



Positive Body Image



Inside:

Influence of Social Media and Websites

What is Negative Body Image?

How can I stay positive?

Activity: List the things you love about yourself!

Activity: Positive Body Image Quiz

Additional Resources



Image courtesy Dove campaign.

What is Positive Body Image?

Positive body image is seeing our bodies (and other people's) in a positive way. Instead of focusing on flaws, you focus on the best things.

For example, if you have small boobs, don't think they're too small or wish for bigger ones! Accept what you have and learn to see the beauty in everything. Every single one of us is unique - there are 7.5 billion people in the world, and no one is like you!

If you have thought negatively about your body for a long time, it's not something that's going to change overnight. There are various techniques that professionals recommend - meditation, eating healthily, exercise. Generally, if you look after your body, you will feel good about it.



*Rainbow of fruits and vegetables.
Image courtesy Shutterstock.*

WARNING:

Reflections in this mirror may be distorted by socially constructed ideas of 'beauty'

Image courtesy of Life Lenses.

Influence of Social Media and Websites

Social media is not the sole contributor to negative body image and (as some people claim) to eating disorders. Social media has a setup that has led to an increase in low self-esteem and other related mindsets. Take, for example, Instagram. Instagram allows users to post images easily, and to view and follow other people. This means that, from your living room or bedroom, you can easily access thousands and thousands of images of women and men with “perfect” bodies who receive positive comments praising their “perfect” appearance. For young teenage girls who are at a particularly sensitive point in their lives, this is an ideal place to start gaining unrealistic aims when it comes to body image.

Psychologists have found evidence linking social media use to body image concerns and dieting. The increase in social media outlets has led young people, especially girls, to link their self-worth to just their appearance and make-up skills, rather than their many other qualities such as kindness, generosity and intelligence.

Moreover, social media sites frequently link teenagers to other, even more, harmful websites. In recent years, there has been an increase in so-called ‘Pro-Ana’ websites. These are sites that support anorexia and frequently include images of young girls who are dangerously skinny. The majority of the content is guidance on how to become even skinnier. Such sites should be avoided as much as possible, and young girls should be educated on both using social media in positive ways and the ways in which social media can foster negative body image.

For more information, read:

- ‘How Social Media is a Toxic Mirror’ <http://time.com/4459153/social-media-body-image/>
- ‘Does social media impact on body image?’ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-29569473>
- ‘Dangers of Pro-Ana Communities’ <https://www.futuresofpalmbeach.com/eating-disorder-treatment/anorexia-treatment/dangers-of-proana/>

need to be
body positive
skinny for
always
summer.

Image courtesy In Good Company.

What is Negative Body Image?

Negative body image, in its simplest definition, is thinking that you look bad when in reality, you don't. Many people do not even realise that they hold a negative image of themselves! Signs of having a negative body image are:

- Constantly comparing yourself to your friends and others
- Obsessively looking into mirrors thinking about how you could "improve" your body
- Envy of other people's bodies
- Considering drastic solutions to "improve" your body - plastic surgery, extreme dieting, extreme exercise, etc.

For some people, negative body image is caused by a certain event or series of events. For example, a child who is put down by her physical education teacher for being unfit could develop an obsession with being fit and have a long-standing dissatisfaction with her body shape, no matter how thin she eventually becomes.

An example that has come up in the media is a case of identical twin girls who both suffer from anorexia. Their anorexia was made worse because they always competed against each other. Peers at their school also referred to one as the 'thin' twin which encouraged the other to push herself to lose even more weight.

Treatment for body image concerns frequently focuses on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. This therapy technique focuses on recognising an individual's personal problems, discussing how the individual currently copes with the problems and talking about different methods that the individual could alternatively use. Additionally, dance and sport have been proven to encourage positive body image. It allows an individual to build trust and confidence in the physical potential of their body which enables them to see past just the aesthetics of their body.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and other treatments for eating disorders and/or negative body image, should be discussed with a licensed mental health practitioner or physician. Do not attempt to self-diagnose or self-treat negative body image, as this can lead to further mental health issues.

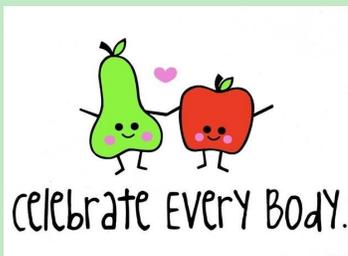


Image courtesy University of Virginia.

Positive Body Image Quiz! True or False:

1. Approximately 91% of women are unhappy with their bodies and resort to dieting to achieve their ideal body shape.
2. Only 5% of women naturally possess the body type often portrayed by Americans in the media.
3. 65% of people with eating disorders are between the ages of 12 and 25.
4. One-third of new cases of eating disorders arise in female adolescents who have dieted moderately.

You can find the answers to the quiz on the next page!

How can I stay positive?

One of the best ways to stay positive regarding your own body image is to simply cut out areas of your life that cause you to feel negative about yourself - such as social media. In certain cases, this is easier said than done, but even just slightly minimising negative influences is one of the quickest ways to accepting yourself.

Remember, **true beauty is not simply skin deep**. Once you accept how beautiful and amazing you are on the inside, then it will become easier to accept who you are on the outside too!

List the things you love about yourself!

It's important to realise what you have - your unique and wonderful features! Find a quiet moment and try and think of 10 things that you love about yourself that are not to do with your appearance.

Think about what you're doing in life at the moment. What skills do you have to offer the world? Are you a positive person? Are you kind? List 10 things that are great about you!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Girl Museum

We are the first and only online museum dedicated to girls.

We exhibit, educate, and raise awareness about the unique experience of being born and growing up female around the world in the past and present.

As a community of passionate and creative individuals, we acknowledge and advocate for girls as forces for collective responsibility and change in the global context, not as victims and consumers.

We are a registered 501(c)3 non-profit educational organization.

Learn more and get involved at www.GirlMuseum.org



Image courtesy The Things We Say.

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Additional Resources

The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) has produced a detailed guide for developing and maintaining a positive body image: <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/developing-and-maintaining-positive-body-image>

NEDA has also produced a quick list of **10 Steps to Positive Body Image**:

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/10-steps-positive-body-image>

Do you or someone you know need help fostering positive body image? Contact these organizations for more information:

NEDA: 1-800-931-2237 (US)

Beat: Beating Eating Disorders
Adult Helpline: 0808 801 0677 (UK)
Youthline: 0808 801 0711 (UK)

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 (Australia)

The Samaritans 24 Hour Service
116 123 (UK)



Image courtesy Public Domain Pictures.

your body
is not
wrong.
SOCIETY IS.

"Your body is not wrong" quote. Image courtesy CafePress.com

Quiz Answers:

1. True
2. True
3. False. It's actually 95%!
4. False. It's actually two-thirds!