How many times have you made a New Year’s resolution to lose weight, eat healthier, exercise more? January is notorious for its diet ads and weight-loss promotions, with the promises of a “New Year, New You!” Yet, we all know that diets almost never work in the long-term and exercising for weight loss often fizzles out as the weeks go by. After starting the year with motivation and aspiration, quickly that bubble bursts when we find ourselves breaking through diet restrictions and regaining the lost pounds.

Instead, the focus for 2021 should be on cultivating body positivity and a healthful, sustainable lifestyle. Cultivating body positivity helps clients avoid the trap of the diet-overeat cycle as well as the blame and shame that accompany it. Body positivity guides us to focus on taking care of our bodies and to develop strategies to reject the very real weight stigma that exists in our culture.

Here are 10 Body Positive affirmations to help clients heal body shame & cultivate body positivity:

1. **I will remind myself that bodies come in all shapes and sizes.**

   *Keep in mind that you weren’t born thinking one size was better than another. Our ideas about how bodies are supposed to look are culturally subjective. A trip to the art museum shows the variability in how bodies are viewed over time and in different cultures.*

2. **I deserve to be treated with respect – at any size.**

   *Unfortunately, fat shaming is part of our diet culture, and it’s unfair. As with any group that’s been marginalized, we need to reject weight bias and recognize that every body deserves to be treated with respect.*

3. **My body is my home, and I’ll do my best to take care of it.**

   *In diet culture, your body is an object, and the goal is to make it look a certain way to become “acceptable.” Instead, think about your body as your home. How does it like to be fed? To move? To rest? You get to decide!*

4. **I will speak to myself about my body in the same way I would talk to my best friend.**

   *Diet culture teaches you to criticize your body. “I’m too fat,” “My belly sticks out too much,” “I’m gross.” Would you ever speak to your best friend this way? Find the same self-compassion for yourself!*
5. I can trust my body and listen to how it wants to be nourished.

The more you diet, the more you learn that your body can’t be trusted as you follow the rules of the plan or program. Then, when you likely break the rules, you see that as confirmation that you can’t be trusted. But overeating is a natural response to the deprivation of diets. Instead, explore attuned/intuitive eating so you can relearn to honor your natural physical cues for hunger and satiation.

6. I will treat my body with kindness and compassion.

There is a quote by poet Nayyirah Waheed that goes: “and I said to my body. softly. ‘i want to be your friend.’ it took a long breath and replied ‘i have been waiting my whole life for this.’” What would it feel like to befriend your body?

7. My worth is not based on my body size.

Your body matters, AND you are so much more than just your body. You are enough.

8. I will notice my negative body thoughts with curiosity instead of judgment.

No matter how much you practice body positivity, there are likely to be moments when negative body thoughts are present. Rather than judging yourself for the size and/or shape of your body, get curious. Reflect on questions such as, “Where did I first hear this message?” or “Can I notice this thought without letting it take over my mind?”

9. I will gently reject the weight stigma that I’ve internalized as my own beliefs.

As a result of existing in diet culture, the weight stigma out in the world has become your own internalized weight stigma (IWS). When you notice yourself having one of these thoughts, label it as IWS. See if you can reject the thought and replace it with a neutral or compassionate statement. (It helps to explore books and podcasts that address the topic of weight stigma.)

10. Learning to accept, appreciate and respect my body takes time.

After years of learning that you must be a certain size to be “acceptable,” it will take time to unlearn this message. That’s okay! There are all kinds of resources to help you along the way as you cultivate body positivity one step at a time.