LETTER TO OUR BODY:

Dear Body,

We've been together a long time, and as I think about our relationship, I owe you an apology. I've taken you for granted, and often got upset or angry with you when you don’t look the way I want you to, or do what I wish you could. I have not been fair. How can I be upset with you for getting out of breath when I go up the stairs, when I haven’t been walking and conditioning myself?! You allow me to do many things, and have a lot of great assets that I have overlooked, instead focusing on one area that I am unhappy with. Further, thanks for sticking by me even though I don’t often talk nicely to you. This is all going to change. Thank you for being the vehicle in which I can live my life, be active, and feel good about myself. I am going to look at you with more appreciation and acceptance and less criticism going forward. In return, I know we’ll develop some mutual respect and peace which can only bring good things. Thank you body. You are mine, and that makes us a beautiful team.

Sincerely-me

Where does this less than positive relationship with our body come from?!

- Old messages (comments or criticism received in childhood at home or school, a stinging comment, stereotypes)
- Media influences (news, TV, magazines, advertisements)
- Ourselves (taking a critical, evaluative stance toward our bodies, looking for perfection, negative or critical thought patterns)

Examples of Common errors in thinking about body image

1-all or nothing thinking

My body is not perfect, therefore it is terrible. If I’m not a 10, then I’m a 0. Nothing looks good on me.

2-mental filter- You pick out a single negative detail

I hate running. I’ll never get in shape. My stomach is big so I am fat.

3-disqualifying the positive

You enjoy dancing but never let yourself dance when out because you feel conscious.

A compliment is disregarded, believing it was given for another reason (she’s just being nice...they say that to everyone...)
How to have a more POSITIVE body image

-AWARENESS  -ACCEPTANCE  -APPRECIATION

AWARENESS

You now know what kind of thoughts and messages are negative and contribute to poor body image. Listening for them in yourself and others is the first step!

Surround yourself with positive people. Look for others who demonstrate positive body image and attitude and learn from their example.

Remember that everyone feels self-conscious from time to time. It’s normal. And, no one is perfect.

Everyone has parts of their physical appearance they like and like less. ~Acknowledge it, don’t focus on it. It doesn’t define who we are.

Become a critical viewer of social and media messages.

ACCEPTANCE

Decrease how much attention you give to those negative thoughts about your body. Let them come and pass until they begin to lose momentum. ~ an unwatered plant doesn’t grow

Substitute these thoughts with ones that are kind, accepting, and forgiving. Begin to talk to yourself as you would a loved one. ~start a list of positive affirmations and put it somewhere you’ll see. Read it!

Look at yourself as a whole person. ~ don’t focus on specific body parts. Think of the characteristics that make you who you are instead.

Wear clothes that are comfortable and make you feel good about your body. Take the focus off numbers and onto colors, styles, textures. ~instead of hiding in black, wear blue to accentuate your eyes

~instead of “waiting till you lose weight” find a few items that fit you NOW to feel good in

APPRECIATION

Appreciate all that your body can do... it carries you to your destination in life, it allows you to breath, laugh, dream, dance, run, climb etc.

Keep a top 10 list of things you like about yourself (unrelated to weight or appearance). Read this list often. Have a friend help you get started.

Do something nice for yourself and let your body know you appreciate it! Take a bath, a nap, a relaxing walk.

Remember that feeling good about yourself starts from the inside out.

~appreciate the positives about yourself and let them shine through