

A Love Letter & Pledge To My Belly (Thank You For Keeping Me Soft & Human)

BY SOPHIA HOLLY

This is a love letter. It isn't an apology and it isn't all sweet. It is a letter to celebrate and reflect on an important relationship. It is also a pledge. A pledge to love unconditionally. Through thick and thin.

. . . .

Dear Belly,

Thank you. Thank you for putting up with me for so many years.

When did it start? I remember a day in second grade. You gently poured over my sunflower leggings. My matching yellow shirt gently clung to you. I didn't mind the sensation. I was much more interested in the current game of wall ball. I had just successfully gotten another teammate out (which was rare for my clumsy self), and ran to my friend for a high-five.

I got the enthusiastic and almost painful high-five. After her hand left mine she reached for you, belly, pinched you and said "chubby cat" with a sly smile, as if she had been wanting to touch you all this time.

In that moment, time stopped. I rested

my small 8-year-old hand on you, not really sure what just happened. The bell rang and we went on with the day.

Years passed by, and I flashed back to that moment every now and then. I would occasionally tug at my shirt, or leggings. I would sometimes give you a gentle pinch just to check if you were still there. You were always there. I started to feel you most when I was with my friends. I noticed how their bellies looked in comparison to you.

Flash forward to fifth grade. My pants got tighter. You must have been in pain! You poured over my jeans. I sucked you in. I kept comparing you to my other classmates. I felt like you didn't belong. I started to get angry.

In seventh grade, I learned the truth. You were flawed! Too big! I stood in health class surrounded by slither peers. The teacher informed us that if we could pinch an inch of fat off of our bellies we were "carrying too much weight around our midsection," and "needed to lose weight."

I was 13.

I was anxious, confused, and now made aware that the mere inch I was pinching was a threat to my health. I pinched you. Again and again.

After that, I was on a mission to destroy you. No more inches of excess. I joined the cross-country team and the cheerleading team. I did research about all the foods that would help in my mission.

I starved you. I crunched you. I pinched you, chubby cat, over and over again.

Time went on and you did slowly start to disappear. But even then it wasn't enough. I imagined you were still there. You

were flatter, but I wanted you to be rigid and defined. I wanted no chance of even pinching a centimeter.

Dear Belly, this is not an apology letter. More of a reflection. A testament. Because over all these years, and after all this violence, you remained.

You stayed present. No need to apologize, because I already have your forgiveness, and I have always had your love. Even during the darkest days, you kept working. You kept me warm, kept holding in my organs, kept moving my bowels, and holding me upright. You kept me soft, feminine, and reminded me of my beautiful humanness.

There was always so much more to you than I ever knew. All along I thought you were merely part of my physical form. Over the years, I learned that, indeed, you are more.

You are a spiritual tool. A symbol of love. A soft place for a friend to rest their head. A warm place for me to rest my hand when I feel unsafe or unsure. A sturdy handle for a lover to rest two hands during a slow dance, a vessel to hold my butterflies that help me discover lust, love, excitement, and fear.

You tell me when to start. You tell me when to stop. You are here. Sturdy. Present.

You are important. If I cannot love you, I cannot love another. If I cannot make peace in the war I have fought with you for so long, I cannot help others make peace with themselves. And if we cannot make peace with ourselves, we have no chance making peace in this world. And that is what it is all about. That is what we all want, isn't it?

I love you so much. You are a part of this vessel that holds my spirit and I couldn't do any of this without your sweet softness.

Love,
Me

For more self-study, [The Urban Howl](#) recommends [Love Your Body](#).

Sip a little more:

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Wonderful Things About My Body Until I
Love All Of Me***

***Women For One's Kelly McNeilis On How To
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