



TIPS AND TRICKS: BODY IMAGE

Body image begins to form during childhood and is influenced by parents, caregivers, peers, society, and life experiences. High self-esteem, a strong identity, experiencing pleasure, and connecting to others is linked to a positive body image. The image of ourselves and our beliefs about how others perceive us constitutes our body image. Self-love, acceptance, self-care, and self-nurturing are necessary for high self-esteem and body-esteem.

TIPS: Warning Signs of Body Image Disturbance

- Unable to accept a compliment
- Mood is affected by how they think/looks
- Constantly compares self to others
- Calls self names such as “fat,” “gross,” “ugly,” “flabby”
- Attempts to create a “perfect” image
- Seeks a lot of reassurance from others about their appearance
- Consistently overestimates the size of their body or body parts
- Believes that if they could attain their goal weight or size, they would accept themselves
- Allows the drive for thinness to supersede much of life’s pleasures or goals
- Equates thinness with beauty, success, perfection, happiness, confidence, and self-control
- Compartmentalizes the body into parts rather than feeling connected to the whole body
- Has an ever-present fear of being fat – even when slim
- Has an overriding sense of shame about their self and body

TRICKS: How to Help

- Base compliments on attributes other than size, weight, or shape
- Minimize “diet” and weight talk
- Never joke about or shame anyone because of their size or weight
- Examine your own attitudes and preferences about weight and size
- Raise your own and others’ consciousness about the cultural bias regarding thinness
- Believe that a person’s body distortion is real for them and respond in an empathetic manner
- Discourage dieting or weight-loss fads, and instead, encourage a wellness lifestyle
- Don’t equate thinness with happiness
- Remember that there is no “ideal” body. Beautiful bodies come in all shapes and sizes.
- Be knowledgeable about professional resources for help, including psychologists who specialize in body image and eating issues.