

A Power Guide for Girls

# BODY talk

ELIZABETH REID BOYD & ABIGAIL BRAY

<http://www.amazon.com/Body-Talk-Power-Guide-Girls-ebook/dp/B00IA9RLP0>

*“Power means holding your head high no matter what you look like. It means speaking out when you’ve been told you have nothing to say. It means having the courage to celebrate your difference, your uniqueness, believing your own story and not someone else’s vision of who you should be. It’s about cherishing your unique self ... Real power, the sort you use every day, isn’t about conforming to an image. It’s about creating a space for yourself and writing your own script, your own story....”*

from the Introduction to ***Body Talk: A Power Guide for Girls***

by Elizabeth Reid Boyd and Abigail Bray.

Since the publication of **BODY TALK: A Power Guide for Girls** (Hachette Livre) it has been my great pleasure to work with many young writers. Body Talk writing workshops have given the participants a chance to think through and hopefully deal with some of the personal challenges that face so many young people today. Workshops (not just for writing, but for personal development too) have been held in high schools, primary schools and after school groups. In the workshops, participants involved learnt to write in different genres and improve their writing skills, as well as learning to deal with real life problems such as bullying and social dilemmas. Many wrote and read their stories aloud. They were all very powerful, especially the stories about bullying. All the students were honest about how bullying feels, and the changes they would like to make in the world.

Please feel free to make use of these workshop materials. If you would like to get in touch with me for more information or resources, I’d be happy to help.

BODY TALK: A Power Guide for Girls is now also available on [Kindle](#).

Dr Elizabeth Reid Boyd

Co-author of ***Body Talk: A Power Guide for Girls***



## *Body Talk Workshop Series*

Workshop One: Tabula Rasa & Getting into Character

Workshop Two: I Wish I'd Said

Workshop Three: Normal?

Workshop Four: Telling it Differently

Workshop Five: Culture Jamming

Workshop Six: We Need Your Voice!

Alternative Workshop Exercise: Friendship Bonds

Alternative Workshop Exercise: The Body Police



**The material for this series is based on *Body Talk: A Power Guide for Girls* by Elizabeth Reid Boyd (pictured) and Abigail Bray**



**Body Talk Workshops have been run in schools and in after school groups.**



**It works for both genders.**

## Workshop One: Tabula Rasa & Getting into Character

- **1. Tabula Rasa**

*When you were born you were a tabula rasa, which means a blank slate or a clean page. You were innocent. You didn't know anything. Over time you were told many things about the world and the people around you, and about yourself. You were told how you fitted in to the world, you were told who you are, who you are not, and who you are meant to be. Gradually, the blank page of your body-self started to become covered in writing. This writing has created your body image.*

*If you feel the body-image that has been written onto your body isn't really who you are, then it's time for a rewrite. You can rewrite who you are and the rules about who you are not and who you want to be. You can change your body-image and the stories that make up who you are with a bit of courage and creativity and a **Tabula Rasa**.*

*Body Talk: pg 5*

This was an introductory session. Using a 'Tabula Rasa' a writing notebook or exercise book, (that the workshop participants were provided with) this workshop aimed to "change the way you have been written on". "Think of the Tabula Rasa as a long letter to your body, a private history of all the things that matter to you. It will be a diary, a journal, an adventure, a body plan, a creative space" to experiment with different ways of being and writing. It forms an introduction to writing from the body and autobiographical writing as a creative starting point."

This introductory session was about releasing a sense of empowering creativity. It introduced them to various techniques to unlock their 'Voice' i.e. brainstorming, stream of consciousness writing, automatic writing, and the rewards of journalling.

**Getting into Character** was another exercise in this session. This exercise was designed to help create characters and character descriptions – starting with self.

## Workshop Two: I Wish I'd Said

*Have you ever walked away from a put-down or being teased and said to yourself 'I wish I'd said...?' You're not alone. But it's time to start putting those day dreams to good use because figuring out what you might say the next time is one of your lines of defence against the Body Police. You have to learn some new lines and how to deliver them with style and power.*

*So you've been in a bit of a spat, someone has shown you the hand (or the finger), someone has walked away from you instead of towards you, someone has made a loud, obnoxious comment about the way you look or something you've said or done.*

*But you said nothing back! Or perhaps you said something a bit lame. You were burning up inside as you walked away and thought to yourself Why didn't I...???! , I should have...!!!!, I wish I had said ....!*

*There is still something you can do. **Rehearse.***  
*Body Talk: pg 22*

This workshop focused on dialogue. By using real life examples, participants used things someone has said and then wrote down a reply that gave them back their confidence. In the workshops, this exercise formed the basis of a scene or dialogue.

This workshop was extremely effective at primary school level. *I Wish I'd Said* is a version of the empty chair technique, as well as re-storying of experiences. It doesn't offer an opportunity to rewind or replay, but it does show a way forward to reframe, rehearse and re-imagine. The imaginary language of wishes "is language that does not contain, it carries, it does not hold back, it makes possible" (Cixous, in Tong, 1998:201). The reading of these stories in class was also powerful to observe – in itself a re-storying.

## Workshop Three: Normal?

*The Body Police are everywhere. They stare, they make comments about your body, as though it is their business, as though what you wear, how much you weight, how tall you are, what sort of hair you have are all open to discission ... they think everyone should look 'normal'.  
Body Talk: pg 3*

What is 'normal'? When? Says who? This workshop used the idea of the Body Police and being 'normal' to explore the idea of fitting in, and not fitting in, in a creative way. It also looked at conflict and tension as an important part of creative writing. We explored how our imaginations are stifled by stereotypes about gender, race and body size.

Participants wrote a short story about your experiences of being 'normal' or not normal, being in a group, or being an outsider, or trying to fit in. Many of these formed the basis for publication.

## Workshop Four: Telling it Differently

### *Tell it*

*Tell your story.... Tell your story as:*

- *graffiti*
- *as a song*
- *as a poem*
- *as a play*
- *as a letter to the Prime Minister*
- *as a letter to your favourite celebrity*
- *as a gossip column*
- *as a letter to Dolly*
- *as a website*
- *as a newspaper article*
- *as a rescue tale*
- *as fairy tale*
- *as a horror story*

(from Body Talk pg136)

### *Different Ways of Telling...*

*Tell It* is used towards a great understanding of context and location - that in another time or place experiences may be different, that there is potential for activism, for making change. Participants are encouraged to experiment with genre and endings, in their imaginary and real life stories: “There are so many different ways we can tell a story. Think about your story. Can you tell it another way? What would be the same? What would be different? What would you need to change? Take one of your stories and try telling it differently. Try a different genre. Try a twist. What happens?”

## Workshop Five: Culture Jamming

*Culture jamming is when people get hold of images and messages in the mass media and jam them, stop them in their tracks and turn those messages and images around. Culture jamming is about thinking of the mass media as an unfinished canvas.*

*Body Talk: pg 192*

The mass media and culture jamming are the basis of this interactive collaborative workshop where participants will use various medium to develop their own.

The participants were encouraged to cut and paste adverts, subvert logos, and brands. One of the purposes of this session was to guide participants towards writing their own 'manifesto', or a letter to the world, asking for positive change. This means thinking outside the self about larger groups, about bodies in general.

## Workshop Six: We Need Your Voice!

### We Need Your Voice: Preparing for Publication

*Use your Tabula Rasa to write your very own joy manifesto, a plan of action, a spirited and soulful vision of how to maximise your joy. Make a stand for a more joyful world. Reach out to others and share your vision for a better world. Start a joy revolution right now. We all need your voice. [...] Go change the world!*

p. 209 Body Talk

In this session, participants worked with material from the previous sessions to prepare for a joint group publication. In one writing group, they produced their own publication “Body Talking”.



## *About the author*

My name is Elizabeth Reid Boyd. I'm an author and academic.

I write fiction as Eliza Redgold. It's the Gaelic meaning of my full name. My historical fiction '[Ladies of Legend](#)' series starts with *NAKED: A Novel of Lady Godiva* (St Martin's Press). Please feel free to visit my website at [www.elizaredgold.com](http://www.elizaredgold.com)

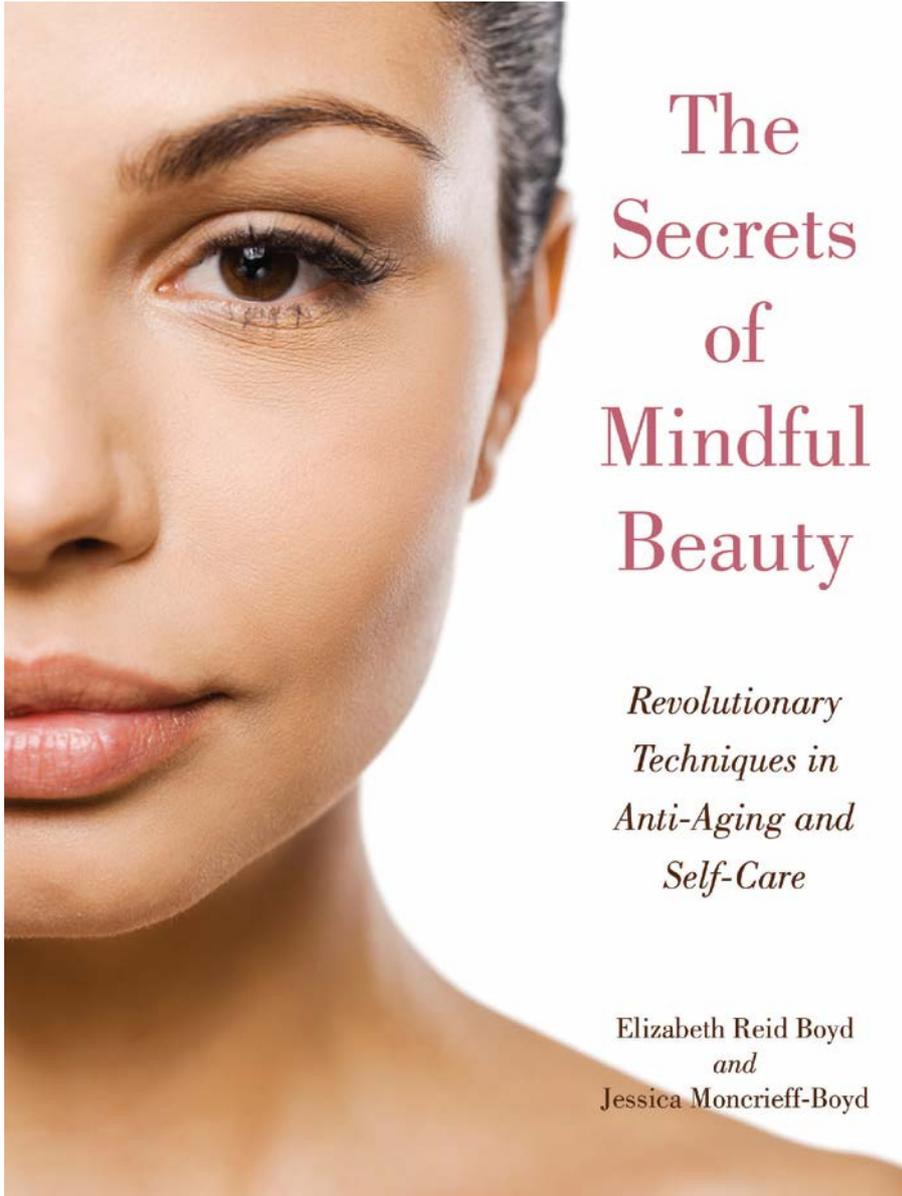
You can access my academic papers and books at <https://edithcowan.academia.edu/ElizabethReidBoyd>

Out soon is some exciting non-fiction (writing as Elizabeth Reid Boyd) including the forthcoming [The Secrets of Mindful Beauty](#) to be published by Skyhorse Publishing, New York. Also coming soon is a non-fiction book about the spirit of fairy tales and how you can transform your life with a forgotten fairy tale philosophy.

Best wishes,

*Elizabeth Reid Boyd/Eliza Redgold*





# The Secrets of Mindful Beauty

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Anti-Aging and  
Self-Care*

Elizabeth Reid Boyd  
*and*  
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