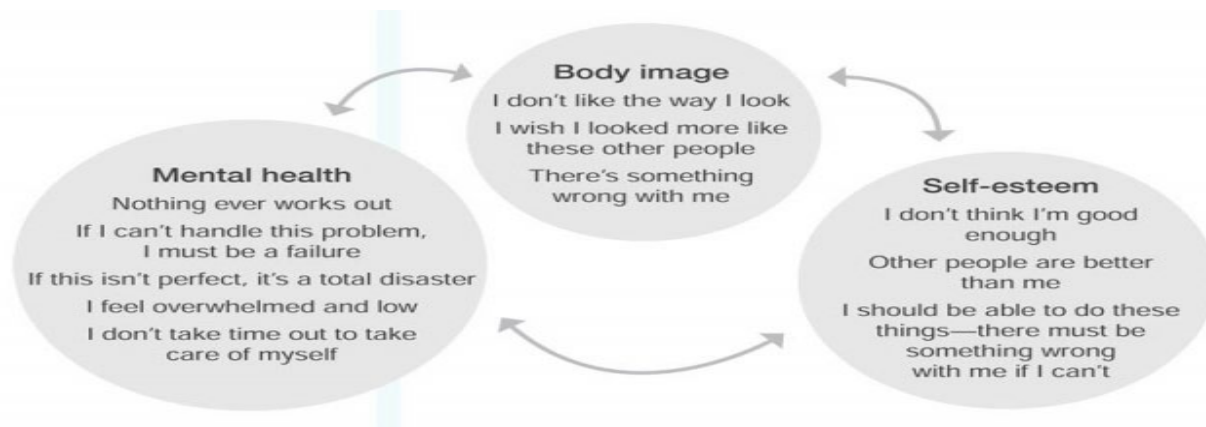


Body Image Issues

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, your child does not need to love every part of their body to experience body positivity. Acceptance and appreciation play a large role in how they may feel about their body and whether they have difficulty with their 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.

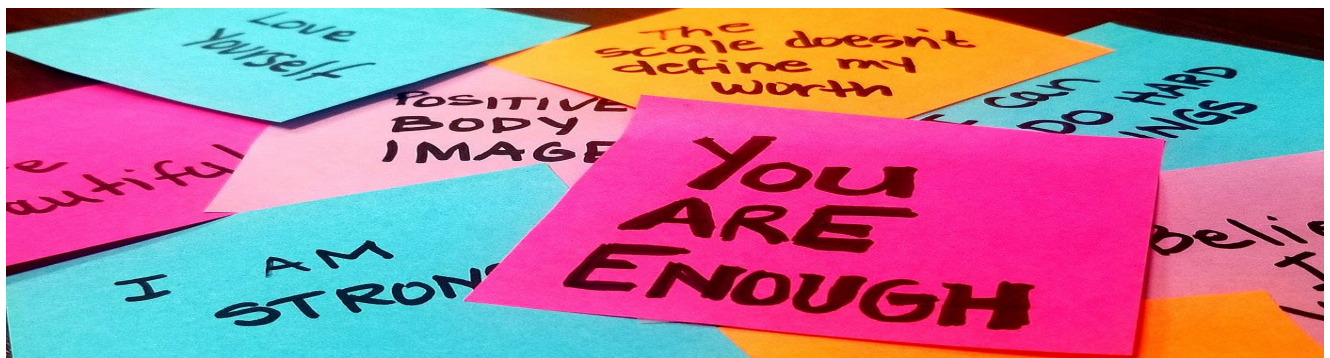


What Influences Body Image?

Body image can be broken down into four parts; how your child sees their body, how they feel about their body, what they think about their body, and how they behave as a result of their 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 your child views themselves and their body. Whether they experience with these factors is positive or negative, these factors have an impact on their perspective and ultimately their body image.

How to Help Your Child:

- **Listen to your child and acknowledge your child's feelings:** Providing your child with a safe space to express their emotions and their thoughts will help your child feel heard and understood.
 - Avoid dismissing your child's feeling or telling them that they should not feel the way that they do.
- **Become aware of negative self-talk and criticism:** Help your child recognize when they are thinking negatively about themselves and help them replace their 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 each day, give your child a compliment and then ask your child to give themselves one compliment of something they did well or something they noticed that they liked about themselves that day.
 - Help your child avoid "should" and "must" statements. These can put unreasonable demands on yourself. Replace "should" and "must" statements with more encouraging statements (Turn "I should lose weight" into "I am not comfortable with my body right now, but I am working on taking care of my body and loving my body the way that it is").
 - Help your child avoid comparing themselves to others either in their life or in the media. Comparison is often the thief of joy.
- **Daily affirmations:** Each day help your child practice using positive statements to remind themselves of the amazing qualities they have in order to help build up their confidence and self-esteem.
 - 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:** You're your child identify the strengths and qualities that they have that are not based on how they look.

- Do this by asking your child questions such as “What are you good at?”, “What makes you unique?”, “What challenges have you overcome?”, “How do you 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.).
- Suggest that your child writes a love letter to themselves or keep a self-esteem or self-love journal.
- **Focus on the importance of the body:** Your child’s body is constantly at work whether they are running, learning, sleeping, or relaxing.
 - Remind your child of all of the things that their body does each day to keep them moving.
 - Help your child work towards appreciating and respecting their body for all of the amazing things that it does each day!
- **Model Body Positivity:** Children are like sponges! Children will often mimic or learn from their parents’ behavior. Avoid speaking negatively about yourself in front of your children. Instead, try to express appreciation and acceptance for your body and speak positively about yourself to model self-love and body positivity.



Recommended Readings for Adolescents:

- “The Ultimate Self-esteem Workbook for Teens” By Megan MacCutcheon
- “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 Reading for Children:

- “The Second Life of Abigail Walker” By Frances O’Roark Dowell
- “Bodies Are Cool” By Tyler Feder
- “Beautifully Me” By Nabela Noor
- “Brontorina” By James Howe
- “Her Body Can” By Katie Crenshaw and Ady Meschke

Recommended Readings for Parents:

- “The Secret Lives of Teen Girls: What Your Mother Wouldn’t Talk About but Your Daughter Needs to Know” By Evelyn Resh
- “Good Girls Don’t Get Fat: How Weight Obsession Is Messing Up Our Girls and How We Can Help Them Thrive Despite It” By Robyn J.A. Silverman
- “The Body Image Survival Guide for Parents: Helping Toddlers, Tweens, and Teens Thrive” By Marci Warhaft-Nadler
- “Raising Body Positive Teens: A Parent’s Guide to Diet-free Living, Exercise, and Body Image” By Signe Darpinian, Wendy Sterling, and Shelley Aggarwal

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)
- Adapted from: University of Michigan: Michigan Medicine (2022)
- Adapted from: Mental Health America (n.d.)
- Adapted from: Western Oregon University (n.d.)