



make sense. Basically, what I discovered is that during high stress times, as hormone called Cortisol is released (Stannard, Lia). Cortisol then slows the bodies metabolism, and can even put it to a grinding halt. Furthermore, this hormone can also create a constant appetite when mixed with adrenaline that gets released. Between bonus food cravings, and hormones that love storing excess fat, it's no wonder the "freshman fifteen" is such a popular conversation. Alas, I could finally, explain how come whenever I am rolled around while I was mid-essay, I had an undeniable craving for 7/11 taquitos and French Vanilla.

Once I figured out that I had been putting on the lbs' for the past six months, my mental state of confidence was completely shot. It has undoubtedly become a race to lose as much belly fat as I could before I had to face the public eye. I can't imagine I am alone in this, either. Everyone I know seems to be on one diet or another. Though it is not a competition, sometimes it feels that way. I have fallen into a cycle of dissecting every last bit of skin on my body. It sounds sad, because it is. I always preach to others about how bodies are beautiful no matter the shape or size, it is just a matter of preaching it to myself.

I find that I go through different phases of confidence, each day is different. It all depends how much time I spend on social media, who I'm surrounded with, and so many more fac-

tors. I constantly remind myself that whatever I look like, it truly will never matter in the end. At the end of the day, I don't go home thinking about anyone's body except mine, so what's the point in worrying? Answer: there isn't one. I often get too caught up on my own appearance every summer, and I forget to enjoy the life around me. Life is so much more than diets and appearances. Life is so much more than weight gain or weight loss. Life is about your experiences and never allowing your sense of confidence to guide you away from enjoying the wonderful things in front of you. Gain, lose, or stay where you are—we are all beautiful and unique and magical humans. Everyone is simply doing their own personal best at being human.

I know I cannot tell you to love yourself, it must come from within you. All I am hoping you get from this is that you are not alone. Nearly every last one of us is concerned in some way about our appearances. In a way, it is comforting knowing that, because who can spend extra time thinking about your body when they are fully occupied thinking about their own. In an ideal world, you would never judge yourself or others. That world is far, far away from us, however. For now, just live your life how you want. Eat as much ice cream this summer as your heart desires, don't be afraid to show your body, and have as much fun as you possibly can.

Works Cited

Stannard, Lia. "Effects of Cortisol on the Brain"
<https://www.livestrong.com/article/18695-effects-cortisol-brain/>