



## BODY IMAGE WORKSHEET 1

Challenging FALSE appearance assumptions:

**a) "Thin/small is good/pretty/better/right"**

o *Why?*

o What meaning are you attributing to thin?

o How could your body's unsuppressed set-point weight, which is predominantly pre-decided, be wrong?

**b) "Physically attractive people have it all."**

o What *actual* evidence do you have of this? Is this something you are assuming through what you see online? or witnessing in fleeting real-life moments? Is it *actually* true that those who are attractive have no 'real life' worries simply because of the way they look?

o Being attractive does not safeguard against feelings of inadequacy, a lack of self-worth, depression or loneliness.

o Our initial reactions to someone's appearance don't always last. Consider the fact that your reaction to someone's personality can impact how you see that person (e.g., as more or less attractive).

**c) "My worth as a person depends on how I look."**

o Think about the other aspects of yourself that represent who you are. What qualities do you possess that you like? What attributes do your friends like about you?

o Think about what you value in others. Do you only like them because of the way they look?

o How much emphasis do you think should be placed on one's body/appearance?

Are there other aspects of life you think are more important? In other words, what are your core values? Are you representing them?

**d) "I should always do whatever I can to look my best."**

o Think about what would realistically happen if you didn't look your best at every occasion. Would people like you less? If yes, are those people you wish to associate with? Do they share your value system?

o Do you require others to look their best all the time? Would you be harshly judgmental of them if they didn't look their best? If you don't expect this of others, why do you demand it from yourself?

o Who can look their best all the time? It is unreasonable to expect yourself to look your best all the time.

o You can always think of ways you can look better. It is an endless and exhausting pursuit.

o Do you believe that at the end of your life you will look back and be proud of always looking your perception of 'ideal', if it meant you had missed out on half of your life (memories, experiences, celebrations etc)?

**e) "The first thing that people will notice about me is what's wrong with my appearance."**

o Just because others are aware of an "imperfection" in your appearance, doesn't mean they will think less of you or mistreat you.

o Your personality is more influential in how others think of you than whatever might be "wrong" with your looks. Your personality with an ED is limited

o We are usually more concerned with our own appearance than with the appearance of others. People will be too worried about how they are being perceived, to spend time worrying about how you look.

**f) "If people knew how I really look, they would probably like me less."**

o Characteristics such as friendliness, warmth, honesty, integrity, intelligence, and a sense of humour are highly valued human traits, no matter what you look like. Do you wish to surround yourself with people who value your surface, but not your core?

o Have you ever stopped liking someone upon discovering an imperfection in his

or her appearance? Have you ever thought “*I didn’t realize X has acne – I should probably end our friendship*”?

o It is likely that you are the one who is uncomfortable with your appearance, not others.

**g) “By managing my physical appearance, I can control my social and emotional life.”**

o Good self-care may make you feel confident; however, feeling attractive will not solve all of your life problems.

o You cannot build a happy life using only your appearance. If suppressing your life happens due to undereating, you certainly will not be sustainably happy.

o Being smaller does not improve body image. You need to focus on fixing your relationship with your body, not your appearance.

o Hiding behind clothes only reinforces your belief that your body isn’t good enough. Your brain is watching and learning.

**h) “My appearance is responsible for much of what has happened in my life.”**

o Attractiveness is not a prerequisite for success. Consider the people in your life who have succeeded in areas that do not directly involve their looks.

o Ask yourself if you have loved or admired people for reasons that have nothing to do with their appearance.

**i) “If I could look just as I wish, my life would be much happier.”**

o What evidence do you *actually* have of this?

o In your experience, is smaller equal to happier?

o Doing actions that tell your brain you should look different magnifies your discontentment with your body. What are you doing to show your body that you are trying to accept yourself at your unsuppressed?

**j) “My culture’s messages make it impossible for me to be satisfied with my appearance.”**

o The media in our culture does portray powerful and unhelpful messages about physical appearance and what is considered "attractive;" however, you can choose not to buy into these messages with enough foundation work. Beauty is subjective.

**k) "The only way I could ever accept my looks would be to change my looks."**

o Research (and experience) shows that you can change your body image without changing your appearance.

o Have you done a disordered action in order to suppress your weight and still not felt good about your looks? Once again, it is your body image that needs fixing – not your body.

*Ideas extracted from The Body Image Workbook by Thomas Cash, 2008*