

# ***Body Confidence:***

*For Women over Fifty*



## ***5 Easy Steps to a***

## ***Better Body Image***

**By**

**Coach Stephanie Wood, PCC**

**Founder of the Body Knowledge System®**

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***“Body Image is a state of mind shaped over time in response to cultural influence, experience with family and friends, and physical development.” Dr. Thomas F. Cash***

# 5 Easy Steps to a Better Body Image:

## Body Confidence for Women over Fifty

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## About the Author

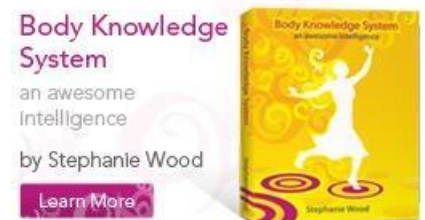


Professional Choreographer, Dancer, Fitness Trainer, Business, and Wellness Coach, Stephanie Wood developed the Body Knowledge System® for her classes and clients who were out of touch, and out of patience with their bodies.

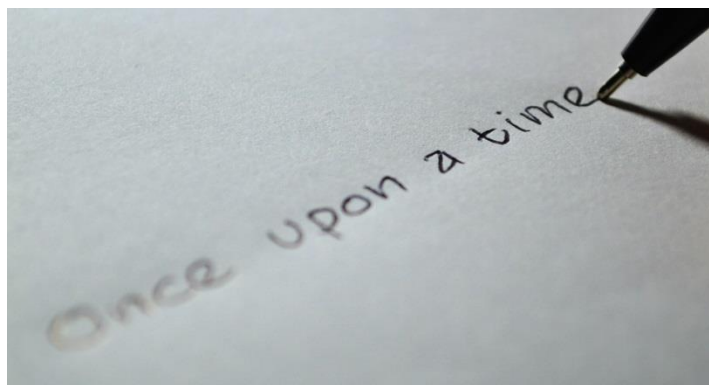
Stephanie believes our bodies are a source of joy, information, and personal wisdom. Her professional life focuses on accessing every body's wisdom. Our physical self provides valuable clues about self-care and our life choices. This was not an overnight discovery, rather the result of her professional experience as a dancer, choreographer, personal trainer, and fitness expert. Equipped with education, personal, and professional experience, research and perceptive observation, Stephanie created the Body Knowledge System® as the New Sustainable Solution to her clients' challenges with their bodies.

Listening to her clients' needs and body image concerns, she realized the traditional approach to diet and exercise was not as effective as a whole body, holistic approach. Her focus shifted from coach/teacher–client/ student relationship to having her clients befriend their bodies, so that the two worked and/or played together for their mutual benefit. This perspective is especially important as we age.

Coach Stephanie Wood continues to learn while she coaches, mentors, and supports clients. As she listens, she hears their issues. Many years and many clients later, she continues to develop the Body Knowledge System® to successfully answer her clients' questions, meet their needs, and customize BKS to each individual, regardless of age. Our common concerns to “lose weight”, exercise more, and feel better about our body image can be addressed with her simple solution.



Stephanie's passions to support other women in their struggles with their bodies with her coaching career lead her current focus on Body Image. Stephanie develops creative, progressive, and personal programs for each individual and small group who want to benefit from the Body Knowledge System®. Her custom Body Image programs combine the science of exercise, the pleasure of rhythm and music, and the fun and support present in her coaching practice.



# A Personal Note from Stephanie: There IS life after 50!

Hey there - it's Stephanie - and I wanted to write you a quick note about what we'll be talking about in this e-book and how it differs from the earlier edition. Here I address my loyal audience of women who are ready to resume control of attracting happiness into their lives regardless of their age.

Body confidence does not now, nor actually ever has depended on the number of candles on your birthday cake! It begins and ends with open communication with your body.

***Rather than resent your body, befriend your body.***

Oh, sure, you say, "how do I befriend that body that shames me every time I look in the mirror"? How do you befriend anyone?

***You BE a friend.***

- **Respect the person**
- **Listen to the person**
- **Work with the person**
- **Play with the person**
- **Finally, trust the person with your deepest secrets**

**Your body becomes your very best friend, forever!**

In your body's case, you are lucky as your new best friend is with you every day of your life.

- No need to text a message to her
- No frustration of not being able to communicate with her
- No chance of a misunderstanding
- No guilt, shame, or any negative feelings
- No need to apologize, forgive, or forget any offenses, because **there are no offenses!**

If you find yourself stuck, confused, or need a tune up, return to this page to renew your enthusiasm in yourself!

# A Better Body Image for Women over 50!

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This second edition to my popular “Five Easy Steps to a Better Body Image” e-book) addresses my practice’s focus: “Women of a Certain Age”, a term coined a century ago by French novelist, Gaston Leroux to indicate middle aged women. Of course, middle age in the early twentieth century defined women over 30 years old. Not only is that term no longer relevant to that, or any age group, as it’s used in a negative connotation, women who enter the second half of their lives do so today with a confidence, and self-assurance our forebears lacked.

From dependence to independence, since last century we are able to make our own choices. We are responsible adults who account for the outcome of those choices without fear, blame, or shame.

At our age, we deserve the respect our experience affords us.

## **Entitled? You betcha!**

And not in the sense of entitlement attributed to the GenX or Millennials. The previous decades provide knowledge through informal and formal education, wisdom from observation, and the patience of aging gracefully.

Because of our societal emphasis on the youth culture, women have been conned into subscribing to a youthful image rather than taking pride in the inevitability of time’s influence on our bodies.

## **This is not a con, this is the truth.**

Body Confidence, which is the attractive element of everyone’s body image, is the essence of presenting a positive appearance in every situation.

Regardless of your age, height, or shape, you can improve your body image immediately with these five easy steps, tailored to you!

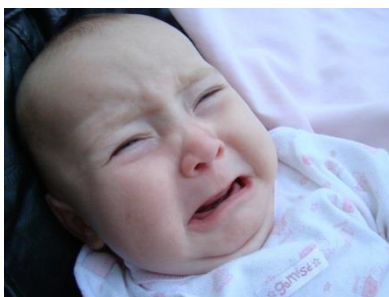
And if you need help getting your arms around this new perspective, please [contact Stephanie](mailto:coachstephaniewood@gmail.com) for a personal, private conversation. ([coachstephaniewood@gmail.com](mailto:coachstephaniewood@gmail.com))

We are not in this alone!

The content of this edition takes the valuable information from the earlier e-book and customizes it for the rest of us, women over 50!

## The Birth of Your BFF

At the moment of your conception, your intimate relationship with her began. Within the womb, we are our bodies. At birth, we are inseparable and best friends. Depending on our bodies for life, she communicates with our environment to ensure our survival. Our survival depended on her ability, and yes, her willingness to alert our caregivers to our needs, wants, and preferences.



Growing from infant dependence on others, to mature independence, the link uniting us to our physical selves stretches---perhaps to the breaking point. From being one with our bodies as babies, as we grow we share our presence with our brains. As we mature, we shift our perceptions (almost) entirely to our minds.

Living mostly in our heads, just like two former best friends who no longer speak, we become estranged from our physical self. When the distance between us increases, we sense the emptiness in that space. We have no idea how to fill the hole\*, so we discount our former friend's feelings and the separation widens.

Even the term "Body Image" implies separation. An image can be a hologram, painting, picture, caricature, cartoon, photograph, or any representation of the person's physical appearance. Nevertheless, it remains a *representation*, not the person. The image is always one step removed, apart, and separate from the physical self.

For all of us over 50, the image is a transparent shell. Our reality lies behind the image within the living, breathing body that supports us, transports us, pleasures us, and completes us, our Best Friend Forever.

Think of the kind of friend you are to your friends, don't you want a friend exactly like you? Look in the mirror and there she is!

Sincerely yours,

*Stephanie Wood* [coachstephaniewood@gmail.com](mailto:coachstephaniewood@gmail.com)

## Body Image Credo

- *Determine the things you can change*
- *Discard the things you can't change*
- *Discover the joy when you see the difference daily!*

*PLUS the wisdom beyond age 50:*

*There is always a Joyous Daily Discovery!*

## STEP ONE: Objectivity

It's unfair for us to discuss "objectivity" before addressing our "expectations", particularly as we pass the half-century mark.

Where did my waist go? Oh, I don't know, 1, 2, 3 children result in expanding not only our waists, but our hips as well. And the perky butt has slipped behind our knees? Oh, yes, our knees: resemble elephant elbows!

**Stop! Negativity is not Objectivity!**

Keep in mind those changes produced children, grandchildren, hours of comfort for your significant other(s), transporting you at home, in the office, on the road, shopping, on the tennis court, golf course, and in the swimming pool and spa. Your physical self feels so good under so many circumstances: a satisfying meal, good wine or beer, warm bed on a wet day, a hot shower/bath after a workout. Stroking the fat cat in your lap, playing with the puppy, reading a great book, listening to smooth jazz in your favorite chair: each and every one of those moments was brought to you by your BFF, your body!

Here comes the real challenge: You *have to look at each other together!*

(Remember you **are** friends right?):

1. Locate a full length mirror
2. Stand in front of it
3. Take off your clothes
4. Look at your BFF, your body
5. Imagine the image your BFF sees looking at you
6. Inhale, exhale, stretch from your toes up to the tips of your fingers
7. Shake your shoulders, booty, arms, legs, head, and face
8. Smile, giggle, grin, then laugh out loud
9. Repeat until you have Happy Feet to accompany your happy face!



Most of us respond with a frown when assessing our appearance in the mirror. Our reaction depends on our body image, not the reality of the body reflected in the glass.

Your body, your best friend, accepts and loves you just the way you are---no judgment, no criticism.

As soon as you understand the dynamics causing your reaction to your reflection, your response can shift from negative to positive.

My career as a professional dancer and choreographer taught me the importance of having an open, loving relationship with my body. My coaching practice taught me to listen to my clients and their bodies. [Body Knowledge System®](#) is the result of both experience and education.

The bottom line? It's never too late to improve your body's image, and it's easier and more fun than you think! By the end of "5 easy steps to a better body image", you'll love your reflection: guaranteed!



Morgentoilette (*Woman Standing in Front of a Mirror*) 1841 by Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg

Who is that person in the mirror?

Is it you, or your body image?

Do they look the same or does your mind punish your body with her opinion?

Are you smiling with affection and acceptance at the person looking back at you?

Or, are you frowning in disapproval at all (or parts) of your reflection?

## The First Step of Five Easy Steps to a Better Body Image

The first step requires courage to face your feelings about your body objectively. The good news is that taking this step is very personal, very private, and like your perfect intimate friendship very trustworthy.

There is no bad news.

When you looked in the mirror before, were you taller or shorter than you are?

As a child, my parents took me to Radio City Music Hall and I made up my mind to become a Rockette, no matter what. My parents are 5'8 and 5'3, and I am 5'4. Rockettes are 5'10 at a minimum. Ok, I assured myself, there is always the Bolshoi? Right?

Right. If you are 5'9 and willowy thin.

Yet, I can still dance!



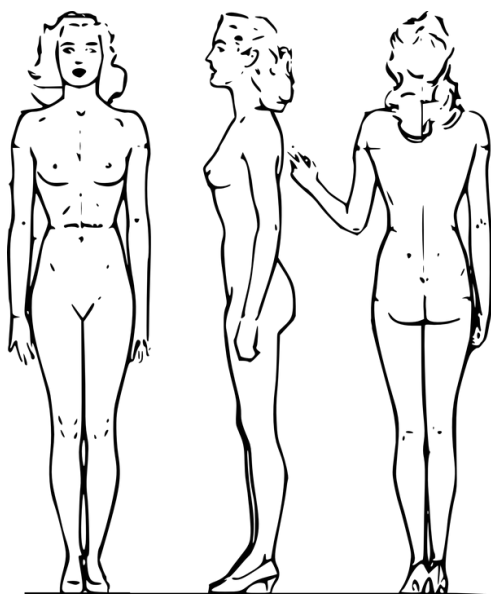
Body positivity comes from living in, and with, your body, rather than relying only on your head to choose, decide, or act. With your better body image comes a more confident presence at home, at work, and at play.

Again, this first step requires courage to face your feelings about your body, objectively. So let's return to the mirror:

Strip down and look at your body's reflection and **STOP** the frown before you feel it start!

Try a smile, instead.

You do not have to mean it, but you do have to *feel* it!



By the end of this e-book, when you complete the five easy steps, you will be able to look at the nude you with a smile on your face from first glance. I promise.

## YOUR TURN

Here's how:

Grab something to take notes, on paper or iPad. Jot down impressions, facts, and ok, judgments, for now.

Begin with your feet: Are they pretty? Are they happy feet? Are they smooth, rough, gnarly? Are your toenails trimmed, polished to cover the fungus? Corns, bumps, scaly?

- ✓ Your Ankles: fat, thin, boney, thick, sturdy, tattooed, ankle chain?
- ✓ Your Calves: muscular, boney, fat, thin, veiny, athletic?
- ✓ Your Thighs: round, firm, fully packed?
- ✓ Your Hips: (you might want to turn around for an overall impression of your legs)
- ✓ Your Abdomen: motherhood stripes
- ✓ Your Breasts: perky or pouty?
- ✓ Your Arms/hands: wings?
- ✓ Your Neck: turkey?
- ✓ Your Face: smiling?
- ✓ Your Chin(s): how many?
- ✓ Your Hair: shiny, thick, straight, curly, dishwater or colorful?

This list is not about what's wrong about your body, it's also about what's right about your body. Everybody has both: assets and liabilities. List all, please.

## HER TURN

Ok, you thought THAT was the tough part, well stand by for a real challenge to your ego: It's time to listen to what your body feels about you. How? Create another list. Remember this is private, personal, and safe. No one will see either list unless you choose to share it with someone else.

Find a quiet place when you have enough time to relax and reflect on your feelings, regardless of the quality of them.

Ask your body the following questions and *listen* for her answers:

- 1) Do I respect you?
- 2) Do I listen to you?
- 3) Do I take care of you?
- 4) Do I love you?
- 5) Do I trust you?

Be prepared for all negative answers, because the older we get the more we escape to our heads and ignore our bodies. Again, we're back to expectations for those of us over 50. If something hurts, or doesn't feel quite right, we automatically fear disease or disability, and our initial reaction is to ignore it and assume it will go away. Perhaps it will, eventually; or perhaps it doesn't, becoming more insistent for your attention over time. Please don't let fear of aging interfere with the open communication with your BFF, as she is there to support both of you!



As adults, if we have negative judgments about our bodies our heads have taken over. As children, we rarely judged our body's appearance; performance, maybe, but never its image. So we mature and external influences pile on the negativity turning our ignorance into resentment of her appearance. We assume the solution to our discomfort lies in our heads and a decision about what we need to "do" to improve our self-image. What *action(s)* we need to take:

- Diets?
- Extreme Exercise?
- Drugs?
- Surgery?
- All of the above?

Our heads make the decision without consulting our body for her opinion.

And how has that worked out for you thus far?

The harder you try, the more you impose your head's solutions on your physical self, the less the likelihood of a permanent mutually pleasing solution for both of you.



Depending on your head alone, without listening to your body's suggestions, results in the return of the weight, plus five or more pounds; the exercise wanes and eventually disappears; the drugs' side effects are unbearable, and a single surgery doesn't do it. Soon the "ignorance" (ignoring your body) turns into resentment, shame, and loathing your body and another vicious cycle begins.

Unlike our heads, our bodies are not interested in blaming you for her appearance or discomfort; rather she yearns for you to return your attention to her needs, wants, and vision for your future.

Rather than pushing you away, she wants to embrace you with the love and affection she has for you for as long as you have lived.

Remember a time in your childhood when all was right in your world. You were safe, very relaxed and at peace: warm, comfortably sated with food and drink, awake, aware, loved and loving. The younger you were at the time of this memory, the more you owe that bliss to your body. Her ability to communicate your wants and needs to your caregivers and their ability to respond to her signals for both of you determined your level of happiness before your mind could intercede with your environment.

From cries intended to get the attention of your caregiver to feed you, change you, put you down for a nap, your body took over for your mother's womb, with instant gratification. Shift your focus from then to now.



When was the last time you felt stress, pain, hunger, thirst, and ignored every sensation? The reasons you choose to ignore your body's attempts to get your attention are not relevant. The action of dismissing your body's pleas sent a message to her about your low level of commitment to her.



If your friend, lover, family member contacted you by text, or phone, you'd probably respond sooner than later. But what about her? Your BFF, your body?

Continue to ignore your body's attempts to get your attention, and her signals will escalate until it's impossible to dismiss her. Accidents and illness are often the result of your inattention taken to the extreme.

Depending on the condition of your body image, your body's age and health, your body in general; her attempts to communicate with you will vary in scale and importance.

## **TAKE AWAY #1**

**STEP ONE**, an *objective realistic assessment of THE YOU behind your image*, is a great start to improving your self-esteem, body image, and a confident presence in your own life.

**YOU ARE:** woman, daughter, sister, grandmother, wife, friend, mother, worker, problem solver, helper, thinker, mover, shaker, and leader of your own life.

**To summarize:** You may not be tall enough, thin enough, or light enough to dance on center stage at the Royal Ballet:



You can always DANCE!



### **Remember Body Wisdom #1**

Determine the things you can change, Discard the things you can't change, Discover the joy when you see the difference!

Do this daily!

Congratulations Women of a Certain Age! You've finished the First of Five Easy Steps to a Better Body Image. Now reward yourself: get up and

### ***Dance! Dance! Dance!***

Put on some motivating music: rock, hip hop, swing, classical, whatever inspires you and your body to move. Now, put the book, tablet, e-reader down and for three full minutes shake your booty!

Feel better?

I thought so!

***Regardless of your age, happiness is a feeling, not a thought!***

## STEP TWO: What's in a Name?

*“What is in a name? That which we call a rose  
by any other name would smell as sweet”*

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2 Scene 2

So, how to end the estrangement that came with maturity? What's the first action when making a friend? Introduce yourself, “Hi, my name is....?” This is the fun part!

Have you ever wanted to re-name yourself?

Most of us have created other more glamorous, smarter, sexier identities for ourselves in childhood, adolescence, or even in maturity. Names come and go through the generations. Over the years, mothers named their daughters after women who were popular in the culture. In the early 1960's Heather became Jennifer, then Moonbeam and Farrah in the 1970's, and the millennium trend toward gender neutrality, Kyle, Payton, Dylan, Bailey, etc.

Whether you identify with your given name or nickname or not, when you provide your body with a name, you have the opportunity to *gift* her with a name YOU love. Naming her takes an action step toward ending the estrangement with her. You are not restricted by tradition, media, culture, or anything outside of yourself when selecting a name for your body. According to the [Body Knowledge System®](#), try several names on her and await her reaction, because selecting the appropriate name for her must feel good for both of you.

Q: How do you know if the name you selected is the right one for both of you for now?

A: It feels right and you are both smiling when saying it aloud.

**The Body Knowledge System® devotes time and energy to providing your body with a name in order to personalize your relationship with her.**

There is more to this process, so if you'd like to learn all about it, please [contact Coach Stephanie](#), for a free consultation.

Now that your body has her name, it's time for an introduction to your new best friend forever. If you're near a mirror, see your smile of welcome to this intimate relationship you have been missing since birth.



[www.mynamenecklace.com](http://www.mynamenecklace.com)

*“Friendship with oneself is all-important, because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world”*

Eleanor Roosevelt

Establishing friendship requires sharing of self as well as sincere interest in your friend. When that friend is your body, the sincerity for both of you is self-evident. If you have been aware of your intimacy until now, you are ahead of those who weren't aware of their body's support until reading this e-Book.

Body knowledge is essential to creating the body image you deserve. And knowledge is gained through communication with each other. To ease ourselves into the process, we begin by writing down our innermost thoughts and feelings about ourselves and each other.





## Our Turn

Go back a few pages (pages 9, 10) and review the questions and answers you provided for each other. After you've had an opportunity to assess your responses to your questions for each other, now it's time to imagine an ideal relationship between you and your body, and then take the steps to get there.

Back to the body lists: without being specific or you can be specific if it makes you feel good, write a letter to your body of all the things you appreciate about her. Rather than listing her parts and passing judgment on their appearance, focus instead on their purpose and how well she fulfills it. (*See sample letters on the bottom of this page*).

Now it's your body's turn to write you a letter of sincere appreciation for what you do *with* her, *for* her, *to* her that improves both of your lives. (See sample on following page). Tomorrow, or the next day, re-read the letters.

Note how well you feel about yourself when you accept the mutual appreciation of you!

### **Letter #1: From me to my body.**

Dear One,

My recent survey of you told me a lot about what's good about you. Although my feet could be smaller and smoother, the way they are now allow me to jog two miles every day, rush to catch a bus, and when we dance. Ahhhhh, when we dance you don't embarrass me. The same things are why I appreciate my legs and hips. BTW, the padding on my butt creates comfort for us on long car rides.

My breasts are the perfect size for sports bras and don't hurt when I jog because of their smaller size.

My second, or third chin, reminds me of my grandmother---the woman beloved by everyone who knew her.

My hands, with the liver spots and arthritis bumps, give and receive love and affection. They help me prepare food for my family, and comfort the children, pat the pets.

Thank you, shoulders and neck for supporting my heavy head without pain.

After re-reading this letter of love, acceptance, and appreciation to you I realize how much I love to move and that without your cooperation I would no longer be able to dance, jog, play with kids, coach their teams, etc. So what can we do now to improve our loving relationship?

## Letter #2: From my Body to Me

Dear Me,

It's so good to hear from you with an open, loving message. When we arrived on the planet, we were best friends and since then, I've missed you. More to the point, whether you realize it or not, every nasty judgmental remark you make about me hurts me and causes me pain---which because of our intimacy also causes you pain, whether you feel it or not.



I, too, love to move and truly appreciate your interest in dancing and willingness to explore our environment whenever we jog. I love the adventure and the feeling of all our parts working together to create beauty when we dance, or support our health when we bike.

In addition, I'm so proud of the life you're living that we share. You are good at your job, loved at home, and we have fun with your friends; our friends. It makes me feel warm, safe, and fulfilled when you are able to relax and express your appreciation through movement, like when we dance, run, or simply embrace others.



## TAKE AWAY #2

Name your body, introduce yourself and celebrate the new relationship!



Body confidence comes from the knowledge that you are no longer alone in your life. From today forward, you have support in everything you do. As long as you continue your communication with your BFF, you'll never be alone!

The letter was the first step in sharing with each other and earning the mutual respect and affection that has always been available to both of you. To maintain an ongoing open relationship of trust with your body is a much easier process, and available to you instantly at any time and every place you happen to be.

*Onward to Step Three*

# STEP THREE: Body Talk, not Body Language

**Step One** referred to an objective, realistic assessment of your body not your body's image. The disparity between your feelings about your body and your perceived body image can be eliminated with better communication between the two of you: your body and yourself. That communication will correct the confusion and establish habits that will restore your confidence as you improve your fitness, health, and well-being.

In **Step Two**, we gave our body her name and established our friendship to benefit our body image today and in the future.

## Step Three

- Body Talk refers to the direct exchange of information between you and your body.
- Body Talk is sharing & listening to hopes & wishes with your best friend, your body.
- Body Talk inspires Body Action to guarantee Body Confidence, a Better Body Image.

## Body Talk is NOT body Language!

There are over 100 pages of bestsellers on "body language" on Amazon.com. They inform us how to "read" someone else's body language. Does their mouth say one thing, while their body tells you the opposite? Are they telling the truth or lying? Can you depend on them, most important, can you trust them?

It's about the involuntary movements that reveal the consistency between the person's thoughts, intentions as expressed in speech and their intentions or honesty. Certainly, that's of interest to criminologists, parents ("How do you tell if your teenager is lying?" "Her lips are moving."), and politicians ("Ditto"). But lie detector tests are not admissible in court, because the results are not up to legal standards of reliability: ask any sociopath.

## Body Talk Basics

- Body talk refers to the direct exchange of information between you and your body.
- Body talk is the constant back-and-forth between your physical self and your personal self.
- Body talk is communication in its purest form.
- Body talk is direct, immediate, current truth, your truth.
- Body talk is sharing, listening, and exchanging visions, dreams, hopes, and wishes with your very best friend, your body.
- Body talk establishes a foundation for your future.
- Body talk instills Body Confidence that you have the power to create the future that it is unique to you.
- Body talk inspires Body Action to guarantee Body Confidence, beginning today!



### How do I talk to my body? How does my body talk to me?

The more important question is: **How do I *listen* to my body?**

Until recently, you have done all the talking if there has been any conversation. And most of the speech has NOT been complimentary, right?

- “I hate my thighs.”
- “If I must have a big butt, why aren’t I famous?”
- “My nose and my boobs need LIFTING!”
- “Neck? What neck, the one that belongs to that turkey in the mirror?”
- “Yes, thank you, I’d love a muffin top! But not on my waist, on my plate!”

Much has been written about the effects of negative self-talk, so I’m moving past boring you with what’s obvious. Instead, ***I’m going to provide you with a solution to change the negative words to positive appreciation.***

**Our bodies change our minds**

**...and our minds change our behavior**

**...and our behavior changes our outcomes.**

Those words belong to [Professor Amy Cuddy, PhD](#), social psychology, Harvard University. Her research proves that your body's position can change your chemistry and therefore your feelings.

## The Power of Posture

### Ready for an Instant Pick-me-up?

Stand up, Stretch up, and Breathe UP!

Your body reflects your feelings, not only about yourself, but also about how you fit into the world, your world. Your posture, your movement, expresses not only your energy level, but also how you feel about you.

Your place on the scale of tight vs. loose, rigidity vs. ease, paralysis vs. grace communicates your internal self to the outside world.

In other words, *your motion quotient reveals your self-image without you saying a word.*

Grab a piece of paper and jot down the names of people who have “presence”. Some obvious names come to mind from politics, entertainment and business. What do they all have in common?

Good, no *great* posture.



Supreme Court Justice,

Sonia Sotomayer

## Your Comfort Zone

Posture is also more than the sum of those parts, more than “just” a collection of righting and stabilizing reflexes — it is the way you live, the shape of your flexible “container,” the physical manifestation of your comfort zone.

We habitually hold ourselves and move in ways that serve social and emotional needs, or avoid clashing with them: posture can be submissive or dominant, happy or sad, brave or fearful, apathetic or uptight.

Strike the Warrior Pose in Yoga or the [Wonder Woman Pose](#) prior to a presentation, interview, or meeting and see how well your posture conveys your purpose!



## Body Movement Helps With Body Talk

From my experience, first as a dancer, then as an educator in fitness and healthy habits and lifestyle coaching, I discovered the secret to real body talk. It’s a real conversation between you and your best friend. There’s more information in my book, “[The Body Knowledge System®](#)” page 102 if you’re curious.

But the point is this will be different for different people.

- Maybe for you, it looks like setting a timer and reminding yourself to stand and stretch every hour while you’re at work.
- Or, maybe it looks like taking your dog around the block once a day.

- Maybe it looks like putting on one of your favorite songs and dancing in your socks in the living room!

It's not about a specific regimen for you to accomplish. It's about talking with your body and moving with her the way she and you like to move.

Ok, that's the basics. If you can wiggle a finger, blink your eyes, you can move. The more you move the more you'll learn and listen to your body; if you pay attention. (More about that in the 3rd step, next.)

You've heard your body before: with every twinge, or shooting pain, or itch, twitch, blisters, or soreness--those physical attention getters are her attempts to get your attention. If you ignore her initial attempts to communicate with you, the volume increases until you can no longer ignore her. Rather than suffer from the equivalent of a deafening SHOUT as listed above from her because you have exceeded your abilities to lift, run, swing, pull, how about paying attention to her before, during, and after your actions? I promise you, the messages will be less severe in the future.

So, the Body Knowledge System® refers to the dance as a means of individual, personally customized and totally private method of direct communication between you and your body. Jive, Ballet, Tango, jitterbug, modern, folk, swing, or the Electric Slide; the formal name of the movement is irrelevant to the message behind the movement.

From now on all your Body Talk dancing is interpretive from you to her or from she to you.

- 1) You choose the music: fast, slow, vocal, acoustic, nature sounds or silence and your choice determines the dance.
- 2) Your body chooses the dance and her participation. One body part, standing, and sitting, total body moving in rhythm to YOUR choice.
- 3) Together you observe how you feel about your dance.
- 4) Feeling fine? Keep on dancing.
- 5) Feeling down? Change up the dance until you feel fine.

Try it, you'll like it; promise.



## TAKE AWAY #3

**Body Talk** means communication between you and your best friend forever, your *body!*



You are always with your friend, your very best friend, and together you will make better choices to create the future, your future. What Body Confidence does for you is immediate, tangible, material, positive CHANGE! First you must establish, or should I say, re-establish the intimate contact with your body that you were born with.

- **Step One** began the process by restoring objectivity and support to your quest for a better body image.
- **Step Two** asked, what's in a name? Everything!
- **Step Three** - Body Talk intimate communication continues your journey to a better body image.

## STEP FOUR: All “Stressed” Up, and No Place to Go?

The tendency of women with body image issues is to hide, usually beneath layers and layers of clothing. Rather than celebrating her curves, she covers them up. Winter makes it easier to hide behind woolens, coats, capes. Unless it rains every day, during the hot and humid summer your raincoat remains in your closet.

Bathing suits are beneath robes and glowing cover-ups or left in the drawer until the last 5-50 pounds are gone. Knowing what our nude body looks like and resenting her always results in the desire to hide her. Unfortunately your efforts at disappearing usually increase your visibility and therefore invite judgments and criticisms, either spoken or communicated through a look of disapproval.

### A Modern Woman’s Point of View Applies to All of Us

Ashley Graham, model, designer, “[Stand Up for Curves, Confidence is Sexy](#)” embodies her motto as a very successful person and professional. Online, on Ted talks, in print and in interviews Ms. Graham stands up for her healthy, active body, even though she’s not a perfect size “0”. A woman who listens and learns from her body on a daily basis, she enjoys the confidence she has as a result of the relationship she has with her body. Role model, who walks her talk, Ashley emphasizes being happy in the skin you are in, “because perfection does not exist, so why waste your time and energy striving for the something that isn’t there?”

### Numbers Are the Nemesis of Body Image

The number on your scale, on your jeans’ label, dress size often is not helpful to a positive body image. Instead of setting goals honoring your body’s health, your focus is on the scale, pants’, or dress size. After learning to communicate with your body, your life becomes soooooo much easier as the numbers fade into the background of your past.

Take your scale and toss it out the window! Really!

The number that appears on your scale differs from the number on your doctor’s scale, and the gym’s scale, and won’t be the same number 10 minutes or 10 hours later. But more to the point, how does that number make you feel?



And that feeling dogs you for the rest of the day. The *Body Knowledge* Solution?

- 1) Set the scale 10, 20, 30 pounds lighter, so when you step on it you'll feel great!
- 2) At the doc's office, kick off your shoes and BACK onto the scale as you threaten the nurse with a long and painful death if he or she shares that information with ANYONE (including the doctor).
- 3) Use something else to determine how you feel about your effect on gravity.

As for sizes, the body knowledge solution suggests ignoring the label, find a personal dresser in the women's department to bring you items she believes will look good on you and try them on without consideration for the size. I'm sure you're aware that the more expensive the line, the bigger sizes are labelled smaller, and vice versa. There are plenty of Size 16 wealthy women sporting Size 3 designer clothes :-)

I think you're getting the idea: if it makes you feel less than wonderful, ignore, excuse, and get past it. In other words, "I feel pretty" is your new theme song and we're sticking to it!

Before long, you will indeed feel pretty!

## **TAKE AWAY #4**

**Numbers are relative, not reality.**

**Free you and your body from the coldness of numerical measurement!**

**Come in from the cold of other people's judgments  
to the warmth of the love you share with your body.**

## STEP FIVE: Lighten Up!

### *Step out of the shadows of Social Insecurity!*



According to poet, novelist, Marge Piercy, “The CIA should hire as spies only women over fifty, because we are truly invisible.”

When was the last time you were politely waiting your turn at a department store cosmetics counter, a discount store’s “help” desk, standing behind the privacy line at the drug store to order a prescription, or ordering a donut at your local bakery, and the young clerk looked right past you to help the next, younger person in line?

At what point in your life did you realize you had become invisible to the young, attractive, “hip”, people surrounding you?

How did you react when you realized being an ‘attractive’ 55, 65, or 75 year old can no longer compete for the attention from anyone decades younger? This realization is tough on all of us, but particularly difficult for women who have matured being valued primarily for their appearance and to a lesser degree their performance.

- Good cooks are admired for their culinary talents not the arch of their eyebrows or swan like necks.
- Brilliant surgeons are respected for the skill with a scalpel, not the long tapered fingers manipulating her instrument.
- Successful litigators and legislators are not disrespected if their appearance does not measure up to their courtroom acumen.

However, all of us over 50 are sensitive to the inevitable changes occurring in our bodies.

If being attractive was the sole basis of your confidence in your world, then you might consider rushing to the surgeon at the first sign of a wrinkle, liver spot, or crepe on your neck. Your medicine chest is full of partially used treatments for your sagging skin, rough patches, or doctor guaranteed anti-aging elixirs for internal or external eternal youth. Our culture challenges each woman to maintain youthful good looks in spite of the number of candles on her birthday cake. For the former beauty pageant winner, prom queen, cheerleader, the progression of age-related effects can devastate your self-esteem until you regain control of your options.

For some of us, it's a relief to no longer feel the pressure to reverse the clock. We can climb into more comfortable clothing, shorten the time between waking up and heading out the door to enjoy our life without the extra hour for makeup and hair, and let's not forget the expense that goes into cosmetics, couture, and coiffure.

Whether we admit it or not, it's hard to accede to the awareness that we have "lost our edge" in one area of feminine competition; whether we were the first one asked to dance or the flower left against the wall; *losing* is always a hard lump to swallow in a culture based on *winning*.

## WHAT THE F\*\*K HAPPENED?



Do you honestly believe that your appearance in the mirror is the REAL you? No! That "image" you see is how you appear to you, and only you.

The reflection is an appearance colored by your judgment.

Your feelings about it are a result of an emotional reaction to your expectations of what you "should" look like...according to whom?

There's more than enough evidence in the media that even middle aged women don't want to see middle aged women!

There have been several magazines targeted at middle aged women, “Lear” and the Canadian “Chatelaine” that failed to find their market.

Magazine editors admit to airbrushing any signs of aging from the faces that appear in articles and advertisements. As recently as 1999, a survey of midlife women told the researcher, McFarland, “that they are well aware the media create beauty standards women espouse, even though midlife women have the wisdom to realize that the images represent fantasy rather than reality, many of them still wish that they could match those standards.”

And on broadcast media, most on screen women are under fifty, or made to look younger than their chronological age, whereas men enjoy a broad spread of age groups on television and in film. Research indicates that according to anecdotal evidence it’s around the age of fifty that most women, particularly those to whom the adjective “beautiful” applied in their youth, realize that no one is looking at them anymore.

# LOL!

## Laugh Out Loud, or Little Old Lady?

### *The choice is yours!*

In a recent Huffington Post article, the writer points to psychologist Dr. Langer’s assertion that who we are and what we do is heavily influenced by the stories we tell ourselves, and those stories about aging are fixed and limiting.

Together, you and your body can cultivate an expanding mindset about aging. The best news is you can do this regardless of your age, shape or the shape you are in:

- 1) **Curiosity:** rather than acceptance of the cultural mindset for middle and/or senior aging, ask questions of yourself and your body. For instance: when considering the Little Old Lady we’re afraid of becoming, ask your body: what if we danced to our favorite rock song for 5 minutes? What if we walked around the block after every meal? What if we gave up an extra donut at work? Sometimes just asking the questions is progress as you are loosening the mindset imposed by the media.
- 2) **Listening:** In a recent AARP article, singer/actress Cyndi Lauper shared her belief that we are brainwashed by aging stereotypes, then she suggested we **listen** to our inner selves, our bodies. Attuning to one’s inner truth is a skill that requires practice. The Body Knowledge System® facilitates that process.
- 3) **Imagining:** In order to get past the cultural brainwashing, you and your body will envision something else. Using the practices found in the Body Knowledge System®, you and your body

will discover opportunities, possibilities and positive options available to both of you. A little creativity goes a long way to improve our image of ourselves. Imagining is playing, pretending, then expanding our concept of our present self into someone we love, respect and enjoy.

## Who's in Control?

### The older we get the easier it becomes...really!

#### You or your body? After the Body Knowledge System®, Both of You!

When your body becomes your BFF, “control” is no longer an issue.

It's not a push-pull relationship, but a partnership.

You, both of you, are in control of your consumption, your motion, your mindset, your actions and your reactions.

Recently I held a teleconference with some of my clients and I had an epiphany. I've been a dancer personally and professionally since my youth and my body's cooperation was essential to my success. Cooperation required constant communication. The process became a part of my life and a habit I can't conceive of not having so when my client Chris answered my question about why she doesn't move more, I almost fell off my chair.

Chris's answer: “Well, when I want to move and tell my body it's time to go exercise, she responds with the 'I'm too tired message', so we both continue to sit.”

Say what?

Her body was not lying to her, bodies do not lie!

So, who is lying? Hmmm, could it be her head?

Of course, the head is where many of us live. The ego is the instrument of denial, perceptions, excuses, blame, and beating us up.

Our body NEVER beats us up. She exists to support us, not to punish us. Ask me how I know this to be true? Unless I am ill or injured, MY body always wants to move. My body offers unfiltered inspiration that motivates me to move as soon as I pause long enough to listen.

Whenever I hear some upbeat music, I move. So, who's in control? The question should be: Who cares? The word “control” is a concept that gives us the illusion of influence over the events in our lives.

Whoever is in control has command over our situation, right? So what difference does that make?

We take comfort in the assumption that certain actions will result in predictable outcomes, right? Based on our education and experience, our security relies on promised outcomes from previous actions and effort.

If that were true, life would be so much simpler, and while some things are true for some people, for the rest of us we live on assumptions and cross our fingers awaiting the results.

### **So, who's really in control?**

**WE are. That's right you and your body are in control of your life.**

Although it may seem that the head vs. the body is an endless competition for control:

- 1) Responding to late afternoon hunger:

*Body:* "I need fuel."

*Head:* "Candy?"

- 2) After receiving criticism on a report you turned in late:

*Body:* Let's shake it off, go for a run

*Head:* Crawling into bed with the TV remote

- 3) Husband calls, working late. Again.

*Body:* Goody, time for a long hot bath with a really good novel

*Head:* He's cheating on me, going to finish quart of double chocolate fudge gelato

- 4) Snow day at school, no time for your work

*Body:* senses cortisol infusion, wards off negative effects by turning on a yoga channel on Healthtv and teaches kids the benefits of stretching

*Head:* anger, resentment, stress at unavoidable circumstances

- 5) Treadmill delivered to home office, one week later:

*Body:* So stressed from all that overtime pressure, I need to go for a very long walk on that very short treadmill in order to loosen up enough to get a good night's sleep.

*Head:* Hours of overtime at a desk this week, my body is too tired to walk on that machine.

Take those scenarios and consider what the outcomes would be if *Head* and *Body* consulted on the next course of action in reaction to the curve balls life has thrown them.

- 1) Body/Head stand up, breathe deeply, and move toward office refrigerator where they select the



small package of cheese and crackers they left for these circumstances.

- 2) Body/Head absorb the criticism and promise to do better next time. They stop at the gym for a spinning class on the way home where they flop down on the couch with some rice crackers to crunch with her iced tea.
- 3) Body/Head remembers he's always late at the end of the month, because he's responsible for inventory and hoping for a promotion. Then they call a girlfriend and go out to a chic flick.
- 4) Body/Head acknowledge that having the kids home mid-week, snowbound in the house is an opportunity to share with them why yoga makes her feel good.
- 5) Body/Head jumped on the treadmill with enthusiasm for the first week, or so. Then Head convinced Body that every other day was better. Body agreed and used the alternating days for weights, swimming, or tennis with her writing partner.

This chapter is not complete without some easy suggestions to turn the “Little Old Lady” in your mind to “Laugh Out Loud” the next time you look into your mirror.

It's about **your** image after all.

- 1) **Hair:** lighten up! Resist the urge to return to the raven haired beauty you were in High School and go with the flow. God frames our face with grey, then white hair to reflect the light onto our smiling visage. Blond works, too. But when it comes to aging, lighter trumps darker every time.
- 2) **Skin:** Dermatologist, [Dr. Mary Lupo, Md.](#), suggests pressing your skin care primers into your damp skin rather than patting or rubbing which stretches the delicate surface. In addition to sunscreen, a must, look for serum with hyaluronic acid to plump the skin and create a sheen or shine.
- 3) **Conceal or Reveal?** For many of us, makeup is a necessary part of our daily ritual in order to bolster our confidence before entering our world. For women over fifty, Makeup artist Blair Patterson suggests selecting concealer with light-reflecting particles as your new best friend. Ms. Patterson looks for “radiance”, “illuminating” adjectives on the packages describing the product to cover and brighten dark circles. These products contain mica, talc or titanium dioxide. After applying the concealer, use translucent powder to brighten the set.



## TAKE AWAY #5

Remember **YOU** (as in you and your body) are **ALWAYS** in control.

You just have to listen AND hear each other in the moment.

It's your mindset, not your ego trip!

### Do you need further proof?

[Click here](#) to get your free copy of “**Food Freedom**” to put on your refrigerator door.

Some of us choose to fill that hole with food, but even the right kind of food can fail to narrow the space between you and your BFF, your body.

This one page document improves your communication skills between you and your body while it confirms who is really in control of your life.



# CONCLUSION:

## Practice Your Dance, Dance Your Practice!

Better Body Image comes from Body Wisdom and Body Wisdom comes from the Body KnowledgeSystem®. To learn more about it, [contact Stephanie](#) for a conversation.

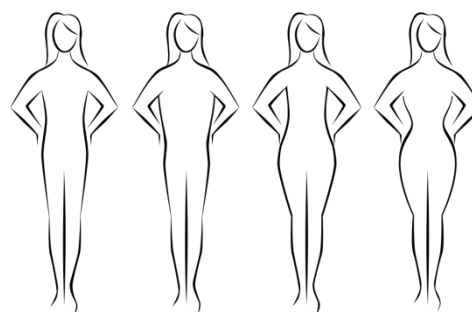
The advent of the internet introduced another venue for women to feel bad about themselves. Social media, selfies, streaming, YouTube, and Facebook increase our exposure to the “ideal” image for us. Impersonal, universal, and overwhelming at times, the media adds another dimension to our insecurities about our bodies, our age, ourselves.

Those of us in the Body Confidence community are not impressed with the impossible standards of internet images. **However, we are impressed by others who are so obviously content in the skin they're in, regardless of its size, shape, or stature.**

In that sense, the Law of Attraction is so true. Everyone loves a lover, particularly when that lover sees butterflies, rose petals, and sunshine all around her every day of her life.

**That person is you!** Your body knows it, and she is willing to share that knowledge with you as soon as you are willing to make the effort to befriend her again.

The Body Knowledge System® knows the way and shows the way to all who have embraced it as the sustainable solution to weight, fitness, personal and professional issues. Not a one-size-fits-all program, it's a custom creation by you and your body, for you and your body.



Banana

Apple

Pear

Hourglass

- *Appropriate* replaces *perfection* in your vocabulary.
- *Approachable* replaces *isolation*.
- *Comfort* replaces *denial*.
- *Acceptance* replaces *resentment*.
- *Expression* enhances *excitement*

As you progress through the process of the Body Knowledge System®, as a spiritual being within a physical being, you sway; you swing to the inner rhythms waiting to express themselves in motion. You begin to relax and receive all the goodness you share with your body. Rather than resist change, you

embrace opportunity to practice your dance and dance your practice of the Body Knowledge System®. With the pressure to be perfect comes the opportunity to be happy with who you are and where you are in life:

This is your personal invitation to hang out with me and our friends on Google+ in the Body Confidence Community.

### The Body Awe Manifesto:

(All) Women want to increase their confidence:

In their bodies,

In their abilities,

In their presence, and

In themselves

In today's personal and professional world.



The Body Knowledge System® began as a sustainable solution for every woman's ongoing battle with her body. Since then The Body Knowledge System® evolved into the modern woman's support system for body confidence today, tomorrow, and forever.



### **CREDO:**

*Determine the things you can change,*

*Discard the things you can't change,*

*Discover the joy when you see the difference!*

## TAKE AWAY #1

**STEP ONE**, an *objective realistic assessment of THE YOU behind your image*, is a great start to improving your self-esteem, body image, and a confident presence in your own life.

**YOU ARE:** woman, daughter, sister, wife, friend, mother, worker, problem solver, helper, thinker, mover, shaker, and leader of your own life.

## TAKE AWAY #2

Name your body, introduce yourself, and celebrate the new relationship!

## TAKE AWAY #3

**Body Talk** means communication between you and your best friend forever, your *body!*

## TAKE AWAY #4

**Numbers are relative, not reality.**

**Free you and your body from the coldness of numerical measurement!**

**Come in from the cold of other people's judgments to the warmth of the love you share with your body.**

## TAKE AWAY #5

Remember **YOU** (as in you and your body) are **ALWAYS** in control.

You just have to listen AND hear each other in the moment.

Coach Stephanie Wood, ICF Certified Coach, PCC is a Body & Business Coach for Entrepreneurial Women and Men, Author of "Body Knowledge System®, an Awesome Intelligence". Her playbook helps you to stop the struggle with your body, to walk with confidence to share your unique talents with the world.

Allow me to help you with your body issues. Contact me by phone at: 1-866-76-COACH. By [email](#) or visit the [Body Awe](#) website.