

APPEARANCE

Do you know the children's game called "Beetle"? Each player rolls the dice and the numbers correspond to a body part of the beetle with the aim of the game being to "build" the beetle piece by piece until it is whole and complete. The thorax, head, tail, feelers and legs are each vital to completing the game.

Attachment to your body parts

What do parts of your body mean to you and what attachment do you have to certain parts of your anatomy? How would it be if you were to "lose" these parts or for them to become "dysfunctional" for some reason?

Think, for example, about a woman who sees her breasts as being a vital part of her sense of femininity and identity. What occurs for someone whose breasts change because of surgery, breastfeeding, natural aging, weight gain, weight loss or plastic surgery? How would it impact her sense of self, sexuality, femininity and relationship with others? According to Louise Hay, breasts represent the principle of mothering. Problems with the breasts may imply that you are "over-mothering and over-giving of yourself" to a person, place, thing or situation. When you think about it, when we feed and nourish our young, cuddle our children and loved ones, make love to someone we care about, we are typically very giving of our breasts and of ourselves.

Some people may be attached to their hair. What occurs for a man, who starts balding or the woman, who has it shaved or goes bald due to hair thinning or hair loss? According to Louise Hay, hair represents fear and tension, and your head represents you and what you show the world. It is how you are recognized. If you got a bad haircut or you lose your hair for some reason, what would that mean to you? For a woman in some cultures, what would it mean to expose her head and hair?

Your skin is a sensory organ that has the function of protection and respiration. How do you feel when you discover more wrinkles or blemishes? What would happen if you were burned or if your face or skin areas had to be operated on leaving permanent scars? The notion of "beauty only being skin deep" could take on a new meaning.

When you notice that you are attached to, or stressing about certain body parts, consider the underlying meaning that those parts have for you, and apply your insights to your own situation. Louise Hay's work* could be of considerable help to you, but also use what your own body's wisdom specifically and individually tells you.

Attachment to your body's functions and abilities

I have walked a thousand miles, literally and figuratively, with my daughter, who has a spinal injury and has been in a wheelchair since the age of 4, as the result of a car accident that also killed her birthmother. I sat in my house just last Saturday and once again admired her for how capably she was looking after her two young daughters as they played at my house. In those many years, days and hours of attending to my daughter and her needs, visiting numerous specialists and undergoing many different therapies and supporting her in becoming independent, we were vigilantly aware of body functions and abilities and what it means to have, or not have, the use of one's legs to walk and run, a bladder that functions well and sensation that enables one to know what is hot and cold, sharp or dull.

What happens when some of your body functions aren't functioning well or aren't "up to your expectations"? eg. changes to your mobility, communication, continence, mental capacity, coordination, physical strength, fertility, sexuality, ability to work and your independence. Are you

presently experiencing particular losses of function or ability? How is that impacting you? How are you adapting to that?

For some of you, losing your capacity to walk, work, think, speak, carry, sit and be independent in your activities of daily living, and feeling like you have lost your identity can feel like a death. My time with my daughter, and in my observation of others with so called “disabilities”, these people are often the very able and capable ones, finding ways to reach their potential beyond what some so-called “able-bodied” people would consider for themselves. They too often find new possibilities and opportunities to work with what they have and excelling at what they do, while many “able-bodied” muddle along in life and accept the path of mediocrity.

My advice to you is this. Focus on your “capabilities” rather than your “disabilities”. Be as independent as you can, for as long as you can. Find ways to open the door to new possibilities for yourself. Ask for the support that you want and need. Focus on finding solutions rather than dwelling on what might seem disaster. Whatever your function or dysfunction, make a difference and use the abilities you have to influence someone or some cause. Find pleasure in, and be very grateful for what you CAN do.

Outside in principle - Attachment to how you look on the outside

How you present yourself to the outside world can say much about you, but can also hide what the core issue really is. Reflect on a time when you really chose to look different. Perhaps you chose to colour your hair radically, wear a very different clothing style, wear little or lots of makeup or get a new tattoo or piercing. Reflect on what that meant for you at the time. What was your “external presentation” saying about your “internal condition”? Did that serve a purpose for you of covering up something, or expressing more of the real you?

When unwell, unhappy or unconfident, it is easy to let appearances slip. How about making it part of your rehabilitation, recovery or self esteem boost to treat yourself to looking and feeling the best that you can? Wear clothes that reflect who you are. Take pride in your appearance – whether you are heading out to the local shop or out to dinner. Wear clothes that compliment your shape and not ones that hide it. Toss out things in your wardrobe that don’t fit anymore, don’t look good or haven’t been worn for ages. Stop saving your best for a special occasion. Bring out your jewellery to complement what you are wearing and what makes you feel good. Start being adventurous with your colour choices and wear colours that suit you and those that project the image you would like to present. Have a haircut that accentuates your best features and that reflects your personality.

Newspapers and magazines bombard you with images of what weight and shape is acceptable according to society’s “norm”. What this does is deny you of your individuality and appreciation of the beauty of your feminine (or masculine) form and the notion of how awesome your body actually is.

Weight can be an “external” demonstration of what is going on internally. What are you covering up with your particular weight, size and shape? What pain, secret or unease do you carry internally that you wish to hide, disguise, deny or keep hidden? Where you carry weight can be a factor of inheritance or may be unique and individual to you, but it may also have a connection with what is going on internally for you, or have a connection to what has occurred in your life? For someone who has a larger bottom or carrying weight around their hips, this can relate to base chakra (energy centre) imbalance – particularly related to family, early childhood years, safety, security and belonging and holding onto your past or what is “behind” you.

Think of those, who have had heart attacks. In many cases these people hold their weight in their upper bodies particularly around their bellies and chest, which constricts and interferes with the function of the heart. Emotional issues around relationships, passion, love, emotions and grief are

possibly also factors to consider. Ask your body for some insights about your weight, size and shape to enable you to heal from the core, lose or gain the weight you want to or love and accept your body more and carry yourself more confidently.

Inside out principle

A baby is not concerned at the size of its mother's breast. What it enjoys is the comfort, nurturance and sustenance it receives by suckling or cuddling into it. A child is not concerned how big its mother's or father's hips, thighs or belly are. What it enjoys is a lap to sit on and to have a story read or some quality time spent together. A person is not so interested in how many wrinkles or blemishes a person has, but more the wisdom gained from experiences that person has.

Have you ever met someone who just radiates health, happiness and confidence? It is not so much how they present themselves on the outside, but it just seems to shine from within. Attitude, thoughts, words, beliefs, having one's soul desires met.....all of these are internal beacons that radiate through. Conversely you can look glamorous, successful and wealthy on the outside, yet be in poverty on the inside – unhappy, unfulfilled, lacking love and with a soul that is dying. You may feel like a shell with no substance.

Your body is not YOU. You are not your body.

At Sunday school, we used to sing the song, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.' Let your inner beauty shine through. Dare to be significant. Dare to show the world how unique you are and how beautiful you are from the inside out.

Yes, you are made up of body parts like the beetle but your body is not you. It is however an embodiment through which you live day to day, express who you are and is a reflection of your life experience to date. Be in your body, but not attached to it as your identity marker. Attend not only to the "shell" or exterior "casing" but more importantly nourish and care for yourself – your mind, body and soul – from the inside out. The power of the inner you is your substance and sustenance for living vitally.

*Hay, Louise September 1999 You can heal your Life. Gift Edition Hay House
ISBN 1-56170-628-0

PS As I just typed this reference to Louise Hay's book, I received an email saying 30 years ago, Louise's initial "little blue book" was Heal your body. Since then, 50 million Hay House published books have been sold. Share the profoundly powerful messages that you read which impact your life in a positive way.

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