

INSIDE / OUT

by Laurie Hays Coffman Body Image

For our new health feature, "Inside/Out," send your health questions to the address on page 17.

The pool opens next week and you are having a major bum-out. "It's this awful body! I can't be seen in a swimsuit. I'm so _____!"

"... fat."

"... scrawny."

"... deformed."

"... short."

"... tall."

The truth is, almost everybody would like to make a few external changes in the equipment. In extreme cases this body-loathing leads to serious health threats like bulimia or use of steroids. Wholeness and happiness require a healthy body image.

I Thought, You Thought

If you wonder how adults feel about *their* bodies, check out these drawings from *American Health*, July/August 1988. It may surprise you to see that much of what they would like to change is based on what each sex *thinks* the opposite sex wants them to be. The sad part is: That's not what the opposite sex likes at all!

Celebrate Yourself!

Explore your body uniqueness. For every imperfection you discover (thunder thighs, freckles, funny toes, lopsided chest), look for ten things you do appreciate about your body (sparkling smile, curly hair,

powerful hands, good posture). Think of your personal eccentricities as fingerprints of your own identity.

A recent study at Penn State shows that teenagers going through puberty sometimes have a hard time keeping a healthy respect for their changing body. In that group of 335 (sixth through eighth graders), girls who developed early and boys who developed late seemed to have the hardest time feeling good about their appearance (from "Those Gangly Years," *Psychology Today*, September 1987).

You've probably noticed that

girls *usually* develop sexually one to two years earlier than boys the same age. That leads to some awkwardness. But "normal" for one person may be as much as five to six years later than for another.

A girl who gets breasts or starts her periods before other girls may feel a lot older than all her peers. Likewise, a boy who is short and still sings soprano when his friends are tall, hairy baritones may feel left out. The important thing to remember is: *This is temporary.*

Every body is regulated by its own inner clock. Scientists have not found any effective means

The average man:

5'10"
172 lb.
33-in. waist
Medium-width shoulders and chest
Hairy or smooth chest (half say each)
Lean build
Brown eyes
Short, straight, dark hair
Tanned or untanned (half say each), clean-shaven

Men want to be:

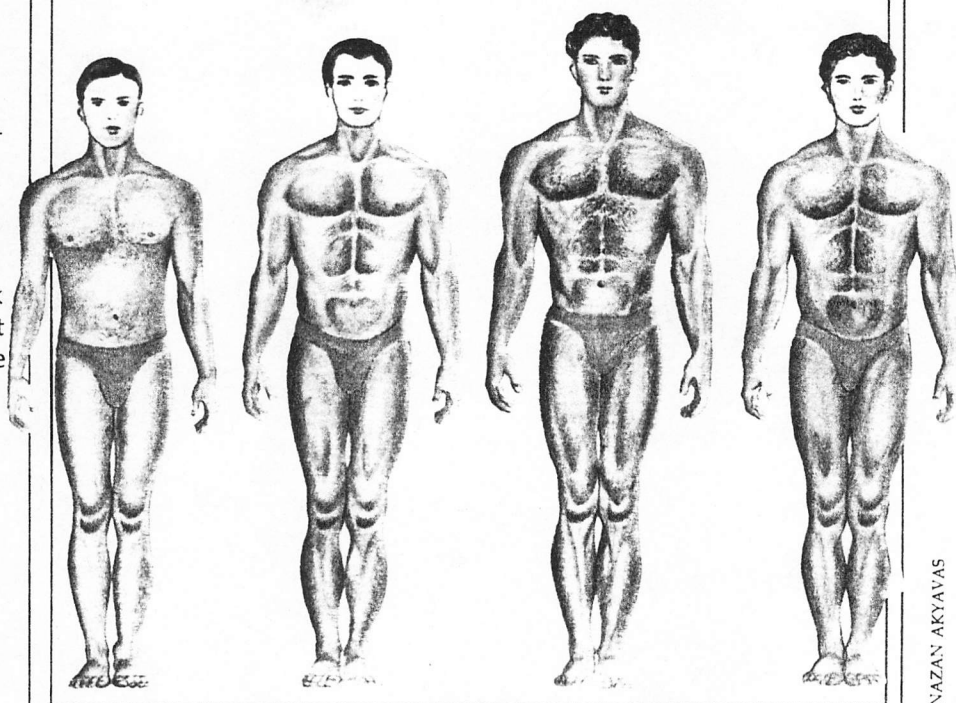
5'11"
171 lb.
33-in. waist
Medium-to-broad shoulders and chest
Hairy or smooth chest (half say each)
Muscular build
Brown or blue eyes (half say each)
Short, straight, dark hair
Tanned, clean-shaven

Men think that women want a man:

6'
173 lb.
32-in. waist
Broad shoulders
Broad chest
Hairy chest
Muscular build
Blue eyes
Short, curly, dark hair
Tanned
Clean-shaven

Women actually want a man:

5'11"
171 lb.
33-in. waist
Medium-to-broad shoulders
Medium-to-broad chest
Hairy chest
Muscular build
Brown or blue eyes (half say brown, half blue)
Short, curly, dark hair
Tanned, clean-shaven



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INSIDE/OUT

of predicting or changing what nature has assigned. If you are earlier or later than your friends, it's not a curse. It's genetics. Remember—time is a great equalizer.

Things to Tell Yourself

Some people who don't like their body waste energy despising what they could be revising! If you struggle with hurtful feelings toward your body, help yourself to some healing thoughts.

● I can *befriend* my body by focusing on the okay things about it—not on the parts I

don't enjoy.

● I can *make peace* with my mirror. I will refuse to indulge in a self-destruction session. Instead I will name all the good things I see, and affirm myself.

● I can *accept* a wide range of "normal" sizes and shapes. And I can believe that I am pretty normal.

● I can *focus* on inner strength and beauty. My body is simply the house where the real me lives.

● I can *practice* good grooming. Attractive hair, skin, nails, and clothes make the most of a good thing—namely, me!

● I can *care* responsibly for my

body. A healthy body—well fed, rested—is very appealing to others and feels good!

● I can *strengthen* my body. Being fit is more attractive than being thin, tan, musclebound, or voluptuous.

● I can *handle* namecalling or rude remarks. I can: 1. ignore them, 2. confront them, 3. use humor, 4. refuse to hold a grudge or get even, 5. pray, 6. love myself.

● I can *recognize* handicaps in others (no body's perfect) without dwelling on them. I can also avoid concentrating on mine.

● I can *choose* my crowd, surrounding myself with kind and positive people. With such friends, I can talk honestly about my feelings, and empathize with theirs. (I may find out they are often dissatisfied with their body, too.)

● I can *thank* God for all the delights my body affords me: hugging, kicking goals, tasting ice cream, touching kitten fur, smelling fresh cut grass, watching sunsets, and listening to love songs while I relax.

And then there's that wonderful sensation of diving into a crystal cool swimming pool on a hot summer day with a body that's really pretty amazing.

What concerns do you have about your health? "Inside/Out" is dedicated to helping you stay healthy—in body, mind, spirit, and feelings. Send your ideas and questions about your health to:

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The average woman:

Women want to be:

Women think men want a woman:

Men actually want a woman:

Dress size 10 to 12
5'3 1/4"
134 lb.
Average-sized breasts
Average body type
Soft body tone
Brown eyes
Short, straight, brown hair
Some wrinkles, blemishes or freckles (half have a problem)
Not tanned

Dress size 8
5'4 1/4"
123 lb.
Average-sized breasts
Average body type
Muscular body tone
Brown or blue eyes (half say each)
Brown hair, wavy or curly; no clear preference for length
Smooth, tanned skin

Dress size 8
5'4"
118 lb.
Large breasts
Thin body type
Soft body tone
Blue eyes
Long, wavy, blond hair
Smooth skin
Tanned

Full rear, medium-width hips, small-to-medium waist
5'4"
121 lb.
Medium-sized breasts
Average body type
Soft body tone
Blue eyes
Long, wavy hair (half say blond, half brown)
Smooth, tanned skin

