

Imagine what the world would be like if women felt secure and comfortable in their bodies, appreciated their individual talents and strengths, and laughed heartily at the impossible, unrealistic images that bombard them. I think we would notice differences in such a generation of women, both externally, and, more importantly, internally. Body image and feelings about the self are not easy to change, but here are some measures that can help. Keep in mind that any steps you take, no matter how small, will move you that much closer to your final goals of feeling more comfortable with yourself and your body.

- Make an ongoing effort to STOP talking about diets and "imperfect" body parts with your female friends. Consider talking to them instead about what you are doing with your life and why you are doing it.
- When you catch yourself criticizing your body or what you've eaten, STOP, remind yourself that self-criticism is part of this syndrome, and shift your attention elsewhere; repeat as necessary.
- Get help if you suspect or know that you have an eating disorder. There are several articles on this site that describe these life-threatening conditions.
- Challenge media images "to yourself, and out loud when with your family, children, and friends. Write and complain if you see images you don't like. Support products with advertisements that feature "normal" looking and/or "normally" sized people.
- Set a good example for girls (and teach boys about these issues, too). Do not model obsessive dieting or self-criticism.
- Start to appreciate your body's various functions: how it walks, makes babies, stays healthy, sees and hears, etc.
- Take good care of yourself. Learn to eat well (most of the time), get moderate exercise and enough sleep, give yourself treats occasionally, and keep supportive people in your life.
- Exercise and move your body for strengthening, health, pleasure, and/or stress reduction. Avoid exercising in desperate, obsessive, or self-punishing ways.
- Learn more about this widespread problem. A recommend read: Jane R. Hirschmann and Carol H. Munter's book, [When Women Stop Hating Their Bodies: Freeing Yourself from Food and Weight Obsession](#) (Fawcett Books, 1997). Other good books are also available check out the catalog available through www.bulimia.com for more titles, or visit Hirschmann and Munter's Web site at www.overcomingovereating.com. (**HealthyPlace.com** [Eating Disorders Self-Help Books Section](#))

