

TIPS TO SUPPORT *body confidence in children & teens*



As a parent/care-giver, you are in a unique position to have a positive and significant impact on your child's relationship with eating, exercise and their body as they develop!

Body image is the way a person, thinks and feels in relation to their body and appearance. These thoughts and feelings then drive the behaviours a person engages in. Helping your child/teen develop a healthy body image is important as it can strengthen their relationship with eating and exercise and reduce their risk of developing serious body image issues, disordered eating and eating disorders.

BE THE CHANGE – BE WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO SEE THROUGH POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING:

Being a positive role model doesn't mean you have to have it all worked out. However it is important that you are committed to demonstrating a positive and balanced approach to eating, exercise and your body and appearance so your child can 'see' what a healthy body image looks like. This helps combat some of the unhelpful messages that they are exposed to in their wider environment.

Self-reflect on your own relationship with your body.

Your appearance does not determine your worth. The way you feel about your body is a reflection of many individual and environmental factors; experiences, people in your life, societal appearance standards. How you talk to and about your body (and other people's), how strongly you value appearance, weight, shape and size and the behaviours you engage in all can be 'seen'. Striving to heal the way you feel or being more accepting, comfortable and neutral in your body can show your child what a positive and healthy body image looks like. It's also never too late to seek support if you need it.

Avoid engaging in restrictive dieting or quick fix 'health' solutions.

Restrictive eating, diets, short-term, health, fitness and wellness plans do not have long-term, positive impacts on health and wellbeing. When weight/shape is the motivator, these behaviours also increase the risk of disordered eating behaviours. By focusing on health outcomes and health behaviours this will ensure that a balanced, more mindful and positive approach to eating and exercise is adopted. Healthy and fit bodies can look a variety of ways!

Be aware of language and aim to reduce appearance based and toxic body talk

Appearance based talk is language and dialogue that discusses body shape, weight and appearance. It may be diet talk, anti-aging talk, 'fat' talk, 'muscle' talk and is mostly negative. It is unhelpful as this dialogue reaffirms appearance and body ideals. Therefore strive to be mindful of your language and use positive, neutral words and dialogue to describe or discuss bodies that are balanced, non-shaming or judgmental and does not attach moral value (i.e. food is not good or bad) to support a healthy body image.

Have fun with your appearance but don't let it rule your life.

It's ok to take pride in your appearance and have fun with the way that you look through fashion and styling (if that's what interests you), but obsessing and worrying about how you look can become all consuming and is not healthy for mental health. Remember, you are more than your appearance, you are not an object to be admired and that the important and most valuable 'stuff' is on the inside. Children are more than their appearance - their weight, shape, muscularity does not determine their worth, lovability or successful life.

Talk to your child/teen about body image (in an age appropriate way).

The way a person feels in their body will change - day to day and over the course of their life. Talking openly about feelings about bodies as they change and develop is important. Ensuring you pitch it in an appropriate for your child's age and stage of development is key. Acknowledge the feelings your child may express, listen and try not to dismiss them. It may be about their body (weight/shape/muscularity), it may be about something else. Keeping the lines of communications open and allowing them to share openly the feelings they may be experiencing can help them work through them in a positive way.

Seek support early if concerned.

Despite best parenting efforts serious body image issues and eating disorders do develop. There are a range of warning signs to look out for and overleaf a number of helpful early intervention websites. Early intervention can reduce the severity, duration of illness and also make a full recovery more likely. You know your child best, if concerned trust your instinct and seek support.

BUTTERFLY NATIONAL HELPLINE
Free and confidential support and referrals
8am-midnight, 7 days a week.
1800 ED HOPE – 1800 33 46 76

📞 phone 💬 chat ✉️ email

www.butterflynationalhelpline.org.au



FURTHER RESOURCES

& reading



This page contains a variety of evidence-based websites and resources to provide further information on topics included in *Body Confident Children and Teens* parent seminars.

INFORMATION ON BODY IMAGE AND EATING DISORDERS AND EARLY INTERVENTION WEBSITES

- Butterfly Foundation website – Factsheets & Helpline www.butterfly.org.au
- National Eating Disorder Collaboration www.nedc.com.au
- How Far Is Too Far (early intervention website) www.howfaristoo far.org.au
- Feed Your Instinct (early intervention website) www.feedyourinstinct.com.au
- Reach out and Recover (ROAR – early intervention website) www.reachoutandrecover.com.au

HEALTH NOT WEIGHT

- ASADH – Association for Size Diversity and Health www.sizediversityandhealth.org
- HAES Australia – Health At Every Size www.haesaustralia.org.au
- Health Not Diets www.healthnotdiets.com
- If Not Dieting (for non-diet resources) www.ifnotdieting.com.au
- Body Positive Australia www.bodypositiveaustralia.com.au

SOCIAL MEDIA

- e-Safety Commission (Australian Government site) www.esafety.gov.au/parents
- A Parents Guide to Instagram (Instagram) help.instagram.com
- Instagram Wellbeing about.instagram.com/community
- Instagram Parent Guides - developed in collaboration with Butterfly <https://butterfly.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Instagram-Parents-Guide.pdf>

Suggested Instagram accounts @thebutterflyfoundation (and check out who Butterfly are following):

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| @nedc_Australia | @i_weigh | @moderationmovement |
| @bodyconfidentmums | @themindfuldietician | @bodyimagemovement |
| @iamjesssanders | @bodyposipanda | @headspace_au |
| @beyondblueofficial | @reachout_au | @projectrocket |

POSITIVE BODY IMAGE PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

- Confident Body Confident Child (CBCC) – parents of 2-6yo www.cbcc.com.au
- RESET: a conversation about boy's body image www.butterfly.org.au/reset
- Dove Self Esteem Project (DSEP) – Uniquely Me www.dove.com.au/dove-self-esteem-project
- Love Your Body Week for Families <https://butterfly.org.au/love-your-body-week>

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS (other resources can be found at the Butterfly Shop!)

- Full Mouse Empty Mouse – A tale about food and feelings by *Dina Zechausen*
- Shapesville by *Any Mills and Becky Osborne*
- Your Body is Awesome by *Sigrun Danielsdottir*
- Embrace Kids by *Taryn Brunfitt*
- Me Time: The Self Care Guide to Being Your Best Friend by *Jessica Sanders*
- Love Your Body by *Jessica Sanders*
- Be Your Own Man by *Jessica Sanders*
- Good Selfie: Tips and Tools for Teens to Nail Life by *Turia Pitt*

DO YOU HAVE OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS?

If you, or your child/teen, have found other websites, pages, books or resources on-message, helpful or supportive, we'd love to hear what they are!

Please contact the Butterfly Prevention Services team:
education@butterfly.org.au

Concerned about your child/teen? We're here to help!



1800 33 4673

WWW.BUTTERFLY.ORG.AU

Free and Confidential
8am-Midnight AEST
7 days a week