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Mia:

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"Embodying My Body," by Mia Dunbar... The first time I was made aware of my body, I was eight years old. My mirror made me look bigger, larger. Suddenly, it seemed as if I was oozing from my skin and pores. It was picture day, and I didn't want anything to do with myself. For the first time ever, I truly hated the skin that I was in. This was my first experience of body dysmorphia, and it wouldn't be my last. Over the years, it's been a sick roller coaster experience with my own body image. I've had highs, lows, and neutral parts. There's been moments where I've celebrated myself, and other moments when I couldn't bear to be sharing the same space as my physical body. I felt tethered to a prison that I couldn't escape. It soon became exhausting to constantly try to love my body. It felt like a battle I couldn't win. I was forever at odds with the very thing that held me prisoner. And that's the thing that they don't tell you about big movements like body positivity, is that sometimes loving yourself isn't enough. Sometimes, preaching body positivity and confidence isn't enough. There are some days when body love isn't enough to sustain what I'm missing from my life. Social media always shows how positive people can be: "love yourself for who you are" and "you're worth it". And perhaps those mantras work for others, but soon enough, it stopped working for me. Body positivity seemed to be a side dish in an otherwise tantalizing meal that is healthy body image. Loving yourself is hard. Making yourself look in the mirror and struggling to find things you love is hard. It was then I realized, maybe it was okay not to be completely in love with myself all the time. There are days when you're having bad body image, and that's okay. You're more than just a body to be seen and complimented on. You're more than a vessel in which people need to find you appealing. There are some days where I don't love my body. And that's okay. There are moments where celebrate my beauty as a woman and an individual. And that's okay. There are moments when I just exist and just am. And that's okay, too. I'm not saying that body positivity isn't a good movement, and that people shouldn't try to love themselves. I'm just saying that me personally, I didn't truly start appreciating the body I inhabit until I just started appreciating me for me. The way I laugh. The way my hands guide me to write. How lucky I am to have strong legs that push me and let me go from place to place. How my lungs can breathe in and out, allowing me to take in air. I focused on what my body can do instead of what it looks like. Suddenly, I wasn't just existing to be pretty, but I was existing and living for me. I was co-existing with myself and the body I am in.

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