



# Kate Daigle Counseling

Nourishing Wisdom for  
Eating Disorder Recovery

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## The Body Reclaimed: Healing Disordered Body Image with Creative Expression

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### Healthy Body Image: How do we get there?

1. Connection to and acceptance of the body in a safe manner.
2. Increased ability to be present in the here and now (mindfulness).
3. Safe and healthy expression through the body.
4. Increased ability to utilize self soothing and affect regulation skills.
5. Correct Cognitive Distortion patterns related to the body.
6. Identification of and connection to sense of Self.

### Writing

- 1) Dialogue with your Body, or Body Parts – have a conversation!
- 2) Writing prompts to invoke creativity and curiosity:
  - a) Think of your body as a tool. Make an inventory of all the things you can do with it: My body is a tool, an instrument of my life. Some of the things it enables me to do are...
  - b) Notice what your body does each day. It is the instrument of your life, not an ornament for someone else's enjoyment. What does my body do for me each day?
  - c) Consider your body as a source of pleasure. Thank of all the ways it can make you feel good. My body is a source of pleasure. Some of the ways it can make me feel good are...

*Adapted from: The Body Myth by Margo Maine and Joe Kelly*

### Drawing

- 1.) Create a Body Image Timeline – draw a timeline of your life, including significant events related to body image (ex: age 5, my friend told me I was fat). Utilize color, shapes, dialogue to accentuate and deepen this. Then draw where you want to go from here.
- 2.) Inside/Outside Masks: draw two masks, one for your inner self (vulnerabilities, insecurities, secrets), the other for how you present your body and yourself to the world (personas, traits, influences, etc). Utilize colors, shapes, paints, collage words, objects to represent feelings and internal/external experiences.

### Gardening

Gardens are a source of life, renewal, and rebirth, and are a beautiful place to practice mindful, non-judgmental awareness of the body. This spring, plant some of your favorite flowers in honor of your body.

***If you were a plant, which type do you think you'd be? Why?***

## **Sitting Body-Centered Meditation in the Garden**

Mental and bodily stress decreases in the garden. Find a comfortable, secluded, peaceful spot in a garden, park, or wilderness. Take a seat along the earth. Draw in a deep breath and notice all of the sweet and savory scents that surround you. In the garden, we don't need to do anything, we just need to be. Our body, which has carried us all our lives, is our inner garden. Allow your gaze to rest on a nearby plant, tree, weed. Say Loving-Kindness phrases to that plant. "may you be safe, may you feel happy, may you feel strong, may you feel peaceful." Spend a few moments sending Loving-Kindness to your green "friend". Now, turn inward and say those same phrases to your body.

## **Movement and Music**

Remember a time when you felt free and peaceful in your body. What would be the soundtrack to that moment? Invite that song and let your body move to it intuitively. Let's focus on healthy movement, not weight loss. What does it want to do? Send gratitude to your body for all it does each day for you.

- Jump (jump-rope)
- Dance
- Run
- Hula Hoop
- Dstretch
- Skip
- Walk mindfully, with complete awareness of your surroundings and how it feels to walk

Follow your body without trying to control it. Let your judgments pass along the way.

## **Deepen the Conversation: Questions to Ponder**

- 1.) If your daughter/son/friend/partner/client came to you and expressed that "I hate my stomach; I am disgusting, fat, and ugly.", how would you respond?
- 2.) What are three advocacy efforts you can commit to enforcing around body image issues in your home community?
- 3.) How would you respond if you observe someone shaming someone else's body?
- 4.) What are three ideas you learned from this presentation that can aid your competency in working with body image issues?
- 5.) Is fat a feeling?

## **Bibliography and References:**

- The Body Myth: Adult Women and the Pressure to be Perfect by Margo Maine
- Lighten Up your Body, Lighten Up Your Life by Lucia Capacchione, PhD
- The Meditative Gardener by Cheryl Wilfong
- Health At Every Size: The Surprising Truth About Your Weight by Linda Bacon, PhD
- Why Thinking You're Ugly is Bad For You, TED Talk, Meaghan Ramsey, Sept 2014
- National Eating Disorders Association, [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)
- National Association for Males with Eating Disorders, [www.namedinc.org](http://www.namedinc.org)

**Have more ideas? Connect with me!**  
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