

The Thin Ideal? Why We Should Love Our Body

BY CLARE FITZGERALD | March 11, 2014

How familiar is this cycle: You see a new diet advertised. Thinking you could lose a few pounds, you decide to start it, excited about how you'll look in a few months time. Four to five months later, you've reached your goal - you're excited and you love your "new" body. Fast forward another four to five months, and you've gained back all the weight, and then some.

If that sounds familiar to you, then you're amongst the millions around the world who have fallen victim to the diet industry and The Thin Ideal. The Thin Ideal is the belief, spread by both the diet industry and popular culture, that in order to be your best you must be both thin and at a low weight. Developed over decades, the Thin Ideal has replaced the once-held view that a full-figure is beautiful, and has created a mass dieting culture. But why has it been present for so long? Why are people buying into the belief that skinny is beautiful?

Let's address the first question: why has The Thin Ideal been present for so long? There are many reasons for this, but the main one is popular culture. Pop culture and Hollywood are probably at the peak of their popularity, and therefore have a massive influence over a large portion of the world's population. Those who follow both have been led to believe that thin is beautiful and, since the majority of actors and actresses are either skinny or on a diet, there's nothing to contradict that belief. No matter where one turns, they are bombarded with tabloids that ridicule those who don't don Hollywood's "ideal" figure, and the result is that they too try to emulate it. Unfortunately, some go to extremes, and end up hurting themselves both mentally and physically. And for what, so people will stop judging them and start complimenting them on their beauty? Is pop culture and Hollywood's idea of skinny really sexy? How would you react to your friend being a walking skeleton? There's a lot that needs to be re-evaluated.

The final question is why are people buying into this mass culture and doing this to themselves? Well, the main reason is they're not told any differently. There are barely any campaigns (apart from Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty) that preach acceptance for one's self. Everything in the mainstream media is about becoming a better you, not loving yourself for who you are. All this nonsense about losing weight is overshadowing all the information about health and wellbeing, which is what everyone should be focusing on.

What needs to be known is this: there is no such thing as a perfect body, nor an ideal weight. Everyone's bodies are made up differently. Some people were born naturally thin and some were born on the heavier side. There are so many factors that play into how our body looks that one can't list them all in a single article. Factors such as our genes, our environment, our activity level, and our body's metabolism; all play into how we look. What we need to start doing is spreading the word about body acceptance. We all need to start cherishing and loving our bodies because we only have one. We only have this one

body, so we need to start taking care of it. We need to stop starving it with all these crazy diets and start treating it right. Eat healthy, exercise, visit the doctor regularly, and read a few self-acceptance books. You'll lead a much more happier life if you learn to accept yourself, both inside and out.