Body positivity vs. body neutrality

Young people are constantly exposed to images, videos and soundbites that intentionally or unintentionally promote ideas about the "ideal" body type. These messages can negatively shape how they see themselves and may contribute to disordered eating patterns or an unhealthy focus on appearance. Approaches like body positivity and body neutrality offer different frameworks for reducing shame and fostering healthier, more compassionate relationships with one's body.

Body positivity is the idea that all bodies are worthy of respect and care, and it encourages people to appreciate, accept or even celebrate their bodies, especially by challenging unrealistic beauty standards and body shaming.



Body neutrality focuses less on how a body looks and more on what it does and needs. It emphasizes respect and care for the body without pressure to love it, recognizing that your worth is not defined by your appearance.

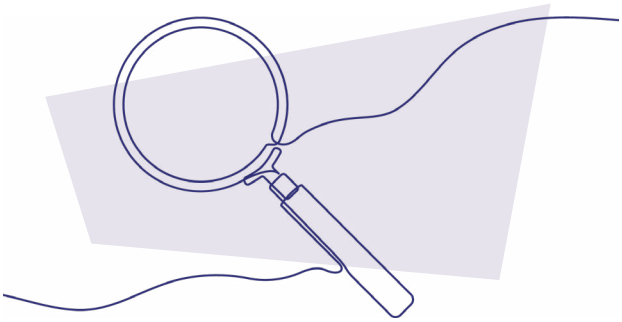
This chart shows how they are similar and how they are different.

Area	Body positivity	Body neutrality
Core focus	Loving, appreciating and celebrating your body	Respecting your body without pressure to love it
Main message	"All bodies are good and beautiful."	"My body is my body, and that's okay."
Relationship to appearance	Challenges beauty standards and encourages positive feelings about appearance	De-emphasizes appearance and shifts focus away from looks
Emotions about the body	Encourages positive feelings like love, pride and confidence	Allows for neutral or mixed feelings without judgment
Sense of worth	Bodies are worthy and deserve respect	Worth is not based on the body at all
Body talk	Uses affirming, encouraging language	Uses neutral, factual and non-judgmental language
Accessibility for youth	Can feel empowering for some	Often feels more achievable for those struggling with body image
Use in eating disorder prevention & recovery	Helpful for confidence and advocacy	Often a safer starting point during recovery
Key skill	Self-compassion and challenging harmful standards	Listening to body needs and meeting them

Practicing body positivity & body neutrality

This worksheet helps you explore two healthy ways of relating to your body. You don't need to choose just one approach and you can use different tools at different times. Use what helps you and leave what doesn't.

Part 1: Check in with yourself



Right now, how do you feel about your body?

- ☐ Mostly positive
- ☐ Neutral / mixed
- ☐ Mostly negative
- ☐ Not sure

One word that describes how my body feels today:

Part 2: Practicing body neutrality

Body neutrality focuses on respect, care and function — not appearance.

A. What my body does for me

Write three things your body helps you do, big or small:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

B. Neutral body statements

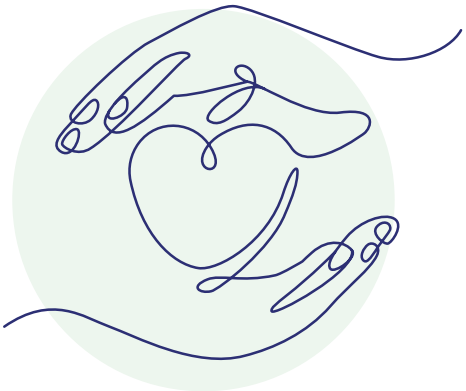
Rewrite each thought in a more neutral way:

- "I don't like my body." 👉 "_____"
- "My body isn't good enough." 👉 "_____"

Neutral statement I can practice: "My body is my body, and I can treat it with care."

OR write your own: _____

C. Listening to body needs



Check what your body might be asking for today:

Hunger: ☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Energy: ☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Stress: ☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Need for rest: ☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

One supportive response I could try:

Part 3: Practicing body positivity

Body positivity focuses on appreciation, kindness and challenging unfair standards.

A. Appreciating your body

This is not about forcing yourself to love how you look.

One thing I appreciate about my body today _____

B. Challenging unrealistic standards

Finish the sentence: "Bodies don't have to _____ to be worthy."

One message from social media or culture I want to question:

C. Kind body talk

Write something you would say to a friend about their body — then read it back to yourself:

Part 4: Choosing what helps (right now)

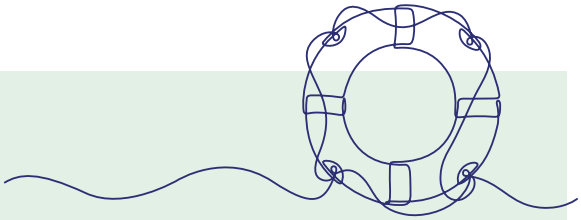
When body thoughts feel hard, which approach feels more doable?

☐ Body neutrality (respect without pressure to love)

☐ Body positivity (kindness and appreciation)

☐ A mix of both

One skill I want to practice this week:



Need additional support?

Hotlines & support lines

ANAD helpline (Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD)): 888.375.7767 — Peer led helpline; Line provides emotional support and referral information.

NAED (National Alliance for Eating Disorders): 866.662.1235
Calls are answered by a licensed clinician specialized in eating disorders; Line provides support and referral information.

Common Thread
by Wolfson Children's