism (the body). There are varied

processes by which the body internally regulates itself. These processes *need constant feedback* > our thoughts! Sustainable systems require a combination of positive & negative feedback.

Dis-ease and cellular malfunction is caused by either a deficiency (cells not getting what they need; improper nourishment) or toxicity (cells being poisoned; alcohol, drugs etc.) ~ In addition to the internal control (our thoughts) there are external influences as well (Life style, environment etc.) ~ Our body is our temple and we have to ensure its optimum condition. We owe it to ourselves and yet some times it seems impossible to *have the discipline to be diligent*, especially when times are tough, and self esteem is absent.

BE RESPONSIBLE ~

Responsibility stands as one of the highest spiritual qualities, and begins with our body. We *have* to take the responsibility to feel good about our SELF. The body offers a fertile arena for inner work. Instinctive intuition of what our body really needs challenges our perceptions and fixed opinions. Awareness grounds us in present moment and provides a necessary platform for deeper spirituality. As a proper object for our love & respect, a cared for body repays us with well being, energy and a home for building our soul.

Closely connected to the body is the mind (ego). It takes *discipline and diligence* to re-wire & re-program the mind. Self esteem is one of the biggest factors here. Negative, adverse, threatening events evoke strong and rapid physiological, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social responses. Emotions (worry, upset, anxiety) chemically affect the body on almost every level; even *imagined* events can stimulate a response. Often times a negative event will trigger a lowering of self esteem acted out in poor care of SELF (the body).

When we feel overwhelmed with what to do about an issue/ situation, or see no resolution, we begin to focus on our 'self', labeling the problem to be with us (and often our weight). All this mental programming, by the fashion and weight loss industry, created a very unhealthy obsession in our society.

Our sense of our own body is the *most primal* experience. Research shows this 'sense' is prone to psychological distortion that can have profound affect on how we view ourselves. According to a study by U of Penn, women tend to distort their perceptions of their bodies negatively, while men distort their perceptions in a more positive self aggrandizing way ( equally bad). It is important to realize the powerful impact of the 'immediate experience' of one's body in *every* situation. Body image is crucial to a person's sense of SELF.

There is a constant process of feeling one's body is  
growing larger & smaller, as different life conditions are encountered.

Dr. Fisher~ body image theorist

One of the main factors researchers propose as giving us a skewed sense of the 'ideal' body is the extremely thin models used at fashion shows and advertisements.

**The body is your temple, keep it pure & clean for the soul to reside in.**

~ B.K.S. Iyengar ~

THE PROBLEM ~

Bad body thoughts are the culprit. The problem lies in the fact that we allow other people's opinions to dictate how we should feel about our bodies and our SELF. Our self image is created by the messages we get from outside of us: media, friends, entertainment industry, our parents; our relentless ego slowly hammering at our self esteem.

THE SOLUTION

We can learn to re-align our thoughts. Awareness is key! As soon as we realize a negative 'body thought' we can pull back from that by challenging that thought, by thinking kind thoughts about our bodies, by accepting 'self' with compassion and by putting focus on what is *really* the issue (family, work, relationship etc.). We need to remind ourselves that we are being unrealistic.

HOW ~

What to do? Accept our SELF the way we are, and realize that weight loss has no bearing on our intelligence nor our personality. Take the focus off the areas we dislike and bring them to the areas we do like. Practice self affirmations daily. Dress to express, not to impress. Stay away from the scale. It is important to notice nice things about our selves and our bodies. Stay alert to fight negative self talk. Stay active and involved with SELF. Realize & respect the relationship we have with SELF.

There is beauty in every one.

A NEW WORLD ~

Let's create our own world. Embrace our unique SELF, feeling free to invent a life that excites us. An abundant life that inspires us, a life we enjoy. Choose to see the beauty in your Self. Imagine the myriad of possibilities, freed from rules, pressures and self punishments. Think of our bodies as the vehicle of our dreams and respect it. There is so much beauty in each of us; become conscious, awake and aware.

**NA HANYATE HAMYAMANE SARIRE**

**Consciousness is eternal; it is not vanquished with the destruction of the temporary body.**

**~ Bhagavad Gita ~**