

Body Gratitude

Chronic illness left me feeling as though my body had betrayed me somewhere along the way. In our culture, it's difficult to know when your body is speaking to you and even harder to then listen to what it's saying. We rather blame our body for all that it's not "doing for us."

When there are few answers and little validation, it's also easy to think maybe it's "all in your head" or if you "just push through" it will get better. However, for me, I could not find any clarity continuing to live my life that way. And truthfully, it was not an option. I had become bed bound.

When I was in the thick of my illness, I realized I wasn't going to find answers from conventional wisdom, and that I was going to have to learn to be my own best advocate. To do that, I knew I had to find an anchor inside myself. I knew I had to stop resenting my body for all the things I wished it could do. Instead, I had to start nurturing it with the love of a mother to a newborn child. I had to start to rebuild on the foundation of gratitude.

Through my brain fog and fatigue, I decided to use some of my few precious "spoons" to write my body love letters. I'd tell it thank you for all it had done for me and for others over the years. I am an activist, and in this moment, this felt like the most revolutionary act for me.

Rebuilding this relationship with my body took time, courage and willingness to make it my friend instead of my enemy. Gratitude was the best medicine I could give myself. Since building upon that foundation and other outside help, I have made some really great progress. I still have my good and bad days, but I am in a much better place physically than I was when I wrote those letters to myself several years ago.

The following are a few guided questions which I found helpful in rebuilding my relationship with my body. Maybe they could be helpful for you.

Take your time. Be patient with yourself. Work within your own comfort level and energy envelope!

I hope we can all find the gratitude within ourselves this year with so much swirling around us.

Meredith Mehner, LCSW

Guided Questions

1. If I could give my body a gift what would it be? (Something sensational-A warm bath, a walk at the park, a massage perhaps)
2. If my body could speak, what would it say about all that it has done?
3. If my body could speak, what would it want me to be grateful for?
4. What is something my body has done since I became ill that I appreciated?
5. What can I do to be kinder to my body; and what can I do to nourish my body with gratitude?