

EXPAND YOUR HORIZON

# MORE THAN MY APPEARANCE

Programme developed by **Dr Jessica Alleva** and adapted and tested by **Dr Ella Guest, Dr Emma Halliwell, Professor Diana Harcourt, Abigail Mathews** and **Dr Jessica Alleva**.

EXPAND YOUR HORIZON

# MORE THAN MY APPEARANCE

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the More than My Appearance writing booklet. This booklet contains 3 writing tasks that will take place over the course of 1 week. This programme was developed and tested for use with adults who **have an appearance which is 'different'** (perhaps as a result of a condition, injury or surgery), who **worry about their appearance** as a result of this difference, and who want to gain a **more positive body image**.

## HOW DO I USE THIS BOOKLET?

This booklet contains writing tasks that take 15-20 minutes each. There are provided spaces within the booklet where you can write, either by printing the booklet out and using a pen, or by downloading the PDF and using your device to write in the boxes. Or, you can complete your tasks in a notebook. Just make sure that you keep your writing tasks safe so that you can look back on them when you have finished.

Before starting your writing exercises, make sure you are in a **quiet space** where distractions will be kept to a minimum. Make sure you are **comfortable**, and feel free to take a break if you need to.



EXPAND YOUR HORIZON

# MORE THAN MY APPEARANCE

## INTRODUCTION

People who have an appearance which is in anyway different (e.g. burn scarring, birthmark, skin conditions, alopecia) are often faced with concerns that are related to the appearance altering aspects of their condition or any associated treatment, which people without these differences may not need to worry about. For example, "Will I look symmetrical after my breast reconstruction?" or "Will my burn scars be visible if I wear a swimming costume/trunks at the beach?". In addition, having a visible difference may affect some functional aspects of the body. For example, scarring might make it more difficult to walk or stretch, or treatment for head and neck cancer may make it harder to eat or swallow.

### WHAT ARE THE AIMS?

The aim of this body image programme is twofold: (1) we would like you to **focus on your body in a more holistic way**, and (2) we would like you to **focus on the things that your body can do rather than how it looks**. Completing our three brief writing exercises over the course of one week can help you to achieve this.

Body concerns in the context of visible difference can be complicated, and this programme will not be the "be all, and end all." However, we hope that it can offer you some extra support along the road to a more positive body image.

# WHAT IS BODY FUNCTIONALITY?

In this programme, we will be referring to the term “body functionality.” Body functionality basically means ***all of the things that your body is able to do*** – in contrast to how your body looks.

When you think about body functionality, what kinds of functions come to mind? Take a moment now to think about some of the things that your body can do.



# DIVERSITY OF BODY FUNCTIONALITY

Below is a list of some body functions that other people have come up with. Take a moment to read through them. Some of these functions may have already been on your mind, but you may not have thought of the other ones yet.

## Body Functions Related to Physical Capacities

- Running
- Jumping
- Walking
- Stretching
- Flexibility
- Reaching
- Bending
- Carrying
- Physical coordination
- Strength
- Stamina
- Energy level
- Reflexes
- Balance
- Playing football
- Swimming
- Zumba
- Yoga
- Climbing
- Cycling
- Dancing

## Body Functions Related to Relationships and Communication

- Talking
- Body language
- Facial expressions (e.g., smiling, winking)
- Hugging
- Cuddling
- Kissing
- Sex
- Crying
- Shaking hands
- Making eye contact
- Being a shoulder to cry on
- Writing a letter
- Laughing
- Waving



# DIVERSITY OF BODY FUNCTIONALITY

## Body Functions Related to Creative Endeavours

- Dancing
- Painting
- Building
- Sculpting
- Carving
- Writing
- Singing
- Playing an instrument
- Reading
- Photography
- Gardening
- Decorating a cake
- Sewing
- Knitting

## Body Functions Related to Senses and Sensations

- Breathing
- Seeing
- Tasting
- Touching
- Hearing
- Smelling
- Experiencing pleasure
- Feeling emotions
- Thought processing
- Sex drive

## Body Functions Related to Self Care

- Sleeping/napping
- Eating
- Drinking
- Cooking
- Caring for the body (e.g. by showering or taking a bath)

## Body Functions Related to Internal Processes

- Healing from a cold
- Digesting food
- Absorbing vitamins
- Creating a baby
- Healing a wound
- Growing (hair, nails, new skin cells, etc.)
- Regulating temperature, hunger, thirst, etc.
- General restoration (e.g., during sleep)
- Removing toxins from the body (e.g., through the liver)

# DIVERSITY OF BODY FUNCTIONALITY

As you may have noticed, your body's functions can relate to many **diverse** domains, including (1) **physical capacities** (e.g., walking, reaching) and (2) **internal processes** (e.g., digesting food, breathing), but also (3) **senses and sensations** (e.g., seeing, hearing), (4) **creative endeavours** (e.g., singing, reading), (5) **self-care** (e.g., bathing, sleeping), and (6) **relationships and communication** (e.g., talking, eye contact).

## IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE HOLISTIC!

It may be easy to focus on just one or two domains of body functionality, such as physical capacities. However, throughout this programme we would like you to try to focus on other domains, too. This is because creating a more **holistic** view of your body functionality can help you to feel more positively about your body overall.

In addition, when reading through the list, you might have thought, "I can't do that!" or, "I can do that, but it is difficult for me!" Living with a visible difference may affect some aspects of functionality. However, throughout this programme, we would like you to focus on the things that your body **is** able to do, including the things that your body is able to do **despite** any aspects of functionality which are affected by having a visible difference. Reflecting on this can also help you to feel more positively about your body overall.

# MY 1-WEEK SCHEDULE

This booklet contains 3 writing tasks to complete over the course of 1 week. It is important that you think about when you will be able to do this so that it fits into your schedule and you stay on track.

Add the day of the week or date in the first column and add what time you will complete the task in the second column. Try to space out the three tasks over the week as well as you can. See below for an example:

MONDAY 01.04	8pm, after dinner
TUESDAY 02.04	-
WEDNESDAY 03.04	-
THURSDAY 04.04	5:30pm, after work
FRIDAY 05.04	-
SATURDAY 06.04	-
SUNDAY 07.04	10am, before my walk

*Tip: Add this to your own diary and/or set reminders on your phone.*

Day 1	
Day 2	
Day 3	
Day 4	
Day 5	
Day 6	
Day 7	



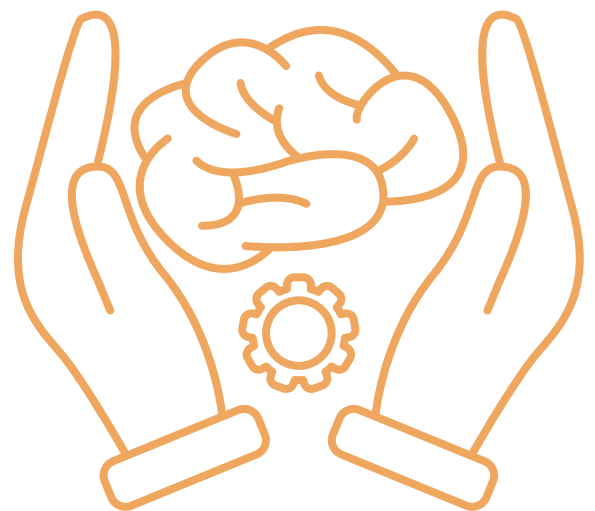
# IMPORTANCE OF BODY FUNCTIONALITY

Before you start your first writing exercise, we'd like you to take a moment to contemplate the **importance** of some of your body functions to your life.

Ask yourself, **what do these functions mean to me?** For example, how dull would life be if you couldn't taste food, enjoy the sunshine, or listen to music? To take another example, where would you be if you couldn't communicate to others using your body (e.g., via body language)? Some body functions seem simple and others seem complex, yet all of them play an important role in our lives and can help us to enact our values (e.g., showing love to our family and friends by giving them a hug).

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

At first, it may seem difficult to think of your body in a more holistic and positive way, especially if you're used to thinking of it differently. But, with practice, it will become easier and more natural to you – like a muscle that gets stronger with exercise! Completing our writing exercises over the coming days can help set you on a course towards a more positive body image.



Now, let's get started with your first writing exercise!

# WRITING EXERCISE #1

SENSES AND SENSATIONS  
PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES

At the start, we asked you to think of some of the things that your body can do. Now, in this writing exercise, we would like you to **describe in more detail what your body can do.**

## WRITING TASK GUIDANCE

In your writing, we would like you to take your time, really let go, and explore the different things that your body can do. Specifically, in this first writing exercise you will focus only on body functions that are related to (1) **the body's senses and sensations** (e.g., feeling pleasure) and (2) **physical capacities** (e.g., going for a walk, strength). You will focus on the other domains of body functionality in your second and third writing exercises. If you need inspiration, you can always refer back to the list of body functions on pages 4 and 5.

Importantly, when you are writing about your body's functions, we would like you to adopt a **holistic** focus (i.e., not limited to just one or two functions). We would also like you to think about the functions that your body can perform even if some of them are affected by your condition. Lastly, remember to **reflect on what these functions mean to you.** Ask yourself, "Why are these functions important to me?" Remember that each simple and complex function plays an important role in our lives and can help us to enact our values.

# WRITING EXERCISE #1

SENSES AND SENSATIONS  
PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES

**There are only 2 rules for this writing exercise:**

(1) Please aim to write for at least 15 minutes. Take a 5-minute break at some point, if you feel you need to.

(2) After you have finished the writing exercise, please reread what you have written (this will enhance the benefit of the programme for you).

Make sure you keep your writing exercises safe and private. Don't worry about spelling, sentence structure, or grammar. Lastly, different bodies can do different things, so everyone's writing will be different. Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers. Your writing will be unique depending on your own body.



# WRITING EXERCISE #1

SENSES AND SENSATIONS  
PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES





# WRITING EXERCISE #2

## INTERNAL PROCESSES CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS

Welcome back! A few days ago, you completed your first writing exercise, wherein you described the functionality of your body. Specifically, you focused on body functions that are related to the body's senses and physical capacities.

### WRITING TASK GUIDANCE

Today, in your second writing exercise, we ask you to focus only on body functions that are related to (1) **internal processes** (e.g., digesting food) and (2) **creative endeavours** (e.g., painting, singing). Please take your time, really let go, and explore the functions that are related to these domains of body functionality. If you need inspiration, you can always refer back to the list of body functions on pages 4 and 5.

As in your first writing exercise, it is important that you try to adopt a **holistic** focus (i.e., not limited to just one or two functions) and that you also reflect on what your body can do – even if some of your body functions are affected by your visible difference. We would also like you to **reflect on what these functions mean to you**. Ask yourself, “Why are these functions important to me?” Each simple and complex body function plays an important role in our lives and can help us to enact our values (e.g., by painting, we can express our emotions and express who we are).

# WRITING EXERCISE #2

INTERNAL PROCESSES  
CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS

**Again, there are only 2 rules for this writing exercise:**

(1) Please aim to write for at least 15 minutes. Take a 5-minute break at some point, if you feel you need to.

(2) After you have finished the writing exercise, please reread what you have written (this will enhance the benefit of the programme for you).

Remember, you do not need to worry about spelling, sentence structure, or grammar. Your writing will be unique depending on your own body – There are no right or wrong answers.



# WRITING EXERCISE #2

INTERNAL PROCESSES  
CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS







# WRITING EXERCISE #3

SELF-CARE  
RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

Over the past few days, you have completed two writing exercises about the functionality of your body. You focused on body functions that are related to (1) the body's senses and sensations, (2) physical capacities, (3) internal processes, and (4) creative endeavours.

## WRITING TASK GUIDANCE

Today, in your final writing exercise, we ask that you focus only on body functions that are related to (1) **self-care** (e.g., eating, sleeping) and (2) **relationships with others and communication** (e.g., hugging, body language). Once again, we would like you to take your time, really let go, and explore the body functions that are related to these domains of body functionality. As always, you may refer back to the list of body functions if you need inspiration.

When you are writing about your body's functions, remember to adopt a **holistic** focus (i.e., not limited to just one or two functions) and to reflect on what your body can do –even if some of your body functions are affected by your visible difference . Further, remember to **reflect on what these functions mean to you**, and to ask yourself “Why are these functions important to me?” Each simple and complex function plays an important role in our lives and can help us to enact our values (e.g., by hugging a friend, we can express our love for them).

# WRITING EXERCISE #3

SELF-CARE  
RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

**Again, there are only 2 rules for this writing exercise:**

(1) Please aim to write for **at least** 15 minutes. Take a 5-minute break in between, if you feel you need to.

(2) After you have finished the writing exercise, please reread what you have written (this will enhance the benefit of the programme for you).

Remember, you do not need to worry about spelling, sentence structure, or grammar. Your body is unique, so your writing will be unique, too. There are no right or wrong answers.



# WRITING EXERCISE #3

SELF-CARE  
RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION



# WRITING EXERCISE #3

SELF-CARE  
RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION



PLEASE TURN OVER

# FUTURE BODY FUNCTIONALITY

In today's session you finished your final writing exercise. Well done!

We hope that the exercises have helped you to think about your body in a more **holistic** sense, and to **reflect on what your body can do, rather than focussing just on how it looks**. We also hope that you were able to reflect on why your body functionality is meaningful to you.

We encourage you to see these exercises as "only the beginning." To continue practicing viewing your body in a positive light, here are a few things that you can try in the coming days and weeks:

- (1) Leave notes for yourself reminding you to think about what you've learned (e.g., "I appreciate all of the things that my body can do").
- (2) Every day, write down one or two sentences about your body functionality (e.g., "Today I am grateful that my body enabled me to give my daughter a hug").
- (3) Reflect on your body functionality as you go about your daily activities. For example, while listening to music you could think, "How amazing that my body enables me to hear my favourite songs."
- (4) If you feel down about your appearance, try to think about your body functionality, as well (e.g., "I might feel unhappy with how I look today, but I'm glad that my body does so much for me").

# FUTURE BODY FUNCTIONALITY

What other techniques can you come up with to help you practice thinking of your body in a more positive way? Take a moment to think about what tips and tricks might help you to accomplish this, and write them in the space below.

To help me practice thinking of my body in a more positive way, I will:

1.



2.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND FURTHER READING

Thank you for completing More than My Appearance. We hope you have enjoyed the tasks within this booklet.

## **Acknowledgements**

This programme was developed by Dr Jessica Alleva and colleagues (2015; 2018) and was adapted and tested by Dr Ella Guest, Dr Emma Halliwell, Professor Diana Harcourt and Abigail Mathews from the Centre for Appearance Research, and Dr Jessica Alleva. After finding the programme significantly increased functionality appreciation in adults with visible differences, the intervention materials were adapted into this booklet to be shared with the Appearance Collective Charities.

## **Further reading on body functionality**

- Alleva, J.M., Martijn, C., Van Breukelen, G.J., Jansen, A. and Karos, K., (2015) Expand Your Horizon: A programme that improves body image and reduces self-objectification by training women to focus on body functionality. *Body Image*, 15, pp.81-89.
- Alleva, J.M., Diedrichs, P.C., Halliwell, E., Peters, M.L., Dures, E., Stuijzand, B.G. and Rumsey, N. (2018) More than my RA: A randomized trial investigating body image improvement among women with rheumatoid arthritis using a functionality-focused intervention program. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 86(8), p.666.
- Alleva, J.M. and Tylka, T.L., (2021) Body functionality: A review of the literature. *Body Image*, 36, pp.149-171.