

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"



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With Your Host

Lindsey Mango

[The Life Coach Hotline](#) with Lindsey Mango

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Lindsey: Hello, welcome to *The Life Coach Hotline*. This is Lindsey, your life coach. What can I help you with?

Lindsey R: Hey, this is Lindsey too.

Lindsey: I love it. Hi, Lindsey.

Lindsey R: Hey. I'm hoping to get some coaching on thoughts around body image and exercise, and I guess like venturing into the realm of sort of self-love and body acceptance, maybe.

Lindsey: Love it. Okay, tell me more about where you're at. Like what is your goal ultimately?

Lindsey R: I think ultimately, my goal would be to stop the obsession so much, right? Like, I think that getting clear on the negative self-talk is good, but it becomes this like exercise, food becomes this real obsession. And I think my thought is that the more I obsess about it, the more in control it is. And so even if it's not necessarily restrictive or over exercising, just the kind of obsession thoughts behind it.

Lindsey: Yes. Okay, perfect. So tell me more. When you think about having the body that you want, having the kind of self-image that you want, what are your thoughts about that in general?

Lindsey R: They're quite negative.

Lindsey: Okay.

Lindsey R: Like it's hard, it's a lot of work. It needs to look restrictive. The initial thoughts are quite negative.

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey: Okay. Perfect. And when you have thoughts like that, how do you feel about your body and all of it?

Lindsey R: I think discouraged. And then maybe there's a bit of judgment that I'm not working hard enough, right? Like that internally maybe I know that it's hard work. But then, yeah, then maybe the judgment that goes with it.

Lindsey: Okay. And then what do you do when you're feeling discouraged and you're feeling judgmental?

Lindsey R: I mean, likely restricting, going back to some sort of like extreme measures. Not necessarily like over exercising, I think that's one thing I've really got a handle on. But certainly restricting, sorry, with food.

Lindsey: Got it, restricting with food.

Lindsey R: Yeah.

Lindsey: And probably I would guess, based on what you're telling me, like I also used to really struggle with this, spending lots of mental energy. Like just thinking about food and what you need to eat and what you shouldn't be eating and what you have to eat next.

Lindsey R: Yeah, exactly. And look what I did, and oh no. Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Lindsey: Totally. Okay, and when you restrict, what is the long-term, like you're like, okay, so I go into restriction with food, kind of obsession with food, what does that look like over the long term?

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey R: Well, I think in a big way, I really got into really restrictive eating for a long time. And I mean, it had huge implications on my health. So I can see that side of it. So yeah, the result was huge implications on my health.

And so while I have been more lenient with some of the actual restricting, that mental energy, that rabbit wheel is still there. And so while I can get into these thoughts of like, well, but the other way wasn't healthy either, it's like it still isn't this food freedom. It still isn't this mindset of freedom around it.

And then there's the other thought that I think it's really important to value every body and that one, I don't know, sensationally Barbie body isn't the only beautiful thing. Does that make sense?

Lindsey: Yeah.

Lindsey R: And I can see that as so true for every other woman. Like I am the first cheerleader and champion for every other woman, but can't seem to hold that thought for me.

Lindsey: Okay, so let me ask you this then. This was the perfect kind of lead-in for my next question. What happens if your body doesn't look the exact way, like the Barbie way or whatever the expectation you have for yourself that you want it to look?

Lindsey R: I'm inherently not valuable enough. Yeah, like I hold some sort of different value or worth than someone else who does have that stereotypical – And then the confidence, obviously. Like if those are the thoughts I'm having, then I'm not showing up with the confidence mentality.

Lindsey: Whose voice is that?

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey R: Oh, I think it's my mom. That's really sad. I mean, we're kind of the same age. I grew up in the age of the 90s fad diets where my mom was, you know, all the things. So yeah, I think that's maybe her voice of her struggling with the same thing.

Lindsey: How does that feel to see that?

Lindsey R: It gives me, I mean, in my mindset of growth it means like I better break this cycle so that my little girl doesn't think this same way.

Lindsey: Yeah, so powerful. And how is it to see that that's not your real, true voice?

Lindsey R: Yeah, I guess it gives it some distance. There's definitely more space.

Lindsey: Yeah, it's like I have so much compassion for this, right? And I can see that you're having that for yourself too, right? But it's like seeing that as a separate voice and a separate truth and not your own. And I'm just curious about your thoughts on this, but can it help you see that the idea of this body, this image that you have in your mind that's like right, that's valuable, that's all of these things, also is not yours?

Lindsey R: Theoretically, yes.

Lindsey: Okay, what part of that doesn't reach your body, right? In my mind, theoretically is like I cognitively understand, but I do not feel that.

Lindsey R: I wonder, I mean, obviously, there are social pressures. And I can give that distance too. But I wonder if it's just such an ingrained, trained thought. Like I was that 15 year old at the gym on the treadmill, right? So I

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

wonder if it's just so true that the cognitive dissonance between not holding that belief just seems so far for me at this moment?

Lindsey: Yeah, such powerful awareness.

Lindsey R: Yeah, I wonder.

Lindsey: Totally. I mean, that makes perfect sense. It probably feels to you like this is what a body is supposed to look, the way that it feels like the sky is blue.

Lindsey R: Right.

Lindsey: It's like it feels like reality. It feels like factual information because you've believed it for so long. So when that happens sometimes, I don't necessarily – Like we can spend lots of time arguing with that thought process and with that belief. But sometimes I don't find it helpful because it's just like you believe it the way the sky is blue right now.

So what if we just allow that to exist? And my question would be, what is the cost of not choosing to believe something else?

Lindsey R: Yeah, I mean, my self-worth and ultimately confidence in myself. Or the cost is time wasted on useless thoughts. And, yeah, time, I guess.

Lindsey: So here's my question. How are you valuable as you are in your body right now?

Lindsey R: I mean, I'm beautiful. I'm smart. I'm compassionate. Is that what you mean?

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey: Yeah.

Lindsey R: I have other attributes outside of my body, for sure. For sure. And it's an interesting thing, because I can get, you know, when you try to focus on that hot girl energy, it's like, okay, well, shoulders back. There's two options right now, I either sit in this junky feeling and slump around and feel like junk. Or shoulders back, and that looks better than anything anyway. And kind of like, I guess, I end up embodying this kind of fake it till you make it.

But ultimately, that incongruency still exists. And I guess that's what you're saying, like you can keep arguing with that same thought over and over again.

Lindsey: Yeah.

Lindsey R: And then again, the obsessive thoughts around all of it.

Lindsey: Yeah, but the thing I want to offer is like, okay, this is perfect. I'm beautiful. I'm smart. I'm compassionate. I'm all these things. But what is also valuable about your body?

Lindsey R: I mean, like, that's a hard one. I mean, I'm strong. I can do things. I am able-bodied. Like I'm capable of walking and running and playing and stretching.

Lindsey: And what makes you valuable no matter what your body looks like?

Lindsey R: How I show up in a space. How I am with other people. How I am to myself.

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey: How does it feel to see that? Do you really believe that?

Lindsey R: I want to.

Lindsey: Why are you so afraid to let go of this?

Lindsey R: I guess because I spend so much time in it. And I truly believe, like I've said that before. Like, gosh, I wonder what kind of mathematician I could be if I spent as much time worrying about, you know? I wonder if there's a control to it? Like letting go of that control means trusting? Yeah, I don't know why. I'll have to think on why I'm so afraid of letting that go.

Lindsey: Well, I think you kind of answered it. And I definitely think it's something to reflect on even more. But if you let go of it, then that would mean you'd have to trust.

Lindsey R: Yeah.

Lindsey: And if you trusted, then what could happen? What could go wrong?

Lindsey R: Well, I would run the risk of being some like blob that nobody likes. But I mean, ultimately, that's not true and I know that. Like I'm laughing at it because I can see how silly that is for my brain to think that. Because it isn't who I am. I like to be active. I like to eat well. I like to do these things.

Lindsey: Yes.

Lindsey R: So that just wouldn't be in line with who I am for that to happen.

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey: Yes. I want you to think about, like five year old Lindsey and her having that thought. Like if I trust that I'll be okay no matter what, then I'll run the risk of being a blob and somebody that nobody likes. What would you offer her?

Lindsey R: Well, that's impossible because even if you were a blob, people would still like you. And whose opinion? Like, what is a blob, right? I just think there's so many – Yeah, and I would just offer her heart so much compassion. That's a terrible thought to have about yourself.

Lindsey: Yeah. How does it feel to see it like that?

Lindsey R: Yeah, like, it doesn't matter. I'm having trouble finding words for it, I mean, outside of sad. Yeah, just so unimportant. And when you're thinking about a child, I hate the idea of a child even considering their body in any capacity, right? They should have their focus on a million other things. So I think that I would try and dispel that right away and just obviously prop them up on their other amazing things, attributes and capacities.

Lindsey: Yeah. And I think the big answer lies in the compassion piece.

Lindsey R: Right.

Lindsey: Right? Like, I love you so much. Of course you have that thought, you've been taught that that was what was valuable.

Lindsey R: Yeah.

Lindsey: What would it look like to trust this, all of this? Like the fact that you don't have to control, you don't have to obsess, just like a little bit more?

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey R: What would it look like?

Lindsey Mm-hmm.

Lindsey R: Confidence and self-love. Yeah, just being way more compassionate. I mean, so is it just a matter of, I mean, because we know that our thoughts are ingrained limiting, or they can be ingrained beliefs and often limiting in this capacity. Is it truly just a matter of choosing those new thoughts in each moment?

Lindsey: Yeah.

Lindsey R: And learning to focus on those ones?

Lindsey: Yes. And I think the second component of that is looking for evidence that they are true. Because think about this, a belief, I imagine it's like you have literally like legs of a table. Like let's say a belief is like the top of a table. And then the legs are all the thoughts and all the evidence, right? You've just spent your whole life, it's like yours is like a solid block right now.

Lindsey R: Right.

Lindsey: It's like we're trying to build a different belief system, so we need to put as many legs as possible under it. So what that looks like –

Lindsey R: Right, that will tell you all the things, why this is so true.

Lindsey: Yes. Instead of arguing for the other case.

Lindsey R: Yeah, absolutely.

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey: So it looks like looking for evidence. And that will look like in your hardest moments, when you aren't loving your body, when you eat something and you feel bad about it, looking for the things that you love and appreciate about your body.

Lindsey R: Okay.

Lindsey: It's looking for the things that make you feel confident. It's having compassion. And then the last piece, and this is the hard part, because right now your body and brain literally, even though it's not true death, we associate our parents loving us with survival.

So right now in your brain, in order for my mom to love me I have to look and appear a certain way, which is really also just a reflection of her thoughts about herself, right?

Lindsey R: Yeah. Yeah.

Lindsey: And so it's like recognizing that, that you can be loved, that the love exists with or without that. In fact, the quote unquote, survival is associated with the fact of loving yourself more, appreciating yourself more, that you get to give that to yourself, rather than having to be something or someone else to be loved.

And then what I was going to say, I didn't finish that thought, sorry. It's like following the action you would take if you did trust that.

Lindsey R: Right. I think, no, I completely agree. I think it has so much to do with the compassion and the trust. And I love the idea that I've borrowed those thoughts from my mom.

Lindsey: Yeah.

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey R: And that they aren't necessarily mine and then giving them that space. I think that I find it hard to reconcile the in between of like, but I do love when I move my body well, and I do love when I eat well, and it's like these two things just can't seem to be true without it being difficult or hard or treacherous or grueling. You know, like the hustle and the 4:00 am, right?

And I guess that's where the obsession then comes into that. Like I've created those thoughts around food and exercise, and so maybe it's just finding the dance party that looks the same.

Lindsey: Yes, it's the fact that you would want to move your body, you would want to eat nourishing foods if you didn't have the obsession and the force.

Lindsey R: Yeah.

Lindsey: So it's recognizing when you're doing it out of force, or having compassion, having love, maybe not even doing it. Like putting your hand on your heart in those moments when your body and brain is literally feeling like it's about to freak out because it feels so horrible. That's where the trust is built. And then it's noticing every time you go, oh my gosh, you know what's so crazy? Later that day I really wanted to move, I wanted to move my body. I wanted to eat broccolini.

Lindsey R: Yeah, no, absolutely. Yeah, no, absolutely.

Lindsey: It's just like a relationship, right? You have to extend a little bit of trust to gain a little bit of trust.

Lindsey R: Okay, I like that analogy.

S1. Ep6. Body Image: "I'm not valuable unless I am skinny"

Lindsey: Right? Like, you can't be checking your partner's phone all of the time, you're never going to learn to trust them. So think of this as muscle, you're just going to extend a little bit of trust in those moments.

Lindsey R: Okay, I like that. Yeah, for sure.

Lindsey: So good. I love it, Lindsey. Thank you so much for calling in.

Lindsey R: No, yeah, this was great. Thank you, lots to think on.

Lindsey: You're welcome. I will talk to you soon.

Lindsey R: Okay, enjoy your day.

Lindsey: You too, bye.

Lindsey R: Bye.

If you want to call in to *The Life Coach Hotline*, go to <https://lindseymango.coaching.com/lifecoachhotline>. Talk to you soon. Bye.