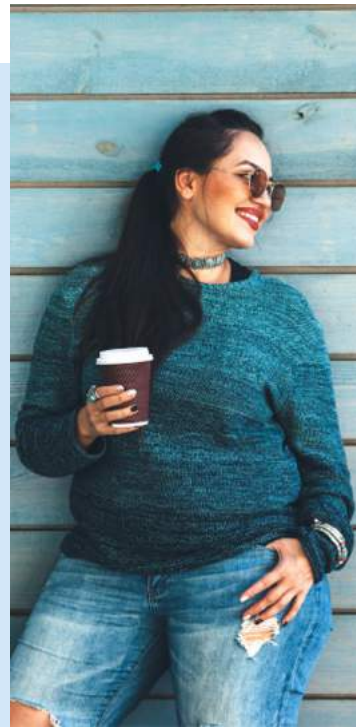


You're Fine!

body image for girls



by Raina Rose & Ginny Jones



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What's inside this book

Message From Raina Rose



Hi peeps! Raina here.

Body image is a tough subject, and I feel like a lot of us feel confused because on the one hand, we see that body and weight is important in our culture, but when we try to talk about it with grown ups, they just tell us we should love our bodies. I don't know about you, but that really doesn't help me.

To me, "love your body" is just another way of making us feel bad about ourselves. That's why I have a different approach - how about we just know that we're OK - we're fine. It's OK and normal to have bad body thoughts, and it's OK and normal to look in the mirror and feel bummed sometimes.

Here's the only thing you need to know: you don't have to love your body. You don't have to think it's perfect in every way. You just have to remind yourself that you're worthy of respect in any body! I know it feels like you need to fix yourself, improve yourself, and

look like the prettiest girl at school, but honestly, you're good. As you are. No need to do anything or fix anything. You're fine!

I'm going to provide you with information about body image, fatphobia, and why dieting is not a good idea. These are all tricky topics, and they can feel really confusing. If your mom made you read thousands of puberty books like mine did, you'll remember that all of them included grown-ups saying something along the lines of, "I wish I could go back in time and tell my younger self that I was beautiful." Did you read that in a fake-sounding sing-song voice? I sure did.

I remember reading that and thinking, "Okay lady, that's great, but no matter how many times you say that, it's not changing my self-criticism." It's as if that lady thinks that saying that she wishes that she loved her body back then will make me love my body now.

I would read the same passage again and again, but it wouldn't change my thoughts. I thought it was broken. "What's with this?" I would think, "I'm supposed to think I'm beautiful, but I don't. So what's up with that?"

The thing is, no matter how many times you read inspirational quotes about loving yourself, no matter how many times your mom says you're beautiful, it's not going to change the fact that the media and our culture at large is built to create self-hatred and body shame. Telling us to "love our bodies" without seeing our bodies within the larger culture just isn't enough.

If being told you should love your body has changed how you feel about your body, then contact me, because I will go to your house, bow down at your feet, and shower you with Cadbury eggs, money, and possibly buttons. Seriously, I have a lot of buttons. I need to get rid of them.

Nevertheless, we are all beautiful. And sometimes you might not see it or believe it. But I guarantee that if I see you, I will think you are beautiful. That's because often we can see beauty in other people that we can't see in ourselves. But don't be mad at yourself if you don't feel beautiful. Just remind yourself that you're normal (and awesome). Don't diet. Don't hate your body. Don't compare yourself to other girls or women wearing tiny bikinis on Instagram. You're fine.

There will be times of doubt. I often find myself complimenting my friends' looks and then wishing that I looked like them. That's just how we seem to be, and it's not an accident. Billion-dollar companies create unattainable beauty standards and encourage us to compare ourselves to others and compete with each other. Then they tell us that if we buy their product we can look just like their models. Don't feel beautiful yet? That's OK, they have another product for us to buy! And so the cycle goes. Over and over and over again.

The fact that we feel bad about ourselves and as if we're in competition with other girls and women doesn't mean there's something wrong with us, but it also doesn't mean that we have to believe it!

We live in a messed up world, peeps. But this book is hoping to bring a little light into this cave we call society. Enjoy!

Love,
Raina 

1. Don't Diet



Our culture tells us that we should all have the same body type (thin). It's totally fake and ignores the fact that body diversity is a real thing. We are not supposed to be the same weight any more than we are supposed to be the same height or have the same shoe size.

Diet companies want us to believe that we can all be thin so that they can sell us diet products like gym memberships, diet food, diet books, juice cleanses, detox teas, appetite-suppressing lollipops, and other things that are designed to make us lose weight in the short term. And watch out - a lot of our favorite YouTubers and Instagrammers are part of the diet industry, too!

The diet industry totally lies to us, because scientists have known for decades that diets can cause short-term weight loss, but 95% of people who lose weight gain it all back plus more. If you just look at the facts, it actually makes no scientific sense to ever diet. Seriously. Don't do it. And if you have done it, you're still fine. Just don't do it again. Promise?

Dieting sucks. It's bad for our health, and if you want to be healthy, you should never, ever try to lose weight.

I know this goes against everything you have heard about weight. I get it that most people think that weight loss is healthy and good. Most of us have friends who are dieting. A lot of us have parents who diet. Heck, you might be dieting right now! It's not your fault! Our entire culture has been brainwashed to believe that forcing all bodies to be thin is healthy, but it's not. Now, you alone might not be able to change our culture, but you can help change it by not dieting or stopping if you are dieting right now.

It's actually totally OK if we let our bodies figure out what weight they want to be. Our bodies are programmed to want to be the weight they like to be. Our bodies will work against every single diet to keep us at whatever they think is our healthiest weight.

It's really likely that the weight your body wants to be doesn't match the weight you think it "should" be. But that "should" comes from images of "perfect" bodies that most of us are not meant to have.

Only 5% of the population looks like the bodies we see in the media, and even they are Photoshopped and filtered to look even thinner and leaner than they are in real life. The rest of us live in larger bodies, and that's fine!

The diet industry makes almost \$70 billion every year trying to convince us that we can lose weight and keep it off. But guess what? Not a single scientific study supports their claims. It's totally false. That's why they always present their programs based on one person's success story ... because they can't get the data to prove that it works for the millions of us who try dieting every year.

**Don't Buy It.
Don't Diet!**

10 Reasons you should never diet

1. Body weight is genetically determined, just like our height and shoe size. If you try to mess with the weight your body wants to be, it will fight back and regain the weight. We're not all supposed to be thin!
2. There is not a single scientific study that shows people who lose weight can keep it off for more than 2 years.
3. About 95% of people who lose weight will gain it back.
4. The majority of people who lose weight will gain more weight than they lost - as protection against the next "famine," which is how your body sees intentional weight loss.
5. 25% of girls who diet will develop an eating disorder (and trust me, there is nothing healthy or glamorous about an eating disorder!).
6. Dieting leads to food obsession and binge eating, which can cause a crazy roller-coaster of stress for your body.
7. Dieting makes your breath smell. Really bad.
8. Dieting can make your skin dry out or break out.
9. Dieting can make you constipated or have diarrhea. Yuck.
10. People who diet weigh more than people who have never dieted (see No. 4 for why this happens).

*Having trouble believing this?

See all the science at www.more-love.org/science

2. Eat What You Like



Have you ever had anyone tell you that you "should" eat something? Or that you should stop eating something? Or that certain foods are "good" and others are "bad?" These are all examples of food policing, and it's super-lame.

It seems like everyone has joined the food police, including our parents, teachers, coaches, and doctors. Worst of all, a lot of our friends police our food, too! I've had times when I'm at lunch and someone questions my food choices! It's crazy!

I've had people tell me that every sort of food is "good" or "bad." Of course sugar, chocolate milk, pizza, french fries, ice cream, and other delicious foods are on the list, but some people (*cough* Tom Brady *cough*) even warn us about not eating certain FRUITS and VEGETABLES! Dude! It really shows how bad the food police can get!

I don't want to live in fear of food. And I don't want you to live in fear of food. Our fear of food is way exaggerated and totally unhealthy. Most of us eat a pretty good diet. We know that, in general, we should eat fruits, vegetables, fats, and proteins. We know that eating fast food three times a day probably isn't going to give us the best nutrition, but it's still not the worst thing in the world!

We're smart: we know that balancing our food is a good idea. We know that mixing fruits and vegetables, whole grains and proteins in with our favorite foods like ice cream and pizza is a good idea (Not literally, don't think that I'm telling you to put cucumbers in your ice cream ... unless that's your jam, in which case, go for it!)

Most of us are actually afraid of food - especially delicious food. But that makes no sense! Food is good for us. We need food.

None of us should have to live in fear of the food choices we make. Sure, we should make healthy choices some of the time, but none of us deserve to worry that eating candy or delicious french fries is going to ruin our health. Cause it's not!

And here's another thing: food does not have moral value. People who eat a certain way are not somehow better people than those who don't eat like that. In other words, people who eat vegan are not better than people who eat Doritos and ice cream every day, and vice versa. It doesn't work like that (although sometimes I wish it did, because I am the queen of eating ice cream everyday).

Being a good person is an inside job, and what you eat is the least important part of what makes you a good person! There are so many ways to make an impact on our world, and restricting our individual food choices is one of the least effective ways to make change.

**Eat food you like.
Eat when you are
hungry.**

8 Tips for eating well

1. Get enough calories every day! You don't have to count them! There, already a relief.
2. Eat when you are hungry (seriously! It works!).
3. Eat foods you like.
4. Try new foods - get adventurous!
5. Don't feel guilty about what you eat.
6. Don't eat food that makes you feel sick.
7. Don't obsess about what you're eating.
8. Don't restrict foods you love - restriction leads to binge eating.



FOOOD!!!



3. Shut Down Body Shamers



I'll never forget the first time I was body shamed. Up until that point, I'd been going along in the world, pretty happy with life. Once I was told that my body was "wrong," I felt immediately worse about myself. And it's stuck with me every single day. I call it my shame demon. You might have it too, and I'm afraid there's no witchy procedure to get rid of it.

Our society is obsessed with monitoring other people's bodies - especially girls' and women's bodies. It sucks, which is why so many of us who are into body positivity are raging feminists, too. (As a daughter of a woman that has a blog dedicated to this stuff, I can confirm this!) We're sick of people telling us what our bodies should look like, and want to move onto more important issues already!

I know a lot of girls who live in families where bodies are super-important. A lot of these girls spend a lot of time worrying about their bodies instead of using their energy to change the world! What a waste of talent, creativity, and intellect!

Even sadder is that some families actually bully and tease us for our bodies. As if it's not hard enough to go to school and have ignorant kids criticize us, some of us have to deal with it at home, too. It really sucks, and I'm so sorry if anyone has ever or is currently telling you there is something wrong with your body.

Here's the thing: there is nothing wrong with your body. There's a whole lot wrong with a society that thinks it's OK to talk about girls' and womens' bodies as if we're pieces of meat or objects. We're not! We're actual human beings with feelings and ideas to share!

We weren't born to hate our bodies, and we don't deserve to feel as if our bodies are wrong, no matter what shape, size, color, or weight we are. Stand up for yourself and your friends when someone tries to body shame you.

Don't accept anyone who tells you there is something wrong with one of your body parts or your whole body. You are not a jigsaw puzzle, and you can't switch out one part of your body to achieve "perfection." Perfection is boring. And body shamers deserve to be shut down.

5 Things to Say to body shamers

1. Did you really just say that?
2. Dude. Are you serious? That's not cool.
3. I don't recall asking for your opinion about my body.
4. Why would you even comment on my body?
5. Don't talk about my body.

4. Don't Worry About BMI



Have you been weighed at school? I have. It sucks. School weighing programs are all based on measuring BMI, or body mass index. This is a complicated formula comparing our height to our weight and then putting us into categories like "normal," "overweight," and "obese."

I remember sitting in the nurse's office at my school because I scraped my knee or whatever, and I saw a chart that listed all the bad things that can happen if you're "obese." Then it said "You may feel shame, depression, and anxiety about being overweight." I was so angry, I wanted to jump up and shout, "Your stupid poster is making people feel those things! Not our weight!" Totally ridiculous.

Of course, anyone who isn't "normal" feels really bad about their category, and since more than 65% of the United States population is outside of the "normal" category, a whole lot of kids feel like there's something wrong with them because of a stupid number.

These school programs were put in place in large part based on a media frenzy over the so-called “childhood obesity epidemic,” which is totally not an epidemic at all. It’s true that as a population our weight has risen a bit, but so has our height! Do you ever hear about the “height epidemic?” I hear crickets chirping, which means that’s a no. This stuff is complicated, but I just want you to know that we don’t need to worry about the “obesity epidemic.” You’re fine.

The fact that our doctors and P.E. teachers use BMI as a way to start conversations about health is extremely upsetting, because BMI does not indicate health in any way. In fact, you might just as well use shoe size as a starting point for a health conversation. Can you imagine that? A P.E. teacher saying, “Oh yeah, you might want to keep an eye on your shoe size, it’s getting a little too big.”

BMI is a ridiculous way to measure health. But how many times have you been told your BMI and then encouraged to lower your weight so that you can be “healthier?” (Please go back and look at the Don’t Diet section and remember to never follow this advice).

BMI has very little to do with health. In fact, most Olympic athletes are above “average” weight because they are so muscular. Think about that. Most professional athletes are “overweight” or “obese” according to BMI.

I hate that so many of my friends worry about their BMI category and feel as if there is something wrong with their bodies because of stupid numbers. Until humans figure out how to safely and effectively lower body weight, we need to stop using weight as an indicator of health.

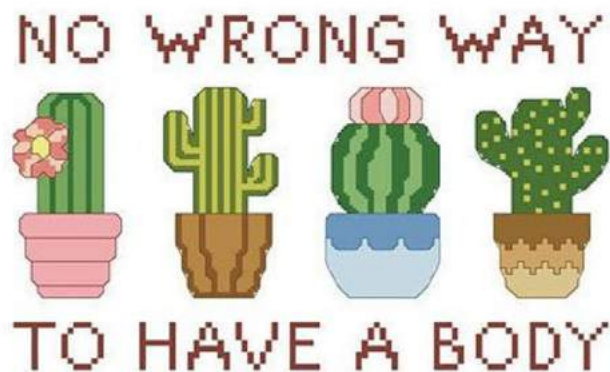
You know what does indicate health? Living a great life! Enjoying yourself! Not obsessing over a stupid number.

So stop worrying about your BMI and start thinking about how you can have more fun, enjoy yourself, move, and avoid toxic stuff. Bonus points if you avoid toxic body shamers at the same time!

**You are more
than a number.**

8 Things That Are more important than BMI

1. Feeling as if you belong somewhere.
2. Having at least one adult who you know loves you unconditionally.
3. Having at least one friend who you can talk to when you feel lonely.
4. Feeling as if you are worthy of love, affection, and attention.
5. Getting enough sleep.
6. Exercising regularly.
7. Not drinking alcohol or smoking.
8. Not feeling ashamed of your body for living its best life.



5. Fight Back Against Fatphobia



Fatphobia is the fear of being fat and a hatred of people who have fat [1]. It's a deeply-held cultural fear, and is almost universal. We live in a tremendously fatphobic culture, and, unfortunately, that means that fat people live with something called "weight stigma."

Weight stigma causes doctors, teachers, parents, employers, friends, siblings, and pretty much everyone to treat larger people really badly. This treatment causes tremendous stress for fat people, and this stress is actually the biggest health risk of living in a larger body.

In fact, all of the diseases that people say are caused by fat are also linked to weight stigma, so researchers are actually starting to say that **the problem with being fat is not fat itself, but the stigma experienced in our society if you live in a fat body.**

There's a good chance you have some fear of being fat or getting fat. Fat may seem like the worst thing you can be. What I want you to know is that your feelings are natural in our society - we have been shaped by powerful forces that are out of our personal control, and not even our parents (mine included!) can protect us from societal fatphobia. But if you want to accept your body, quit dieting forever, and be a good human citizen, then it's time to fight back against fatphobia by learning the "second thought" process.

Basically, our culture teaches us our "first thought," like "being fat is bad." This thought is not true, but it's deeply believed and often the first thing that pops into our minds. Rather than feel bad about having that thought, all I want you to do is start to work on your second thought. We don't have to live with our first thought, especially if it's bigoted and discriminatory!

We may have the first thought that "being fat is bad," and then have a second thought of "or so I've been told by society. In fact, all bodies are good bodies."

We may have the first thought that "that fat person is so gross," and then have a second thought of "or so I've been told by society. In fact, that person is a human being who is worthy of respect just like everyone else."

And we may even have the first thought that "I don't want to get fat," and then have a second thought of "or so I've been told by society. But I know my body is wise and I'm going to treat it with respect."

See how this works? It's really hard to overcome all of the societal conditioning that we've been exposed to. But it's not hard to learn to have a "second thought" that helps us treat others and ourselves with much more respect and compassion. Fatphobia is the only form of discrimination that is actually on the rise right now, and it's got to stop! Learning to practice having a "second thought" will help you accept and respect all people, and yourself, regardless of size.

[1] Are you surprised that I'm using the word fat? There's a huge movement right now driven by "fat activists" who are working to reclaim the word "fat" as a simple descriptor, like tall, short, thin, or brunette. It's still a tough word, since a lot of people use fat in a negative way. Because of this, you probably don't want to call someone else fat, but you can certainly choose to call yourself fat, and you can respect someone who identifies as fat and uses that word to describe their own body.

Quick Tips:

don't be a fatphobic jerk

fat is a descriptor

If someone who is fat calls herself fat, don't jump in and say "no you're not!" That's not respectful and just demonstrates your own discomfort with the word. If someone calls herself fat as a descriptor, think of it as the same as her saying she's a blonde or tall. No biggie.

thin privilege

There's an important concept that we should all understand, called "thin privilege." Now, we all live in a fatphobic society, and almost all of us "feel fat" sometimes. But it's really important for those of us who are living in smaller bodies to acknowledge that we don't get to say that out loud, because it exposes the idea that we think there is something *wrong* with being fat (i.e. we are fatphobic) and, also, we are not actually living in a fat body. Unless you are plus-sized, you live with thin privilege. I live with thin privilege. It doesn't mean I don't have bad body days, but I can't say I understand what it's like to live in a fat body.

fat is not a feeling

It's really important to know that fat is not a feeling! A person can have fat, but they cannot "feel fat." You have fingernails, but you cannot "feel fingernails." You have eyes, but you cannot "feel eyes." It's simple: don't say you "feel fat." Ever. It shows fatphobia and really hurts our cause. Look deeper when you want to say I "feel fat." What are you really feeling? Sad? Lonely? Look deeper and find something that is an actual feeling, not just a cheap stand-in.

6. Become a Body Positive Warrior

Being body positive doesn't require you to run around in a bikini and to LOOOOOVE your body all the time. All it asks is that we give equal respect to ourselves and all people regardless of our body - fat or thin, brown, black or white, tall or short, abled or disabled, etc.

The body positive movement is a social justice movement that promotes the belief that all bodies, regardless of size, shape, color, or ability, are worthy of respect. The goals of body positivity are both personal and societal: we want all people to feel positive about their own bodies, and we also want societal protections for people in all types of bodies.

Being body positive means learning that we don't need to feel bad about our own bodies, but it also means recognizing that nobody deserves to be discriminated against just because of their body.



People who live in marginalized bodies (including people who are not thin, white, and conventionally attractive) face discrimination at work, and their bodies can mean they are paid less and have fewer work opportunities. In fact, discrimination on the basis of weight is the only legal form of discrimination in every state except for Michigan (Yay, Michigan!). That's messed up, and that's what the body positive movement is trying to change.

There's no question that we don't live in a body positive society - look around and you will see primarily thin, able-bodied, white

models and actors in mainstream media. But we are starting to make some strides. You may have noticed that we have more people of different sizes, colors and abilities being featured in the media. Websites, clothing catalogs, TV shows, and magazines are all starting to show a diversity of bodies.

Don't worry if you're an imperfect body positive warrior! Remember that this is a social movement, and you don't have to single-handedly right the injustices of our culture - you can just be one part of the change.

5 Steps to Becoming a body positive warrior

1. Practice accepting your body as it is. Remember, it's fine!
2. Don't let unattainable beauty standards make you feel inadequate (you're not!).
3. Support businesses that show a variety of bodies in their advertising and programming. The more diverse they are, the more money they get from me!
4. Support social justice movements and organizations that seek to increase body diversity and decrease body discrimination.
5. Get involved! Support anti-discrimination laws to protect people against weight stigma.

7. Learn Media Literacy



You know what she looks like: perfect skin, pert nose, tiny waist, rosebud mouth, long legs, glossy hair, round breasts, large eyes, glamorous pose ... we all know what the “perfect woman” looks like, because we see her everywhere. We see her in movies, on TV, in social media, in magazines, in Victoria’s Secret store windows, on billboards, on the covers of those magazines in the supermarket ... everywhere.

The media is a powerful industry designed to sell us stuff. They’re not idiots - they’re super-smart. In fact, some of the best minds in psychology, filmmaking, photography, graphic design, and marketing combine to power the beauty, fashion, and diet industries and convince us all that we are not good enough and that the only path to success is to look like the models who sell their products.

The beauty industry is worth almost \$800 billion! And here’s the thing: beauty products don’t exist unless we feel bad about ourselves. They are literally built on our insecurities.

But it's not just the major brands that present an idealized version of perfection and profit off our insecurity. Social media influencers are doing the same thing! The worst thing is that we know we're being advertised to when Maybelline™ says something, but sometimes we don't realize that's what's happening when our favorite YouTuber tells us about the cleanse she's on. Our brains are wired to believe social media influencers, which is why they are fast becoming the people we need to be most careful about when it comes to media literacy.

And I know, I know, you're like: "I don't fall for it! I know that I can't look like that!" But here's the deal: we all fall for it. I fall for it, my friends fall for it, even that weird lady across the street with four thousand cats falls for it!

Our subconscious is not controlled by our modern intelligence, it's based on hard-wired impulses that are designed to keep us safe. We are built to respond powerfully to societal norms and we want to meet them so that we

stay in the group and are not left out of important things like sharing an antelope and sheltering together in a cave.

So - you're not stupid for falling for beauty standards, it just means you have a functioning human brain! But that doesn't mean you have to be at the mercy of toxic media messages.

Look, I've had the dream that I'll wake up magically gifted with the features I envy in others. I'll be walking along, feeling great, and then, as soon as I look in the mirror, I remember that I'm a NORMAL GIRL and not an airbrushed supermodel, or even the dorky YouTuber who I love (and happens to be beautiful!). I'm me.

And sometimes it takes a few minutes to remind myself that I'm influenced by the media, and that perfection is an illusion. Then I gather my resources, remind myself that I rock, and move on with my day.

**Don't believe
everything you
think.**

4 Steps To media literacy

1. Notice what's happening

Are you being sold something? Is there a link to a product? Do you need to click to "learn more?" If so, then be careful! It's very likely that very smart people are behind it! (Beware the smart people! They go for the brain first!)

2. Notice how you feel

Does consuming media make you feel good or bad about yourself? Does following that Instagrammer make you feel good or bad about yourself? It doesn't count if you think you'll feel good about yourself after you use the product, do their workout routine, or buy the same shakes as them. Do you actually feel good about yourself as a result of the media itself?

3. Pay attention

Very few media and influencers come right out and say they want your money. They package their sales pitch in a way that makes you feel as if you want it all by yourself (not because of them). It doesn't feel as if you're being sold something, because it seems like you want it for your own reasons. Remember - these people are super-tricky and super-smart. They are hacking into systems that are hard-wired in your brain. You're not weak for falling for the pitch, but it's important to know that it is a pitch.

4 Steps To media literacy

4. Remember it's an illusion

Remember that perfect bodies and faces are an illusion. Even the Victoria's Secret models don't look like Victoria's Secret models IRL! Almost all faces and bodies in the media are Photoshopped or filtered to create the illusion of perfection. And if they aren't altered after the image is captured, the person still spent hours doing their hair and makeup (often with the goal of looking as if they didn't do anything), and they have invested in great lighting, cameras, angles, etc. Media is an illusion, and none of us look like that without tremendous effort. If you do nothing else, keep this in mind every single time you consume media images.



About Raina Rose

Hi, I'm Raina, and my mom runs More-Love.org. I'm only 13, and I can't say that I've figured all this stuff out. But I can say that I'm really interested in helping all of us find a way to accept ourselves and our bodies and not be afraid of eating delicious food and enjoying ourselves.



Photos of Raina by Karina Francis Jones

About Ginny Jones

Hi, I'm Ginny, and I created and run More-Love.org, which helps parents raise kids who are free from body hate, disordered eating, and eating disorders. I waged war with my body for too many years, and I'm hopeful that this book will help you enjoy a peaceful relationship with your body.

About More-Love.org

More-Love.org is a website that empowers parents to raise kids who are free from body hate, disordered eating, and eating disorders. Come visit us some time! If you would like to see the science behind this book, go to www.More-Love.org/science