



EMBODY

By Sossity Chiricuzio

Perspectives

Embody - The Right to Bare Arms

by Sossity Chiricuzio, PQ Monthly

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It's a right based on an ownership you've been convinced you don't have.

Ever feel like there's a conspiracy to make you hate your body? That you spend so much time and money trying to achieve an impossible ideal? It's not you, it's true.

Shame sells.

You can't escape your body, or having it on view to the world. Images everywhere show you how to buy your way into the impossible ideal, or minimize the proof that you failed. How do we reconcile this with self love? Or even with temperatures in the nineties?

Here in Portland we're lucky enough to have multiple clothing stores that push back against shame in regards to fat bodies. I bet some of you just winced at that word. Ever wonder why? It's just an adverb, after all. A descriptor. A body type. When did we decide it also meant horrible? A curse to find a magic spell for?

The only spell you need is one that sets you free. I've interviewed Annie and Carlee from *Fat Fancy*, and Gaya from *Savvy Plus* to get some tips towards that goal.

PQ: Hot temperatures generally means less clothing, but body shaming and body image are still very much a thing. How have you seen this reflected in your shoppers, and how do you handle it?

Annie: Occasionally it comes across as a self-deprecating statement. I might point it out, and counter it. Talk them through it if it feels right. Plant a seed for the idea of an alternate point of view.

We have a zine we just made that is meant to give ideas to people who may want to get into body and fat positivity and acceptance, so I might suggest the zine too. I think actually being okay with yourself and your body can sometimes result in less fat shaming and/or make it easier to deal with when it does come up.

Gaya: When my customers talk negatively about their bodies, I sometimes respond by pointing out how beautiful their bodies are. I say, "let's embrace them, to choose to participate in life and not be on the sidelines." I suggest they try on different styles and sizes and find what feels good.

PQ: How do you feel body image issues have changed (or not) in the last 5 years?

Gaya: I think it has changed thanks to people in their twenties and thirties and social media. Their attitudes are much healthier and I don't see as much body shaming. The younger generation seem to embrace their bodies, I am totally inspired by them.

Carlee: We have all come in contact with this media focus on "The War on Obesity." This messaging is pretty pervasive and reinforces an already fatphobic society we have to live in every day. It's exhausting.

However, there has also been a powerful and growing Body Positive Movement to counter this. We have seen the rise of Fat Fashion blogs, Fat Positive social medial groups, new plus size clothing lines, and in general the idea of body positivity entering the mainstream.

PQ: Bare arms are a big stumbling block for many fat folks - how do you handle that topic/what is your advice for folks looking to embrace that option?

Annie: I have two approaches. One is to jump right in and try it and see what happens. Wear something sleeveless out of the house. Notice that the world doesn't end. Feel how good it feels. Do it again.

For those who may be really unsure about it, I say, try going sleeveless in the house first. Then, try it for a quick jaunt to the grocery store or walking the dog. As you get more comfortable, wear it out more. Notice that no one really cares and it feels really good! It's so freeing! You deserve to wear what you want. It's hot out and there's no reason you should suffer.

If someone is going to judge you because of the way you look, that's someone you don't want in your life anyways. You are a divine being who is perfect as they are in this moment.

Carlee: I always tell people that their arms are beautiful and there is nothing wrong with them. My message is always the same. This is sometimes the first time they may hear this. Ultimately, they must come to the decision about whether or not to show them entirely on their own. That is a process that's different for everyone.

PQ: Is there anything else you'd like to leave our readers with as food for thought, either as fat folks,

or allies?

Gaya: It's not about the size, it's about how it fits...does it feel good? Does it look good? Who cares what size it is. Love yourself for who you are today, not tomorrow or yesterday.

Carlee: To non-fat folks: Please learn about what body shaming is and don't do it. I hear and see this in the queer community way too often. It's hurtful and not OK. Being smaller bodied doesn't make you morally superior nor does it give you permission to shame folks. You can do better. That is all.

Annie: The road to self-acceptance is a journey. I recommend starting on your journey as soon as possible if you haven't already. Sometimes you might take two steps forward and one step back, but it's a journey that is soooo worth embarking upon. As allies, please interrupt diet talk and negative body talk when you see it happening. That is super helpful!

Search online: fatfancyfashions.com, savvyplus.com, dreamboatcoaching.com, carolrossetti.com.br, #losehatenotweight, and #haes.

Sossity Chiricuzio is a writer and columnist based out of Portland, Oregon. She is a regular contributor for PQ Monthly and focuses on social justice, communication, community, and changing the world. You can follow her adventures online @sossitywrites and find more at sossitywrites.com.