

Body Image: The Missing Piece of Whole Body Healing

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Body Image Healing

Where to begin & Tools to get
you started



This is important to us because.....

Some of the most common questions we get are.....

- “Is talking about Body Image even my job, or in my scope of practice as a Dietitian?”
- “How do I open up the conversation about BI, especially when someone is really shy?”
- “What about self-disclosure? Do I tell my clients about my own body image?”
- “How do I help people see that their BI issues are more than their body?”
- “What are the differences between acceptance vs. neutrality vs. healing?”
- “What do I say when someone has lost weight but still hates their body?”
- “How do I broach the topic of negative body image when it feels awkward?”



Consequences of poor Body Image

- High levels of body image dissatisfaction in those presenting for weight loss and disordered eating (including “emotional eating”)
- We might be the first point of help (so entrenched in our society, may not realise BI is serious/needs attention)
- Can significantly effect psychological and physical wellbeing
- It keeps people from connecting to their deeper pain and deeper healing



As Dietitians, why do we need these skills?

- Our training specifically in body image is inadequate
- We can see really complex clients
- Sometimes we can struggle with poor BI too.
- People will often present first to a Dietitian if they perceive the “problem” to be their body, thus the “solution” is to change the body
- People who feel badly about their bodies or who have been dieting for long periods of time will usually benefit from psychotherapy from someone experienced in body image



The epidemic of Body Disconnection



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What IS the way we understand "Body Image?"

The way a person experiences their own embodiment (sense of being "in" the body)

Not a singular thing, or idea. Encompasses:

- Thoughts
- Beliefs
- Perceptions
- Feelings
- Actions

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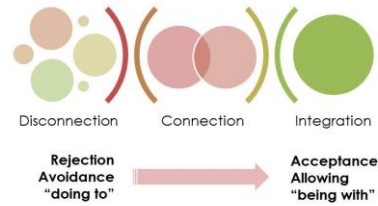
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Conceptualisations of Body Image healing & "the work"

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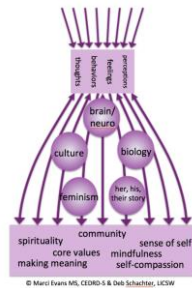
Fi's Conceptual Snapshot of Body Image Healing



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Marci's Conceptual Snapshot of "the work"



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What does "healing" mean to/for you?

- Words
- Phrases
- Images
- Emotions
- Sensations



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How do we understand "healing?"

- Not a destination, place or body
- An **ongoing process** or navigating the challenges of life
- A stronger sense of "knowing" and "being" in our bodies
- Being able to "right the boat" (resilience)
- Building a relationship to an experience rather assigning the experience to "self"



What's this got to do with our work as Dietitians?

Ability to tune in to the body can affect many areas in which we work:

- Appetite
- Self care
- Rest, movement
- Respond, rather than react

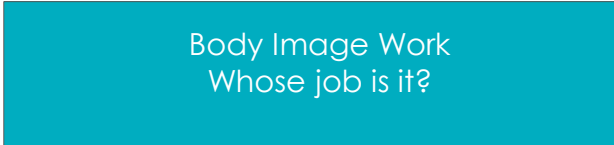
Ability to attune enhances ability to respond, with curiosity, kindness & compassion.



How do people come to experience poor BI?

- We're not born this way!
- Cultural exposure - family, peers, broader culture
- Bodies come to represent value, worth and currency
- Strong narrative of "change my body, change my value, change my life"

We have a CHOICE is how we support people with body image....



Should a dietitian even be doing this work?



Marci's Tree Analogy

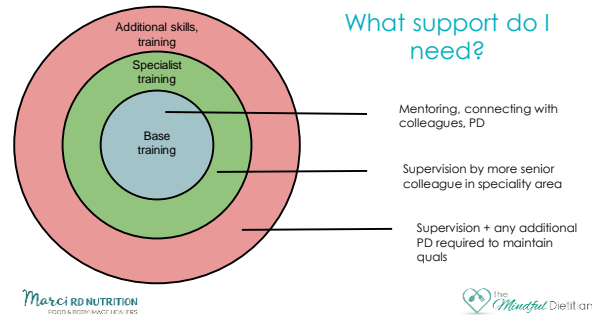
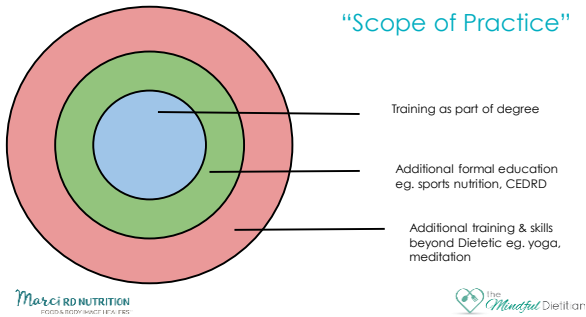


Reducing body checking, buying new clothes, social media, socio-cultural criticism

Thoughts, beliefs, values, working with the brain, mindfulness and self-compassion work

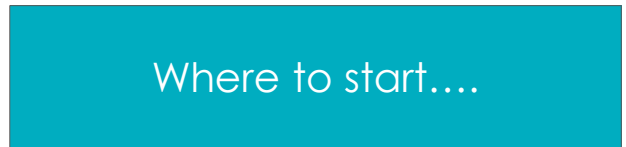
Emotions, embodiment, lived experience, trauma, relational dynamics





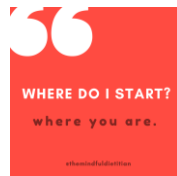
Guideposts for Scope of Practice

- Does the information I'm gathering help me guide this person to:
 - Develop a healthier relationship to their bodies?
 - Develop a healthier relationship with food?
 - Make recommendations about what I hope they might explore in therapy?
- As a dietitian, you are allowed to:
 - Ask about intersecting aspects of their life that influence their body image
 - Ask about their overall mood and mental health status
 - Listen to their experiences, thoughts, and feelings
 - Decide with your client what can be healed with a dietitian and what can be healed in therapy
 - Help your client use their body as a tool for healing, grounding, and connection



Where to start....

1. Broaching the topic, starting the conversation
2. Getting to know their experience
3. Finding a shared language and expectation



Broaching the topic...

- "I know that one of the things you've mentioned really wanting help with is negative body image. Are you interested in starting to work on this together?"
- "As I've been listening to you over our past several sessions, you have made it clear how much pain your body image brings you. If you'd like, this could be something we could try to work on more intentionally together if you'd like."
- "Most people don't realize this but it is possible to help you feel less awful about your body, even if we aren't working on weight loss or changing your body. If this is ever something you want to talk more about, please let me know."



Getting to know their experience

Each person's unique body narrative is developed through a combination of:

- Biological factors
- Family of origin
- Culture
- Interruptions to body experience eg. trauma, disease/disability
- Degree of power/privilege (along spectrum, changing)
- Weight-based Stigma (discrimination)



Find a shared expectation/language

"In my experience I have found that it really helps to talk through together what we each think "body image work" means. This isn't a test but I am curious, what does the term mean to you? For me, body image work is...."

1. Getting to know the unique story of your body
2. Deconstructing what is expressed in your negative body image- decoding
3. Finding the specific tools that help you feel less awful and help you heal

Analogy- turn the lights on FIRST!



Tips for getting started

- Take your time
- Conversations can be very therapeutic
- Watch urges to "fix" or "solve"
- It's OK to not know everything



Setting Goals



Guidelines for creating purpose in your work together

1. Focuses on changing the relationship to the body/body experience rather than the body itself.
2. May begin with learning about what it's been like for them to have a body.
3. Focuses on treating their body with kindness and respect
4. Invites education and exposure to body positivity and body acceptance

In webinar 2 we will dive into these types of interventions in detail!!



Building your confidence in having Body Image conversations.....

What feels difficult, tricky, scary about these conversations?

Let's reflect....

What are most people led to believe about how to improve body image?



Formal Assessment Options

Options for measures/tools:

- BIQ
- BSQ
- BAS-2 (Tylka, Wood-Barcalow)
- BI sub-section of EDEQ (Fairburn)
- Body Image States Scale (BISS, Cash)



Please join us for Webinar 2!



Body Image: The Missing Piece of Whole Body Healing

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Webinar 2: Building Body Image Skills



Webinar 1 Review.....

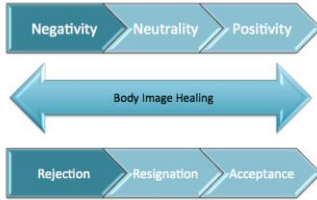
- What is "body image?"
- Constructs of body image
- Roles, scope of practice
- Where to start
- Goal setting
- Guidelines for creating purpose and direction

Guidelines for creating purpose in your work together

1. Focuses on changing the relationship to the body/body experience rather than the body itself.
2. May begin with finding a shared language and learning about their body story
3. Can include increasing exposure to body positivity and body acceptance via social media.
4. Help clients separate negative feelings they have toward their body from their food choices (i.e. I felt upset about thighs so skipped dinner.)
5. Develop kind self-care practices that show body respect.



The Body Relationship as a Spectrum



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Is my client ready?

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Assessing readiness

Nutrition Therapy & The Stages of Change Model

Pre-Contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ED is ego-syntonic; utility for RDN Find connection/support building, ask questions, connect consequences of ED, educate in small doses, consider positives of change
Contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aware of issues but not taking action to make changes; sticky for RDN Explore pros/cons, get to know ambivalence, make room for client to notice downsides of change, obstacles to change, educate, consequences
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting ready to make some changes, likely small; where RDN is trained Develop concrete plans, create vision of what it might entail, mental support/minimize sabotage, explore available tools, consequences
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full preparation into action; where RDN is trained Offer supports to manage feelings & urges, process thoughts & feelings, examine challenges and consequences, learn from and repeat
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent relapse; maintain action for >6 months Reinforce new skills, support expression of authentic self, develop relapse prevention plan, develop other life interests, reduce stress

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Building skills....
For us AND our clients!

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Distress around Body Image may arise in situations such as....

Any combination of:

- Thoughts
- Feelings/emotional experiences
- Sensations in the body

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What does this mean?

What are "distressing symptoms?"

What are we taught about how to deal with these symptoms?

How can we be most effective in helping people build skills and a more positive body image?



Body Image healing work is



"Fixing" is.....

Weighing, measuring, counting
Pushing against, avoiding, reacting

"Being" is more.....

Noticing, curiosity, acceptance
Self compassionate awareness, responsive
Values-based decisions



What does this mean for us?

Noticing when we are heading into "fixing" mode

- What might we be thinking? Feeling?
- Why do we get drawn into

Developing skills in self awareness

Getting the support we need to do the work

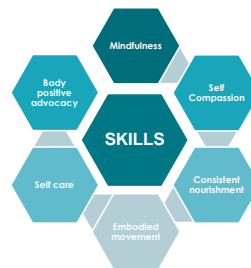
- Supervision, mentoring



Tools for Body Healing



Skills we may consider introducing or discussing



Mindfulness and Body Image



How Mindfulness practice can support Body Healing

Events (internal/external) can "trigger" negative thoughts, feelings and actions towards the body, often upsetting, distressing, annoying!

Mindfulness can help to build awareness of these experiences, and skills to respond rather than react

Reduces efforts at "body fixing" in reaction to "trigger"

Build skills in "pause" between felt experience & response



Self Compassion (Neff, Gilbert)

= speaking and acting towards ourselves the way we would a friend

Developing a "kind voice" alongside the critical voice

Why? Criticism & judgement makes body image worse!



Consistent Nourishment

Work towards balanced, adequate, pleasurable, and mindful eating

Food choices should be separate from feelings one has about their body

Treating your body in a way that develops self-trust - "I can count on you!" fosters healing

"You cannot feel positively towards something you do not treat well."



Embodied Movement

Emerging, promising research

Essential elements:

- Enjoyable
- Accessible
- Inclusive

*there may be good reasons folks with poor body image don't want to move their bodies. Explore, but don't push!



Self Care

Building skills in caring for oneself

More than a bubble bath.....

Elements:

- Bring closer to self, rather than avoiding
- Gentle, caring
- Aim not necessarily to "feel better"
- Might feel boring!



Body positive self advocacy

- What do I say when.... (eg. at the doctors)
- Social media clean up
- Linking in with like-minded communities eg. Facebook groups
- Reading, podcasts etc to support body image healing
- Exposure to individually relatable information eg. feminist literature, politics, social justice, diet culture history etc.



Values

ACT: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Developing action steps that line up with core values and that create a life worth living, even amidst pain and suffering.



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Intersecting Constructs: Values



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Intersecting Constructs: Values

Values Assessment:

1. Provide your client with a list of values
2. Narrow down their top 10 → 5 → 3
3. Invite a conversation about how they think their values might support their healing.

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How does Body Image actually improve?

1. Build resilience, bounce back, "right the boat"
2. Reduce "acting on" negative body thoughts/unpleasant sensations
3. Building a sense of knowing "this won't last"
4. Cultivate community #metoo
5. Developing the ability to use negative body image as a vital entry point to greater self-knowledge (deconstruct → offer self healing)
6. Build body trust
7. Time, persistence, consistency, community

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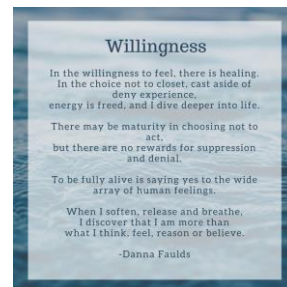
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Examples of building positive Body Image Goals....

1. Read 1 body acceptance article and listen to 1 body positive podcast this week.
2. Begin developing a list of things that I really like about myself.
3. Purchase 1 new pair of shorts that fit my here and now body.
4. Notice the mean thoughts in my head and journal about how I speak to myself as if I was 5 years old.
5. Make a commitment to eating every few hours even when I feel badly about my body.
6. Move for fun rather than calories burned once this week.

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Our favorite body positive resources

Books

"Embody" by Connie Sobczak
"Self-Compassion" by Kristin Neff
"The Body is Not an Apology" by Sonya Renee Taylor

Social Media Mavens

Virgie Tovar
Ragen Chastain
Lindy West
Jes Baker
Nalgona Positivity Pride

Podcasts

"Food Psych" by Christy Harrison
"Fearless Rebelle Radio" by Summer Innanen
"Appetite" by Opal Food & Body Wisdom



Where to next?

Please join us in our full-length course
(Sept 2018)



www.bodyimageworkshop.com

Thankyou!!

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