

Fostering Positive Body Image in Children

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What does it mean to have a positive body image?

to accept, enjoy and take care of your body

Tips for Parents

- Make your home a haven, free from negative comments about appearance or weight.
- Work on your own body image and avoid diet-talk & body complaints around children.
- From an early age encourage your children to listen to and trust their body signals, such as hunger and fullness signals, which tell us when and how much to eat, or tiredness signalling our need to rest and recharge.
- Encourage children to enjoy what their bodies can *do*, more so than what they look like.

- Make enjoyable physical activity and relaxed healthy eating, a family priority
- Focus on children's uniqueness, strengths and attributes that are unrelated to looks.
- Examine your own prejudices about weight and appearance, then help your child challenge prejudice and stereotypes too.
- Reassure your child that the physical changes that occur at puberty (esp weight gain for girls) are normal and everyone develops at their own rate.
- Limit the amount and type of media your child watches, uses or reads. Talk to your child to help him/her develop a critical awareness of the images & messages that we receive every day.
- Point out examples of successful men and women who don't fit the ideal image. This helps to diversify our notions of what it means to be 'masculine' or 'feminine'.
- Discuss body image issues when they arise. Listen to your child's concerns and always affirm your child's body & his/her uniqueness & individuality.
- Pick up on your child's self-defeating thinking (eg perfectionism or self-comparisons) and question it.
- Encourage your children to look after their bodies whatever their size or shape. Our body is the only vehicle we have for expressing ourselves in this life, so it only makes sense to care for it.
- Work with other parents, teachers & the whole school community to combat teasing about weight & shape.

Interested in having Thea come and speak at your school? Get in touch.

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