



Tips for Supporting your Child's Mental Health Through Body Positivity

Lead by Example, Be Body Positive Yourself!

- Your child's self-confidence starts with you, so avoid discussions in front of your children about losing weight or getting rid of the beer belly. Instead, point out what you love about yourself and your body.... Compliment yourself.
- Talk about what your body CAN do and Not what it CAN'T do.
- Choose to talk about yourself with respect and appreciation.
- Avoid expressing any dislike or guilt around certain foods
- Talk about the importance of eating healthy for mind, body and soul.
- Reinforce the importance of eating foods like vegetables and healthy fats.

Encourage Acceptance of Self and Others

- Building self-confidence can be difficult for anybody, but it's especially difficult for young people.
- The social pressure to be thin is one of the many complicated reasons people develop an eating disorder.
- Studies have found that girls as young as 10 years old were more likely to reach harmful weights if a close family member negatively addressed how they look.
- Placing pressure on a child to have the "ideal" body type can lead to low self-esteem, which is linked to depression and developing unhealthy eating habits or eating disorders.
- Teaching your kids about self-acceptance is an important part of building their confidence. Doing this allows them to shift negativity away from themselves, and prepares them to be more comfortable with expressing their feelings
- Let your child pursue their interests, and help them set goals. Offer praise around their abilities
- Make it clear that you love them unconditionally, no matter how they look, or if they didn't win their match or dance competition

Talk to Your Children About “The Perfect Body”

- When talking to children about their well-being, we should cover topics around health and not weight.
- Avoid hurtful language and blaming or shaming.
- Never comment on their appearance, or image. Instead, talk about healthy bodies.
- Help them learn to respect that all body types can be healthy.
- Let them know their appearance will change over time, but explain that size and weight doesn't dictate happiness.
- Deconstruct cultural body norms by explaining to them that “big” doesn't equate to bad health.
- Reinforce that a "perfect body" is one that accomplishes things, and not one that looks a certain way.
- Address what they see on TV and social media.
- Help them to think critically about social media promoting unrealistic beauty standards, or stereotypes around gender.
- Continue these conversations with our children as they approach puberty, and let them know they can come to you with any topic they need to discuss, no matter how hard it is.

Help Children Enjoy Their Bodies and Encourage Physical Activity

- Encourage children to stay active in ways that work for them.
- Inspire them to follow their passions and stay active.
- Join them on walks and bike rides, or throw a ball around outside as a family.
- Make sure to praise them when they make accomplishments, and support them when they challenge themselves.
- Acknowledge that different bodies can achieve different things.
- It's OK for children to have different abilities and body types than their friends

Create Positive Connections with Food

- Building positive relationships with your children around food by making healthy eating a healthy habit
- Make cooking together a family activity
- Avoid banning foods at home like sweets or ice cream, and instead teach your children about healthy portioning
- Encourage balanced and health-friendly meals, and never treat food as a reward.
- Improve how your children see themselves by being mindful about how you treat your own self-image.
- Make compliments about what your children do, rather than how they look
- Be kind to yourself. Promote self-care, encourage exercise, avoid harmful language, eat well and be proud of who you are, and your children will do the same.