

Paper: Chicago Tribune RedEye Edition (IL)
Title: Boost sex life with better body image
Author: Laura Baron
Date: April 14, 2005

You're not feeling jacked about your body. You're the one woman hoping the poncho trend never dies. It seems you don't get the attention you once did, and you just plain don't feel as attractive as before. Most likely it's not your body--but your body image--that's changed. And when you're not feeling it, your confidence often plunges. This combination is no good for your world or your sex life.

The bedroom should be where inhibitions are lost. Sexual play is about each partner experiencing the other fully. That's a tall order when you're too self-conscious and propped up in only flattering poses. Sex is about spontaneity and exploration. Concentrating on what your tush looks like or where your other breast went is going to throw off that rhythm. Real sex demands an honest connection. The intimacy you and your partner share should be liberating and safe for you. Showing your trust in your partner will inspire confidence in your relationship and fire up your sex life. That closeness can only occur when you truly open yourself. If your negative body image is keeping you hidden underneath your partner, your sex life will wilt.

That need to hide also will affect other areas of your world. So, before your body image gets out of control, take charge.

Stop watching how other people respond to you. Most likely it's in your head. But even if you are dealing with a real body change, if you allow outside approval to define your feeling of attractiveness and worth, then anyone can own you. Don't let them. If you're in a relationship where you feel your partner is putting undue pressure on your appearance, take a second look. Are you being valued for more than your body? And are you being supported ("Honey, let's go to the gym") or controlled ("You need to go back to the gym")? If it's the latter, move on. Take back your power and take care of yourself.

Any woman without healthy self-esteem can fall prey to the adolescent thought that her value lies only in her looks. Don't allow others to tell you who you are. Don't allow yourself to be defined by only one facet. True strength and beauty start from within. So, ladies, walk with purpose. Chin up.

Stop with the pity party; it will get you nowhere but smack in front of the fridge. You have to adjust your perception. Without that, changing your body will merely change your dress size, not your life. Do the real work. If what you find is that your body issues stem from deeply rooted psychological issues, please seek help. Don't hide.

Reintroduce yourself to yourself. Stand in front of the mirror and seek out your best attributes. Work to accentuate them with clothes, bronzing lotion, whatever you can think up. Just concentrate on what you like. And start pleasuring your body again, in any way you can dream up.

Then get yourself out and flirt. You deserve a chance to connect no matter what state your body is in. Cocooning isn't an option. Internet dating can be a tool to get your groove back, as the distance can seem less threatening. But don't sink too far into that couch of complacency. At some point, you've got to trade up the screen for an actual face.

So, click those stilettos one in front of the other and honor the self and body you've been given. You want that better body? Start with your head.

Author: Laura Baron. REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR LAURA BARON IS A RELATIONSHIP COACH BASED IN CHICAGO. SHE CAN BE SEEN THURSDAYS ON "WGN MORNING NEWS."

Copyright (c) 2005, Chicago Tribune Company. All rights reserved.