

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

It's summer! And we all know what that means. The days are long, the shorts are, short and the pressure to be beach body ready is at an annual all time high. Because most of us have gone months, well at least a year without a professional hair cut, manicure and have been slowly increasing the time between shaves and other body hygiene maintenance, we should not be expected to instantly be beach body ready. With the beautiful warm weather upon us and the excitement of Summer comes the pressure to fit our regular bodies into our "summer body". During the summertime, we get additionally bombarded with images of bikini clad, too good to be true, photoshopped to perfection, sparkly, sun kissed bodies, accompanied by a 14-day get fit fast plan to get us "bathing suit ready". We are expected to throw off our clothes, frolic in the waves and reveal our skin to the world carefree. All good, right? But among the joy that summer brings there can be a LOT of challenges for those of us on this journey of body acceptance. Luckily, there are hundreds of reasons to remind us of the power of celebrating and loving our bodies exactly as they are. Being "body positive" or BOPO (I love this abbrev!). Means refusing to conform with the cultural norms that imply that if your body is not perfect than there is something you need to "fix". That is why you should remember that every body is a beach body.



The first thing to know about body image is that you're not alone. Everyone — no matter what

their weight or shape — feels insecure from time to time. The good news? You can literally control the amount of self-esteem you have. Being BOPO will take time and conscious effort, but it is entirely within the realms of possibility. Here are a few small, concrete ways to start.

The notion that summer clothing and swim wear are meant for one body type is rooted in fatphobia and eliminates a large portion of the population. Furthermore, the idea insinuates that an entire subset of clothing isn't meant for people who wear larger sizes. This is both ridiculous and most importantly harmful. We should not idealize a specific body shape. Instead, we must recognize that body diversity and positivity are something to be celebrated year-round. If you made five women eat the same foods and exercise with the same program for a month, they would still have different shaped bodies. The media portrays images that are highly photoshopped and manipulated and don't exist in real life. A healthy body shape is one that is consistently nourished, not deprived. Whatever body shape you have, just remember. You are beautiful. There's no such thing as an "ideal" body shape, regardless of what some may try to tell you. The most important thing is that you're happy and healthy.

Society's long-standing obsession with the "bikini body" has played a large role in the lives of millions of people who struggle with an eating disorder. It's a tidal wave of unrealistic expectations. The focus on bathing suits, skimpier clothing, and dieting to get "bathing suit ready" can be difficult to manage for individuals of any size and may exacerbate negative body image and eating disorders. Treat yourself with care. Acknowledge that summer may bring expectations about your body but that your worth is not defined by how you look. Don't waste precious time or energy thinking about how you look through other people's eyes. This means being on your own team. It means giving yourself the same respect, dignity, and understanding you want for your loved ones. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok, Facebook, and other social media platforms can do a lot of good. They help us stay connected to friends and family. They can also offer support systems for everything from social issues to décor dilemmas. However, there's also the not-so-great side of social media. Sadly, when paparazzi capture photos of stars looking like us (i.e. regular folks), media sites include them in their worst bikini body photo galleries and tabloids mock stars for not appearing to be so-called "beach ready." Our view of what is real and natural becomes distorted when we obsess over what others portray as glamour and perfection. This can cause us to have unrealistic expectations, and when we do not reach these goals, we lose self-esteem. But it doesn't have to be all or nothing. Stock up your follow list with people that make you feel empowered and accepted. Focus on those accounts that inspire you to live authentically and unapologetically. If a social media platform is making you feel bad about yourself? Hit the unfollow button, or better yet delete.

When it comes to our bodies, almost all of us spend more time criticizing our imperfections and thinking about the things we would change about how we look, rather than thinking about what our bodies do for us each and every day. Our bodies do *a lot* for us. Our body enables us to move through life and experience all it has to offer, no matter how fit or able we are. For example, right now, you're reading this most likely seated, because your body itself is working hard to see it physically and comprehend it mentally. It's a meta way of thinking, but it's true! Your body is a lot stronger and more capable than you probably give it credit for.

At your next pool party, look around. There is a good chance you will see the odd six pack, but for the most part, you will likely see some soft tummies and cellulite as well. People won't be spray tanned, have glistening abs or buns of steel. And most people won't look like they just came from the cover shoot for *Men's Health* or *Shape* magazine. You may be giving those two pieces of fabric way more power than necessary, the ability to embrace that, rather than hide or judge one's body, is tough. But, as small as one bathing suit ad campaign is, the empowering "sorry, not sorry" message behind it is one plenty of women can stand to hear. Stop hiding your body away from the light. Go let yourself grow in all your beautiful ways. I'll be making up for lost time and growing right beside you and accepting my body

unconditionally throughout it all." You can learn & practice to accept then love yourself because that's what you deserve." This summer the beach is going to get whatever bodies we bring because EVERY BODY IS WORTHY NO MATTER ITS SHAPE AND SIZE.

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How to Be Beach Body Positive This Summer After Living Through Quarantine

<https://www.dailycal.org/2021/05/06/how-to-be-body-positive-this-summer-after-living-through-quarantine/>

7 Reasons Every Body is A Beach

Body <https://www.sheknows.com/health-and-wellness/articles/2032864/reasons-every-body-is-a-beach-body/>

Summer Body Anxiety is Real, Here's How to Work Through It

<https://www.talkspace.com/blog/summer-body-anxiety-how-to-work-through/>