

How to Raise Kids with a Healthy Body Image

Body image is the mental picture you have of your body. A healthy body image is when you feel comfortable with your body and accept the way you look. An unhealthy body image is when you feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or unhappy with your body. As a parent you can promote a healthy body image in your kids from a young age with these tips.

Be a positive role model

Teach your children to accept and celebrate the natural differences in body shape and size that make us unique.

Set a good example by making positive comments about your own body shape or size.

Focus on your children's unique qualities

Do your kids have special interests? Are they really good at sports, art or music? Encourage them with positive words and offer your children the chance to foster these interests.

Celebrate your family's successes

Celebrate your own accomplishments on a regular basis. For example, when you receive praise for a job well done at work, tell your family how proud you are of your achievement.

When your children come home from school having completed a great project, celebrate that accomplishment!

Talk about media images

Remind your children that many of the images of men and women in magazines and ads are altered by computers.

Talk about unrealistic images in the media including very thin or muscular bodies. Remind your kids that these images are used to sell you products and services.

Visit [MediaSmarts](#) to get information that will help you talk to your kids about media images.

Focus on healthy choices

Be a [positive role model](#) by offering healthy food choices at home and when eating out.

Find ways that you and your children can be [active together](#). Take a walk after dinner, go to the park on weekends or turn on the music and dance together!

Remind your children that healthy eating and regular physical activity can help keep their body and mind feeling good and energized as they grow.

Know when to seek professional help

Speak to your doctor if you think your young child or teen has low self-esteem or a negative body image. These feelings may be signs of a more serious problem such as depression or an eating disorder. Spotting problems early may help prevent more serious problems later on.

Growing up can be hard at times. As a parent, listening to your children and being supportive can go a long way. Remember it is never too early to promote a healthy body image and positive self-esteem. It's a gift that you can give your children for life!

Want more information about a healthy body image?

[When Eating and Weight are Concerns: A Glimpse at Eating Disorders](#)

[Facts about eating disorders](#) from the Canadian Mental Health Association

[Promoting a positive body image](#) from AboutKidsHealth