

Coping with Triggering Photos in Eating Disorder Recovery

INTRODUCTION

This worksheet will help you reframe how you view photos of yourself, especially those that feel triggering. As you work through these exercises, take your time to reflect and challenge unhelpful thoughts.

1. RECOGNIZE IT'S JUST ONE PERSPECTIVE OF A MOMENT IN TIME

A photo captures a single angle and moment, just like a camera can't always capture the full beauty of a sunset.

Reflection Questions:

- Think of a time you took a photo of something beautiful (a sunset, a view, etc.) that didn't fully capture it. What was missing in the photo that you remember from the moment?
 - *Describe that experience here:*
- What qualities about yourself or the moment might a photo fail to capture? Consider aspects beyond your physical appearance (such as emotions, thoughts, or the environment).
 - *Write your thoughts here:*

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2. REFOCUS ON THE MEMORY BEING MADE

Photos are about memories. Instead of focusing on how you look, remember the experience and the joy that came with it.

Reflection Questions:

- What is a memory or moment that stands out to you, regardless of how you looked? Why is that memory special?
 - *Describe this memory here:*

- When you look back on life, what types of moments do you hope to remember most?
 - *Write down some of those moments or experiences:*

- Try viewing a recent photo through the lens of the memory itself. What was happening around you? Who was with you?
 - *Reflect on this experience:*

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3. REMIND YOURSELF THAT YOU ARE SO MUCH MORE THAN YOUR APPEARANCE

Diet culture emphasizes appearance, but true fulfillment comes from a life aligned with your passions, relationships, and values.

Reflection Questions:

- What are three things about yourself that have nothing to do with appearance?
 - *Write them down here:*

- When have you felt most fulfilled or happiest? What was important to you in that moment?
 - *Reflect on that experience:*

- What are some things you're passionate about or that give you a sense of purpose?
 - *List them here:*

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4. CHALLENGE THE INNER CRITIC AND EMBRACE SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Being kind to yourself is essential to finding peace with your image in photos. It's about cherishing memories over appearance.

Reflection Questions

- When your inner critic starts picking apart your appearance in a photo, what supportive or self-accepting words could you tell yourself instead?
 - *Write down a few kind phrases:*

- What does "freedom from appearance-based judgments" mean to you? What might life feel like if you were free from this inner critic?
 - *Describe your vision of this freedom:*

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BOTTOM LINE: FOCUS ON BEING PRESENT

Takeaway Exercise: Write a self-compassionate affirmation that you can use when feeling triggered by a photo of yourself. Examples include:

- *"This is just one moment in time. I am so much more than how I look here."*
- *"I choose to focus on the memory, not my appearance."*

Write your affirmation here:

Ready to find freedom?

Consider how you might take steps toward letting go of appearance-based judgments and embracing the memories and experiences that bring meaning to your life. If you'd like to work through this journey with a therapist, book a free consultation to explore support options.



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