





Appreciate - a Lean Life Skill

“I finally realised that being grateful to my body was key to giving more love to myself.” ~ Oprah

As women, we often struggle to find nice things to say and appreciate about our own bodies. Often, even if we don't vocalise it, we're on the receiving end of constant (less than positive) dialogue from our inner critic, to the extent that it could be likened to getting a constant telling-off from someone in authority. So, it's no surprise that under those circumstances, it is hard for us to thrive. Plus you can see how a lack of bodily self-appreciation could act as a real roadblock to us navigating and staying at our Ideal Weight.

As you move from negative to positive (think book image on your Ideal Weight Focus Band) it is important to regularly find things to appreciate about your physical body and how it enables you to interact in the world. You may already be good at that, or you may need some guidance.

Appreciate Exercise:

There is growing evidence that self-appreciation (and self-compassion) are important predictors of well-being and resilience. To appreciate yourself involves acknowledging yourself with care and positive concern, rather than focusing on personal inadequacies or mistakes. And, when stressed, instead of immediately fixating on lack, you focus on the aspects of you (personally) that are unique and amazing - you focus on the doughnut, not the hole. You reach to find something about yourself that you appreciate (however small) instead of falling into previous behaviours where you notice what you believe is wrong with you. An effective way to deal with a lack of self-appreciation is by finding a way to relate differently to your inner critic.

In this Lean Life Skill exercise, we are going to connect with disparate facets of ourselves to understand how they work together, conflict, and how they feel when experienced in the present.



Write down something you don't like about your weight or physical body, and that you've recently berated yourself for:

Once you've jotted down the criticism, grab three kitchen chairs, spaced apart in a triangular shape (with about 1m between them).

FIRST CHAIR: The first chair is our Inner Critic. Sit there, and when you're ready vocalise out loud the criticism you had about your body. Express as fully as possible, noting how you feel and any emotions that surface. Push it a little, but stop if it starts to feel too uncomfortable.

When you have finished, take a few deep slow breaths and move to the second chair.

SECOND CHAIR: This chair represents the sensation of being judged (by yourself). Express out loud how it feels to encounter this criticism. For example: "I feel sad and hurt". Notice the tone and your emotions.

While still in the second chair, engage in a dialogue between the first and second chairs' perspectives. Try to understand how each perspective feels.

When you have finished, take a few deep slow breaths and move to the third chair.

THIRD CHAIR: The third chair represents the wise friend or coach. Drawing on a sincere sense of self-appreciation and compassion, confront the critical voice and the critiqued voice. Address both perspectives out loud. What do you say? What advice do you give? How do you relate to each perspective from a more detached point of voice? Notice your tone and demeanour.



Allow yourself enough time to express everything you need to from each perspective, leaving time to reflect on the experience. Understand how you think and how you could benefit from the perspectives explored. Then answer this question:

Going forward, and taking the perspective of the wise friend or counsellor, how are you going to appreciate your physicality and what words of appreciation and support will you use:

(Next time you find yourself being negative and self-critical, try to locate your compassionate voice and use those words of appreciation and acknowledgement instead. And use the HEART on your Ideal Weight Focus Band to remind yourself to appreciate yourself.)



"You have been criticising yourself for years and it hasn't worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens."

Louise Hay