

**An exercise to help you adjust to the changes your body may be experiencing**

- Every morning face the mirror and really look at yourself.
- Take 60 seconds to focus on your eyes, on your hair, and on your smile.
- Slowly glance down to every feature of your body.
- Out loud, recite, three, unique, positive affirmations or compliments while you are still standing in front of the mirror to yourself. (Example: I have a beautiful smile.)
- After each affirmation, take a moment to determine how the words make you feel. Be mindful of the emotions you are feeling and allow positiveness to present before moving to the next statement.
- As you finish with the third affirmation, tell yourself out loud that you are going to work hard today to remain positive.
- Lastly, look yourself in the mirror and state, "I am beautiful, inside and out."

By doing this simple, self-affirming exercise every morning, you will notice that you will become more confident and less critical of yourself, gaining more self-confidence over time. You want to be honest with yourself, focusing less on your limitations and more on your strengths and talents. Having scleroderma does not mean you can no longer live a full life, it may simply mean you have to adapt to doing things differently.

Challenge yourself to learn how to be creative. On those days when emotions are overwhelming and you are feeling sad and depressed, find a way to resourcefully channel that negative emotion into something productive. Get up off the couch and bake your favorite cake, go for a short walk, visit a neighbor, volunteer for the local Scleroderma Foundation chapter. Giving of your time to someone else is a great way to focus positively.

## LEARNING ACTIVITY: COPING WITH BODY AND PHYSICAL CHANGES

### Suggested exercises:

#### Simple steps for successfully accepting change:

- Accept the fact that you are unable to control everything about your disease.
- Gain a good sense of humor and learn the gift that laughter can have in your life.
- Be positive.
- Journal and keep track of your emotions.
- Recite daily positive affirmations.
- Allow others to be supportive of you and your scleroderma journey.
- Work smarter and not harder.
- Find quiet time every day to channel positive energy into your life.
- Accept your changes embrace them and enhance them by trying new dress styles, makeup and wardrobe styles.
- Change your hair style to help lift your spirits.
- Don't fight the change, embrace it and learn to find the gifts that the change provides for you along the way.

A good way to avoid the pitfalls of having negative emotions become overwhelming as you are adjusting to the changes scleroderma may be effecting in your life:

- Create a list of your favorite things to do so it is readily available on the days when you are feeling sad, alone and depressed.
- Schedule one activity a day that will keep you active and involved in the community. The more engaged you are, the less you will be focused on yourself.
- Set realistic goals. Create three or four realistic goals a week for what you would like to accomplish.
- Try and maintain routine and a schedule in your life to assure you are feeling as if your life has purpose and meaning.