

What Parents Can Do to Promote Positive Body Image in Children

These are concrete actions parents can take to help foster positive body image

- Show zero tolerance for body and weight-based teasing in your home.
- Instead, emphasize the complex beauty and natural diversity of body shapes, types, and sizes.
- Can learn to accept, affirm, and love their own bodies. Show appreciation for your body strength, dependability, and health.
- Noticing, but your child's body not for its decorative attributes but for the bodies functionality in power, such as its strength, coordination, flexibility, endurance, and energy.
- Think of yourself and your actions as teaching about body image. Model respect and self care of your body by eating nutritious food and minimal junk food, getting enough sleep, getting regular check ups, and exercising.
- Treat exercise and sports is something we do for enjoyment, increase energy, and strength, not to stay standing or lose weight. Remember that pleasure is always more compelling than punishment in the long run.
- Expanded definition of beauty to include an array of features, qualities, shapes, sizes, skin tones, and textures. Comment on natural beauty and inner beauty that you notice in others rather than superficial gloss.
- Value and reinforce enduring qualities of character, such as honesty, patience, tolerance, moral courage, loyalty, and effort toward meaningful goals, particularly over appearance in superficial attributes.
- Recognize that children grow unevenly in height and weight. Don't be alarmed if they may have periods of plumpness as they grow.
- If you are concerned about your child's weight, focus on increasing your activity level as a family and offering healthy food choices at home rather than dieting or nagging. If concerns about weight progress, talk to the paediatrician.
- Regular family time, such as meals, recreation, and hobbies that build skills, self-confidence, and knowledge together.
- High self-esteem is protective against poor body image, and is a by-product of competence. Encourage your child to developing an area of expertise or skill that is somewhat unique among their peers, and give your child age appropriate responsibilities and chores that contribute to the common good of the household.

Hope's Eating Disorders Support

Phone: 519.434.7721

Email: info@hopeseds.org

- Critique and discuss commercials, movies, and other media for messages that justify, demean, and sexualize women and men in ways that restrict their full expression as human beings.
- Engage and advocacy for positive social change, particularly around oppressive, disrespectful, or sexist representations of groups in the media, modelling the ability to be an active agent in the larger community.
- Model and teach acceptance and appropriate expression of anger and conflict, and how to channel anger into specific requests and constructive action.

Encourage Self-esteem

A strong sense of identity and self worth is important to help children cope with life pressures. You can:

- Help children to develop effective coping strategies.
- Encourage children to express their needs and wants, to make decisions (and cope with the consequences) and to pursue things they are good at.
- Allow children to say 'no'. Encourage them to be assertive if they feel they have been mistreated.
- Help children develop a critical awareness of the images and messages they receive from television and magazines.

Foster a Healthy Relationship with Food

You can't encourage children to develop a healthy relationship with food if you:

- Not to label foods as “good” or “bad” - this sets up cravings and feelings of guilt when the “bad” foods are eaten.
- Avoid using foods as bribes or punishments.
- Except the children are likely to have different eating habits from adults - for instance, they may require more food more frequently during the day or may go through periods of liking or disliking particular foods.
- Do not crash diet and do not try to put your child on a crash diet
- Allow your child to eat when they're hungry and stop when they're full. Do not force your child to eat anything on their plate.

Hope's Eating Disorders Support

Phone: 519.434.7721

Email: info@hopeseds.org

Be a Good Role Model

The most influential role model in your child's life is you. Parents can encourage their children to feel good about themselves by showing them how it is done.

Except your own body size and shape. Don't complain about "ugly" body parts or, at least, don't share your opinions with your child.

Except other peoples body sizes and shapes. Don't put a lot of emphasis on physical appearances or your child will too. Instead, try talk to your child about all the different aspects that make up a person, such as personality, skills and outlook on life.

Be critical of media messages and images that promote fitness. Encourage your child to question and challenge Western societies narrow 'Beauty ideal'.

Retrieved from Bulimia Anorexia Nervosa Association.

Hope's Eating Disorders Support
Phone: 519.434.7721
Email: info@hopeseds.org