

Learning About a Healthy Body Image

How can you learn to feel good about your body?

It can be hard to know what is an "ideal" body shape or body size when TV, movies, ads, and social media show unrealistic images of what it means to be attractive. Healthy bodies come in lots of shapes and sizes.

Most of us will never look like fashion models or world-class athletes. But when you treat your body well—feed it healthy food and move it in ways it's built to move—you can feel good about it.

Another part of learning to feel good about your body involves changing your thinking from negative to positive.

Negative thoughts can make you feel sad and anxious. They take the joy out of life, and they can take a toll on your physical health. The more negative thoughts you have about your body, the harder it is to be healthy.

How can you change your thinking?

Your thoughts really can affect your health. By telling yourself more encouraging things, you're telling your brain to produce chemicals that can:

- Lower your stress level and make you feel less anxious.
- Make you feel happier and more optimistic about the future.

Do you have any negative thoughts right now? (Sometimes it's hard to even know.) Take a minute, listen to your thoughts, and see if you do. If you're telling yourself something that makes you feel bad, remember: You are in charge of what you tell yourself. So why not come up with something more encouraging?

What else can you do to feel more positive?

- **Focus on things you like about your body.** If you don't like your thighs, think about some part of your body that you like.
- **Share your feelings with someone close to you.** We all have negative thoughts about our appearance from time to time. Talking about it with someone else helps you keep those thoughts in perspective.
- **Do something nice for yourself.** Maybe you could work less today and spend more time with friends or family. Or you could find something that makes you laugh.
- **Take time to be grateful.** What's one thing you appreciate about your body? Are you healthy and able to be active? That's something to be grateful for.
- **Eat well. Sleep well. Be active.** The nicer you are to your body, the easier it is to feel more positive about yourself.
- **Make social connections.** Enjoy some time with family and friends. Look for new ways to connect with people, such as a class, a club, or a community or support group.

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