

## Love Your Body

By Jessie Veeder, Life Editor

Self-confidence is an important part of achieving a healthy body image, but confidence is often difficult to accomplish when we are constantly faced with media images portraying unreasonable body types and beauty expectations.

In order to help students overcome insecurities and learn to celebrate who they are on the inside, the UND Women's Center, Healthy UND Wellness Center and Student Health Services has organized the third annual Love Your Body Week.

Activities began yesterday at the Memorial Union.

Jane Croeker, LSW, Health Promotion Advisor, said that the purpose of "Love Your Body Week" is not just about fitness — it's about promoting a healthy body image and celebrating diversity.

"Part of what we are trying to promote is loving who you are, as you are, and taking care of yourself," said Croeker. "We need to start saying 'I like who I am but there are some things I want to do to feel better,' rather than beating yourself up about it."

Kathy King, who has been teaching a women studies class since 1997, agreed. She said that in her classes some of the liveliest discussions take place when issues of body image are brought up. "The topic seems to resonate with the majority of people," she said. "We are all susceptible to media exposure and its hard to say that we're smart enough to disregard images of air brushed models when we are faced with these images all the time."

King feels that in order to improve self-confidence, it is important to avoid images that make people feel bad about themselves.

"If you are watching a television program, like Friends, and you find that you are comparing yourself to the people on the show and it makes you feel bad, shut it off we can all do these small things" she said.

With media playing a large role in people's perception of beauty, the small things become quite significant.

In order to avoid negative comparisons, King suggests surrounding ourselves with photos of people who look like us, instead of pictures of supermodels or celebrities.

King also warns to be cautious of the way we interact with one another.

"We need to stop putting each other down," she said.

With positive images come reasonable health goals and expectations

"Sometimes people throw themselves into something, like vigorous exercise, with only thinking about the short-term goal of losing a few pounds," Croeker said. "It is important to think about lifestyle changes in the long run, not the short run."

When thinking about the media's perception of beauty and

perfection, what usually comes to mind is women's bodies, but both Croeker and King believe that there is an equal amount of pressure put on men.

"Guys are having plastic surgery and losing and gaining weight for sports," said King. "This is not only about beauty image, we are screwing up our bodies."

Because of these concerns Croeker doesn't want the men to feel excluded from this event. "We have materials on men's body image and eating disorders. This event is for everybody," she said. Croeker describes "Love Your Body Week" as "a kind of celebration" and the fun and healthy group activities seem to be a good way of bringing people together and encouraging them to let go of body insecurities.

"The social part is nice and activities like belly dancing are fun ways to help people get rid of a few inhibitions about their bodies."

All in all, Love Your Body Week is about improving and encouraging self-confidence.

"We need to be careful of the things we say to ourselves. So many times people compartmentalize their bodies, picking apart the pieces that they don't like. We need to look at ourselves as whole people and concentrate on what our bodies can do for us," said Croeker.

Scheduled events will continue all week, including a walk with President Kupchella, scheduled to take place at noon in the Hyslop Sports Center track today.

Tomorrow is Inside Out Day, where everyone is encouraged to wear his or her shirt inside out and/or wear a sticker to show "It's What's Inside that Counts."

Thursday will kick off with a Women's Center Meet and Eat at noon featuring "Thick Thighs Anonymous," a monologue by King.

The monologue is taken from a play written by King called "When the Fat Lady Sings," and King describes it as "a funny look at a support group for people who don't like their size."

Kat Barrett will be teaching a Belly Dancing class at 5:15 p.m. on Thursday at the Healthy UND Wellness Center.

"Love Your Body Week" will wind down on Friday with aerobics with UND First Lady Adele Kupchella at 6:45 a.m.

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