Faculty Member's Book Helps With Reshaping the Body by 'Rethinking' the Mind

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With warm weather just around the corner, many people are probably wondering how they'll lose enough weight to look good in a bathing suit.

The most important thing to do is be practical, says Lauve Metcalfe, certified wellness coach and author of the book "Reshaping Your Body, Rethinking Your Mind," published by DSW Fitness.

Dramatic weight loss as depicted on TV reality shows may be anything but reality, she says. "Some TV shows present people who reduce their weight by 15 or more pounds per week, but that is unrealistic for most people," says Metcalfe, a faculty member in the College of Medicine's physiology department and special adviser to the UA Center for Physical Activity and Nutrition.

"Those participants are working out six hours a day, which few of us can do. A healthy weight loss, typically, is no more than 2 pounds per week."

So what's a dieter to do?

"Sensible weight-loss programs have more modest goals but are rooted in self-esteem and positive body image," she says. "No one can make you healthier or change your attitude. You need a support system as well as professional expertise to hold you accountable as you develop healthier habits."

That support, she says, can come from family, friends or, increasingly, the workplace. "Workplace wellness programs make sense for companies that see the payoff in terms of healthier employees, reduced health care costs and greater productivity."

(Click here for information on employee wellness programs at the UA.)

Positive influences, whether in the workplace or elsewhere, make all the difference, according to Metcalfe, who offers weight coaching for the Tucson community.

"If you don't feel good about your body, you tend to have lower self-esteem," she says.

Much of Metcalfe's work focuses on women, who she says may feel added pressure to appear young, sexy and glamorous. But men also are susceptible to image issues and may worry about a beer belly, hair loss or being short of stature, she noted.

Particularly for females, says Metcalfe, concern over body image can start early â€“ even in elementary school â€“ and may lead to poor eating habits that bring serious consequences,
including bone loss.

Three areas are essential for successful weight management, she says: appetite â€“ how you choose, cook and enjoy food; activity â€“ how you move and engage in physical activity; and attitude â€“ how you deal with issues of self-esteem and barriers.

In her book, "Reshaping Your Body, Rethinking Your Mind," Metcalfe enumerates 11 skills for developing a healthy body image and self-esteem:

- Honor your personal story. Past events and experiences "shape" one's perception of body image. Acknowledge your personal story and become more conscious of what choices you can control to improve the quality of your life.
- Accept yourself the way you are. Develop acceptance of your body image in the present form. Self-acceptance allows you to channel your energies into modifying behavior, rather than struggling with negative "woulda, coulda, shoulda" thinking.
- Create a positive mental outlook. The attitude that you bring into a situation greatly determines the outcome, and it conditions you to expect good outcomes or to be disheartened by negative ones. Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're probably right.
- Practice positive self-talk skills. Positive self-talk messages will reinforce the qualities, skills and attributes within you, affect your unconscious mind and have a major effect on the way you view yourself.
- Guide away from comparisons. Beauty is a multidimensional combination of a variety of aspects of an individual that is in a constant state of change. Acknowledge your personal expressions of beauty that make you unique.
- Build your self-reliance. Each time you challenge yourself and attempt a task or skill that is outside of your comfort zone, you will experience a stronger degree of confidence in your abilities.
- Lighten up and live in the "now." To fully enjoy life, stay in the present and experience life from moment to moment. Create a balanced perspective on life by looking to the future with anticipation and respecting the past for insight, but not dwelling on either of them.
- Reward yourself in healthy ways. Create rewards and positive incentives to keep you on track with your body image program. Develop daily, weekly and monthly incentives that recognize the effort you are putting into your personal wellness program.
- Give yourself praise. Acknowledge the positive steps you make in taking care of yourself. Be open to the praise of others and regularly give and receive compliments.
- Develop coping skills to deal with setbacks. There are moments in all our lives that are difficult to deal with emotionally. By creating rest periods and occasional breaks in your program you will allow yourself time to be a "human being" instead of a "human doing."
- Be connected. Many people can help you stay on track with a healthy lifestyle. Value the role that supportive friends and relatives play in your life. Take time out on a regular basis to be in touch with nature and the environment.

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