

Dealing With The Body Police

The following Body Police Quiz is simply for fun, but it also hints at how to deal with Body Police in real life. Adapted from *Real Gorgeous: The Truth About Body and Beauty* by Kaz Cooke. Enjoy!

The Body Police Quiz

1. Someone criticizes your appearance. You immediately think:
 - a) I wonder what they're insecure about?
 - b) Right, that's it; I'm going to have my head removed.
 - c) You might have left the iron on.

2. A guy in the street yells out: "Hey, big ass!" You say:
 - a) Excuse me; I think you might have dropped your IQ.
 - b) Is that an eel coming out of your nose?
 - c) What an attractive human being. That's the sort of man I really admire and like to be around. How about a date?

3. Your mother tells you should lose some weight. You reply:
 - a) Shall I amputate a leg?
 - b) I'll start starving myself for your sake, shall I?
 - c) Mum, I think you should read this stuff about why diets don't work.

4. Your family has been getting at you to lose weight. You call a family meeting and say:
 - a) We've got three choices. You stop hassling me, I get bulimia, or you pay for me to go and live in the Bahamas. What'll it be?
 - b) This is the shape I am. Your constant nagging does not take account of the fact that diets do not work, I am supposed to look like this, and you're driving me into becoming a neurotic, obsessed, miserable person. I just want to check with you if that's the whole point of this, in which case I am putting in an application to join another family. The Simpsons appeal.
 - c) Either you accept me the way I am or I'm going to make extra pocket money by conducting guiding tours of the family room of a dysfunctional family.

5. An uncle tells you have started getting fat. You:
 - a) Ask what it has to do with him.
 - b) Tell him you could lend him a book on biology which would explain.
 - c) Laugh at him.

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6. A friend asks you to go on a diet with her. You reply:
 - a) Only if it has Mars Bars, broccoli, pumpkin, and custard in it.
 - b) Thanks, but I can get bored at the same rate by watching paint dry.
 - c) I'll race you to 30 pounds and the first one there's dead, nyah nyah nyah. Oh.

7. A girlfriend says, "I'm so fat. I can't have lunch." You react by:
 - a) Explaining that if she doesn't have lunch she'll be inhaling chocolate by 3 P.M.
 - b) Saying "You are not fat. That's flesh. It's for holding your bones in."
 - c) Who told you that? Come, we shall firebomb them.

8. You have always remembered the guy at school who said your nose is too big. You take comfort from the fact that:
 - a) The guy is now living alone in a trailer in Lubbock, Texas, with a part-time job as a sewage sorter.
 - b) He was only saying it to impress his mates, who collectively are as attractive to you as a four-hour documentary on the mating frenzy of cane toads.
 - c) You have now moved on to a world unpopulated by smelly, 14-year-old boys who have the social skills of a ferret on drugs. He has asked you out three times.

Things to Say to the Body Police

Ask yourself not "What can I do to make myself more acceptable?" but "What is the matter with that person that they need to judge me by their own insecurities and standards?"

People who are truly happy with themselves never bother to insult other people. There is always a reason why you are being targeted, and it has nothing to do with you.

Sometimes ignoring them will help, sometimes it encourages further abuse. Try not to fall into the trap of always returning an insult, as you can just get into a slinging match that teaches them nothing and drives you crazy. Sometimes, however, it might be the only way to drive home your point. **Enlist your friends** so you can help each other go on the offensive.

Some of these suggested retorts can be used as all-purpose responses to any body commentary from someone else, such as, "*Are you feeling insecure?*," "*My, my, my, but you do seem insecure!*," "*You wouldn't say that without all your friends around,*" and "*Grow up!*"

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If you just don't feel safe saying any of these things out loud, make sure you say them to yourself. This can be most satisfying. **Laughing or smiling after people insult you can drive them crazy.** It's a great way to show you don't take their uninformed judgment seriously.

They say:

"You're getting a bit fat" (or disapprovingly, "You're putting on weight").

You say:

"Anything else? Perhaps you could write it down for me so I don't forget?"

"No I'm not. What did you say that for?"

"Who asked you?"

"What is it you are feeling insecure about?"

"I am not fat, I'm me-shaped."

"I'm growing. Any objections?"

"How kind of you to say so."

"I have no intention of going on a stupid, impossible diet just so you feel that your outdated prejudices are validated by pressuring me into action which would be counterproductive and unhealthy, thereby reinforcing the self-loathing recommended by you and your own fears. So, hey, get a life, dickbrain."

"And you're a real heartthrob."

"A bit fat for you, or a bit fat for me?"

"Why don't you grab your bottom lip and pull it over your head?"

"You have no right to comment on my body."

"Yes, thank you, I have put on weight, and I feel great."

"Thank you."

"I'm not worried about it, so relax."

"I'm sorry, but I don't care what you think."

"Nobody was ever thrown out of bed for being cuddly."

"When I need your opinion to make me feel crappy, I'll let you know."

"You're right. I guess I should become anorexic immediately. Would that be all right?"

"Are you trying to give me an eating disorder?"

"You can get a book from the library to explain what shape women are."

"What makes you so interested in my shape?"

"I'm not getting fat, I'm growing. It's this inevitable thing that happens when you're a teenager, like people hassling you."

"You are quite right. I do not have the body of a 12-year-old boy. Do you have one you're not using?"

"What is this? Body insult hour?"

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They say:

"Why don't you try the new diet/my new diet/a diet?"

You say:

"This is my natural shape. If it offends you, please don't look at it."

"I don't need a diet. I eat healthy food."

"Diets don't work."

"I enjoy my food."

"Because I'm not stupid. I know diets don't work."

"Why don't you mind your own body?"

"This is really boring. Can't we talk about something else?"

"I don't want to get obsessed with food."

"I'm happy the way I am."

"Why do you want to ruin my life?"

"Allow me to get away from you."

"Strangely enough, I don't have time to go to the gym for five hours a day. Will I be arrested?"

"What's your problem?"

"Do I look that stupid?"

They say:

"You're a real skinny stick, aren't you? Have you got anorexia?"

You say:

"Is it my turn to criticize your body now? No."

"Who asked you?"

"Is there anything else you'd like to comment on? Should I take notes?"

"Thanks for that, Einstein."

"Cat got your brain?"

"I am naturally thin. You know, like you're naturally rude."

"You mean I'm *thin*? Oh my God, I 'd never noticed!"

"I am not a stick. I am a woman, with feelings."

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They say:

"You've got no tits."

You say:

"Well, they're bigger than your brain."

"Your fly is undone."

"How long have you been looking at me?"

"That's not what you said last night in bed."

"Feeling insecure?"

"Am I supposed to care what you think?"

"Thank you for your intellectual contribution."

"Dang, I knew I forgot something when I got dressed this morning."

"You sound like a three-year-old."

"Get a life."

They say:

"Hey, check out the big hooters on that one" or "Show us your tits."

You say:

"Show us your brain."

"Don't you know what they look like?"

"Grow up."

"You can always tell a bottle-fed baby."

"There's a big booger coming out of your nose."

"Never mind, when you grow up, a girl might show you what breasts look like."

Communication Tip

An assertiveness-training teacher tells me that this is a good method of preserving dignity and (we hope) making people realize how stupid they are being. Follow these four simple steps:

1. *Stand or sit up straight.*
2. *Pause for at least three seconds.*
3. *Make firm eye contact.*
4. *Use a well-modulated voice to ask your question or make your statement. For*

example:

"You're getting fat." (Pause.) "How kind of you to say so."

or

"Aren't you too thin?" (Pause) "No."