RAISING A BODY CONFIDENT CHILD
INFORMATION AND TIPS FOR PARENTS

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The Butterfly Foundation
BUTTERFLY

Is Australia’s largest charity that supports people suffering from eating disorders & negative body image

- Support Services
- Education Services
- Advocacy and Awareness
- Fundraising

www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au
Body Image...

Is the perception that someone has of their physical self and the thoughts and FEELINGS they experience as a result of this perception.
SOME STATISTICS

- 1 in 2 (50%) of Australian teenage girls have dieted; and more than half are unhappy with their bodies
- An estimated 3% of adolescent boys use muscle enhancing drugs to help achieve their ‘ideal’ body
- An Australian study found that over 75% of girls aged 14-16 years wanted to weigh less. 63% of them believed they were overweight - with only 16% actually being overweight for their height.
- Similarly, 70-76% of Australian high school aged girls consistently express the desire for a thinner body

A NOTE ABOUT PUBERTY

• Talk to your child first about puberty
• Puberty can start as early as 8-9 so have a conversation about physical and emotional changes around 8.
• There are resources available online to help you in knowing how to handle what can sometimes be a ‘tricky’ conversation.
• Weight gain and shape change is a natural part of puberty
• Just like they did as a baby. When a child goes through a growth spurt, like puberty, they will get hungry!
• Puberty is not a time to put your child on a diet
• If you are concerned about their weight gain, seeking professional advice is recommended.
THE REALITY OF THE ISSUE

HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR
- Normal Eating
  - Responding to hunger and satiety cues
  - No ‘good’ or ‘bad’ foods
  - Mostly positive feelings about body shape/size
  - Regular moderate exercise

UNHEALTHY BEHAVIOUR
- Dieting
  - Limiting amount and type of food consumed for a period of time
  - Preoccupation with body shape/size and eating
  - Don’t like the way parts of their body looks or consistently feels like losing a few kilos
  - Frequent thinking about food, eating and body
  - Sometimes feel guilty or bad for what you have eaten and may ‘make up for it’ with exercise and/or restriction
  - Occasional binge eating

POSITIVE BODY ESTEEM
- Increased Body Dissatisfaction

DISORDERED EATING
- Frequent Unhealthy Eating Behaviours
  - Frequent food restriction, use of unhealthy weight loss behaviours and binge eating
  - High Level of Body Dissatisfaction

MENTAL & PHYSICAL ILLNESS
- Sub Clinical Eating Disorder
  - Some symptoms of an eating disorder but not all
  - Severe Body Dissatisfaction

CLINICAL EATING DISORDER
- Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (EDNOS), Binge Eating Disorder

Butterfly
Foundation for Eating Disorders
A FEW MORE STATISTICS

• Disordered eating is the highest predictor of the development of eating disorders (1)
• Even without an ‘eating disorder’ diagnosis, Disordered Eating is associated with physical, mental & social issues (1)
• A person with disordered eating issues has a 20% chance of developing an eating disorder (1)
• Eating disorders have increased threefold in the last 50 years (2)
• Approx 10% of the population is afflicted with an eating disorder (2)
• 90% of the cases of eating disorders are young women and adolescent girls (2)

(1) Commonwealth Dept, Health & Aging (2010) - NEDC
(2) Eating Disorders Victoria
WHAT ABOUT MALES?

• Limited research and programs for males
• Males are engaging in dangerous dieting and exercise practices
• Popular culture a very real impact such as music videos
• Male grooming is now booming
• More males are undergoing cosmetic surgery
• Areas of focus – height, muscle, overall size, body fat, hair, complexion
EATING DISORDERS (ED’s)

• ED’s are mental and physical illnesses and are not a lifestyle ‘choice’

• They are not just about food or weight – but rather develop as a means to cope with intense negative.

• There are 4 types of ED’s – Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified and Binge Eating Disorder

• All are serious require professional treatment

• They are complex and develop due to many different reasons (biological, psychological and environmental)

• They affect males and females, of all ages, cultures and backgrounds
EDATNG DISORDERS (ED’s)

Despite your best efforts, ED’s can and do still develop

Please note that it is not your fault!

Professional support and advice to help you and your child is available.

Intervening early can help to reduce the severity and duration of the illness and make a full recovery more likely.
A NOTE ABOUT OBESITY

Obesity is not an Eating Disorder. It is a label for weight that is greater than what is considered healthy for a given height.
OBESITY

• Hysteria about obesity can cause eating related problems.
• Emphasis on weight is resulting in an increase in dieting.
• Dieting causes people to gain weight over time.
• Dieting is a major predicator in the development of ED’s.
• Media portrays overweight in a stereotypical way.
• Stigma is attached to being overweight – lazy, unlovable, unhappy, unsuccessful or out of control.
• Messaging requires a shift in focus:  
  - from weight or shape to health.  
  - from negative motivators (fear) to positive ones
THERE ARE MANY INDIVIDUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES THAT CAN IMPACT A PERSONS BODY SATISFACTION.
INFLUENCES ON BODY IMAGE

INDIVIDUAL

• Self Esteem

• Personality Traits

• Internalisation of appearance and beauty ideals

• Body Comparison Tendencies
INFLUENCES ON BODY IMAGE

ENVIRONMENTAL

• Family
• Peers & Friends, Boyfriends & Girlfriends
• Teachers /Youth Mentors
• Coaches/Dance Teachers
• Social Networking Sites
• Media/Popular Culture
MEDIA

What’s the secret of my success?
It’s Adobe Photoshop Day Cream

Adobe Photoshop Day Cream,
Reduces miraculously wrinkles and
all skin imperfections. To always
look young and glamorous.
TODAY’S WORLD IS VERY DIFFERENT TO THE ONE WE GREW UP IN.
UNDERSTANDING THEIR WORLD

A little bit of research can go a long way

• Who are their friends? What are they doing, wearing, what are their interests!
• What shows are they watching?
• Which celebrities (movie/music) are ‘IT’
• Which music videos are popular?
• What video games are they playing?
• Who are the sporting stars they admire?
RATHER THAN TEACH THEM WHAT POSITIVE BODY IMAGE IS... LET’S SHOW THEM!
YOUR BODY IMAGE

• Understand your own body image blueprint
• Respect your body’s history
• Change your tune
• Seek support... If necessary
• Everyone deserves to feel comfortable and confident in their own skin.
BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL

Is about doing simple, positive things:

• Avoid making negative comments about your body or appearance (photos too) in front of your child.

• Speak kindly about all body shapes – celebrate diversity

• Focus on what your body can DO

• Avoid fad diets, diet foods & excessive exercise regimes

• Use positive words to describe food and exercise

• Demonstrate self pride over self obsession

• Disengage from ‘Fat Talk’...
WHAT IS ‘FAT TALK’?

“Do I look fat in this’?

‘I feel so FAT’

‘You look great, have you lost weight?’

Language and dialogue that reaffirms the thin and beauty ideals is FAT TALK!
A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE HOME

• Be mindful of language – work to reduce the use of negative words such as ‘fat’ ‘skinny’
• Be mindful of the labels on food packaging – diet foods or ‘no fat’ can send a strong message to a child
• Don’t tolerate weight or appearance based teasing
• Be mindful of the language used when watching television shows or at meal times
• Place scales (if you must have them) away from view to discourage a child/teen from weighing themselves – especially during puberty
Your beauty and worth cannot be measured.
ESTABLISHING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD & EXERCISE

• Use language such as ‘Everyday’ & ‘Sometimes’ foods - avoid ‘good’ or ‘bad’
• Encourage BALANCE, MINDFULNESS & AWARENESS around food and eating
• Help them understand the difference between eating when hungry and emotional eating (tired, boredom, stressed).
• Encourage them to listen to their tummy. Are they hungry, full or satisfied?
• Encourage exercise and activity for fun and health instead of weight loss or weight management.
BODY IMAGE BOOSTERS

• Spend minimal time in front of mirrors
• Picking the right ‘day’ to shop
• Avoid media – particularly music videos
• Encourage them to appreciate beauty in others rather than make body comparisons
• Help them avoid being too tired, stressed or hungry
• Reduce body bullying or toxic self talk
• Nurture their body with balanced eating and activity
• Help them to find positive ‘outlets’...
BODY IMAGE BOOSTERS

- Encourage them to talk about their feelings
- Engage in gentle (not rigorous or punishing) activity
- Do Activities they like and are good at
- Journal Writing
- Music - Listening to or playing an instrument
- Art – draw, paint or make something
- Use positive affirmations - encourage them to write something positive and carry it with them to refer to at those moments!
- Wear their favourite colour or item of clothing
- Encourage hygiene and self pride over obsession
NEED SUPPORT?

Schools Support Services
School welfare or wellbeing team or representative

Butterfly Support Line
T: 1800 33 4673 (1800 ED HOPE)
E: support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au
Monday- Friday
8am-9pm