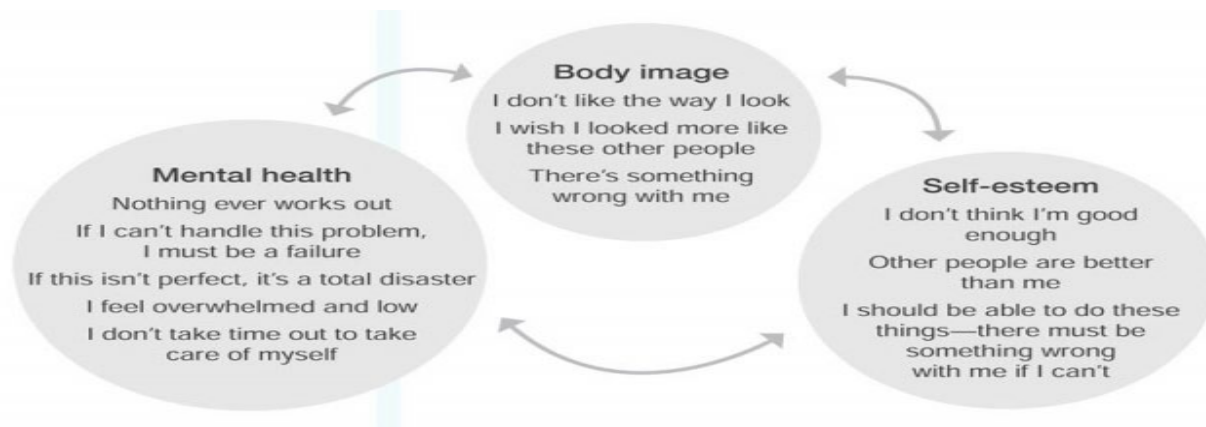


Body Image Issues

What is Body Image?

Body image refers to how an individual views and feels about their body often in terms of attractiveness, weight, and shape. Although body image is a concept that individuals become more aware of overtime, especially during adolescence, children as early as the age of three can begin having concerns regarding their body. Positive body image is when an individual feels comfortable and confident in their body. With that being said, you do not need to love every part of your body to experience body positivity. Acceptance and appreciation play a large role in how you feel about your body and whether you have difficulty with your body image or not. Poor body image is when an individual is not satisfied with their body or views their body in a negative way. Experiencing poor body image can lead to many different issues that can have an overall impact on how an individual feels about themselves. Self-esteem, confidence, mental health and physical health, thoughts, and mood can all be impacted by body image. Poor body image can often lead to changes in lifestyle or unhealthy habits such as restrictive or excessive eating, frequently checking weight, and developing harmful relationships with or attitudes towards food or exercise.

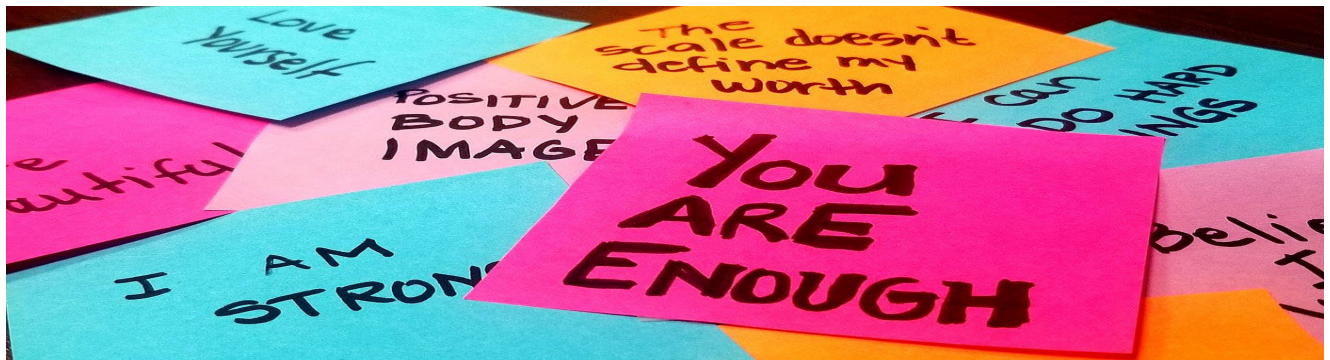


What Influences Body Image?

Body image can be broken down into four parts; how you see your body, how you feel about your body, what you think about your body, and how you behave as a result of your body image. Body image can be influenced by many different factors, some internal and some external. Factors such as self-esteem, personality, social media, bullying, peer interactions, and pressure or expectations from society can all play a role in how you view yourself and your body. Whether your experiences with these factors is positive or negative, these factors have an impact on your perspective and ultimately your body image.

How to Improve Body Image:

- **Become aware of negative self-talk and criticism:** Recognize when you are thinking negatively about yourself and replace your negative thoughts with positive thoughts.
 - We often compliment others and talk nicely about the people we love, but not about ourselves! At the end of the day, give yourself one compliment of something you did well or something you noticed that you liked about yourself that day.
 - Avoid “should” and “must” statements. These can put unreasonable demands on yourself.
 - Avoid comparing yourself to others either in your life or in the media. Comparison is often the thief of joy.
- **Daily affirmations:** Each day practice using positive statements to remind yourself of the amazing qualities you have in order to help build up your confidence.
 - These affirmations can be stated out loud, written down in a journal, posted on sticky notes and placed on a mirror, or thought about (“I am beautiful just the way I am”, “I value myself”, “I deserve to be happy”, “I appreciate who I am”, etc.).



- **Recognize that your value is not based on only your physical appearance:** Identify the strengths and qualities that you have that are not based on how you look.
 - Do this by asking yourself questions such as “What am I good at?”, “What makes me unique?”, “What challenges have I overcome?”, “How do I help others?”, etc. These questions can help identify the character traits that we hold that we do not usually recognize (Character traits such as kindness, athletic, talented, brave, generous, artistic, etc.).
 - Write a love letter to yourself or keep a self-esteem or self-love journal.
- **Focus on the importance of your body:** Your body is constantly at work whether you are running, learning, sleeping, or relaxing.
 - Remind yourself all of the things that your body does each day to keep you moving.
 - Work towards appreciating and respecting your body for all of the amazing things that it does each day!

Recommended Readings:

- “The Ultimate Self-esteem Workbook for Teens” By Megan MacCutheon
- “Just As You Are: A Teen’s Guide to Self-Acceptance and Lasting Self-esteem” By Michelle Skeen PsyD and Kelly Skeen
- “The Self Love Workbook for Teens” By Shainna Ali
- “The Body Positive Journal” By Virgie Tovar and Lucila Perini
- “Body Talk: How to Embrace Your Body and Start Living Your Best Life” By Katie Sturino
- “More Than A Body: Your Body Is an Instrument, Not an Ornament” By Lindsay Kite and Lexi Kite

Recommended Websites:

- <https://nedc.com.au/eating-disorders/eating-disorders-explained/body-image/>
- <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/body-image-0>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/body-image.html>

Recommended Apps:

- Build Confidence: Free on iPhone devices and \$2.49 on Android devices
- ThinkUp: Free and compatible with iPhone and Android devices
- Good Blocks: Free and compatible with iPhone and Android devices

References:

- Adapted from: National Eating Disorder Collaboration (n.d.)
- Adapted from: Choosing Therapy (2023)
- Adapted from: National Eating Disorder Association (n.d.)
- Adapted from: Kidshealth (2018)