

## Body Image: A balance between FIT and Body

February 14, 2008

One of the goals of FIT-Body Ezine is to help redefine what Fit looks like on US. In other words, we can be both FIT and have a Body (without giving in to the pressures to be super thin).

It's about living and maintaining a healthy lifestyle and appreciating the beauty of our form. I'm not really saying anything that most of us don't already know deep down, despite the constant pressure to be thin. I remember growing up wishing I had a figure like Janet Jackson! She was not what mainstream America would have called FIT back then with her hour-glass figure. Culturally, we tend to associate beauty with a "healthy" (like your grandmothers used to say...) body.

It is this mentality that has significantly influenced mainstream America. I have noticed in recent years that several companies are using fuller figured women in their advertisements to better represent the average woman. Many people agree that it is about time! Of course, in all things there is a balance. Extreme thinness or obesity is never a healthy state to be in. But, these ad campaigns and African-American women's positive perceptions of their own bodies are having a huge impact on society.

I did a little research and came across a study published in December 2006 in the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology on this very topic. The authors were trying to determine whether Black women are still more satisfied with their body images than White women as has been suggested in previous research. They found that the gap is actually closing between the two groups. What was concerning about their results is that one of the possible explanations that they offered to explain this involved Black women becoming less satisfied with their body images as a result of the pressure to be thin (yet another reason why FIT-Body Ezine is so important...). But, the authors also suggested that another reason why the gap was closing between Black women and White women in terms of body image satisfaction could be that White women have a healthier attitude about their bodies as a result of the influence by minority cultures.

There was a precaution in that this new acceptance of a heavier body-type could lead to obesity. Again, it's all about maintaining a balance between healthy body image and healthy living. It's probably fair to assume that both reasons contribute to why the gap is narrowing. The good news is as we become more accepting of our bodies, we help women of other races become more accepting of their own. The bad news is we may be losing the positive perceptions we had about the balance between FIT and Body. The bottom line is there is a balance between being healthy and appreciating the beauty of our form and as soon as we begin to believe this then we can begin to define what FIT looks like on all of our Bodies.