



# The Emily Program

**No Body is Perfect**

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[emilyprogram.com](http://emilyprogram.com)

# Overview

- Provide a brief overview of body image and describe associated factors.
- Offer 11 tools for promoting positive body image in children & adolescents.
- Share advice on talking with teens about weight / shape.
- Discuss practical tips for making mealtimes enjoyable.
- Provide recommendations on what to do if you suspect your child is engaging in disordered eating behaviors.

# What is Body Image?

When you think of the term “**body image**” as it relates to children and adolescents, what comes to mind?

Why as parents / caregivers should we be concerned about our children’s “**body image**?”

So what *is* Body Image? Let's break it down!

# What is Body Image?

- Our internalized representation of our bodies
- The “picture” we form in our own mind
- Three Components:
  - Beliefs about appearance
  - Feelings about appearance
  - Sense & control of body during movement

# Positive vs. Negative Body Image

## Positive

- Clear, true perception of shape
- Appreciation and celebration for one's natural shape
- Understanding that appearance says very little about one's character & value as a person
- Proud & accepting of one's unique body / refusal to spend excessive amount of time worrying about food, weight & calories
- Comfortable and confident in one's body

*National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)*

# Positive vs. Negative Body Image

## Negative

- Distorted perception of shape
- Belief that only other people are attractive
- Association of one's shape & weight with personal failure
- Feelings of shame, self-consciousness and anxiety about one's body, shape or weight
- Discomfort and awkward feeling in body

*National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)*

# Spectrum of Negative Body Image

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graph TD; A[Spectrum of Negative Body Image] --> B[Normative Discontent]; A --> C[Body Dissatisfaction]; A --> D[Body Image Disturbance];
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Normative  
Discontent

Body  
Dissatisfaction

Body Image  
Disturbance



# How does BID develop?

- Media Pressure
  - Portrayal & glorification of an unrealistic “Thin Ideal”
  - Perpetuation and creation of normative discontent
    - Increased pressure to diet and achieve thinness
  - Television: 3% females overweight  
32% females underweight
  - Clear decline in size of models over past 30 years

**What is the current “ideal” body?**

**For Women??**

**For Men??**

# Ideal Body Standards

What I've learned from teenagers:

**Ideal body image standards are a hot mess of contradictions that continually change over time.**

# Women's Ideal Body Types Throughout History

<https://www.facebook.com/BuzzFeedVideo/videos/1619559064851636/>

And What About Males???

# Why is BID a Problem?

- Significant impairments in psychosocial functioning, including:
  - Depression (Noles et al., 1985)
  - Social Anxiety (Cash et al., 2002)
  - Impaired Sexual Functioning (Cash et al., 2002)
  - Low Self-Esteem (Powell et al., 1999)

# BID & Eating Disorders (ED)

- Substantial research from diverse areas of psychology recognize the role of BID in the onset and maintenance of ED.

# BID & ED (cont'd)

- Most consistent predictor of the onset of ED (precipitating factor)
- Moderates the connection between depression and ED
- Moderates the connection between low self-esteem and ED
- Associated with poorer response to treatment and higher rates of relapse in ED



**How do I prevent (or change!) negative  
body image in my child / adolescent?!**

# 11 Tools I Can Use Tomorrow

1. Encourage your child to appreciate what their body can do.
2. Have your child keep a “Top 10” list of things they like about themselves.
3. Remind your child (often!) that beauty is subjective and runs more than skin deep.
4. Encourage your child to see him/herself as a whole person.
5. Encourage your child to spend time with peers who are positive and confident.

# 11 Tools I Can Use Tomorrow (cont'd)

6. Show your child how to shut down internal dialogue that tells them that there is something wrong with their body.
7. Encourage your child to wear clothes that are comfortable and make them feel good.
8. Teach your child how to be a critical consumer of social & media messages – and monitor!!!
9. Ensure your child regularly does nice things for him/herself and others.
10. Encourage the message that beauty (and health!) can exist on a spectrum.

Most Importantly...#11

*To thine own self, be nice!!!*

**Should I even be talking about weight with my child?**

# “Guidelines for Talking to Teens About Weight”

- American Academy of Pediatrics

- In a nutshell, the advice was:

**Don't.**

**Is this realistic?**

# Practical Tips for Talking about Weight (if you have to!)

- Be Prepared.
- Think outside of the Scale.
- Normalize and Validate.
- Be clear that love is not contingent on weight.
- Encourage family behaviour changes geared towards overall health – increase # of FUN family meals!

**Fun family meals?! But we're so busy!**



# **Children and teenagers who regularly eat meals with their families do better in many areas:**

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Academic Performance
- Peer Relationships

# Making Family Meals Fun

- Set aside time.
- Reduce the rush.
- Get everyone involved.
- Dedicate time to talk.
- Create a relaxing ambiance.
- Play games!
- Model desired behaviors.
- Reward desired behaviors.

**Finally, I would not be a good ED psychologist  
if I did not add the following...**

**What to do if you suspect your child has an ED...**

# What to do if you suspect your child has an ED...

- ✓ Trust your “spidey-sense.”
- ✓ Educate yourself.
- ✓ Set aside time for a private discussion, free from distractions.
- ✓ Share your concerns using specific examples.
- ✓ Avoid accusatory or critical statements.
- ✓ Avoid giving simple solutions (e.g. “Just eat!”).
- ✓ Express continued support.
- ✓ Remember that is not your (or your child’s!) fault.
- ✓ Convey concern, determination for action and unconditional support.
- ✓ Share your concerns with your pediatrician.
- ✓ **Schedule an evaluation with ED specialists.**

# Additional Resources

## ☐ Recommended Books:

- ✓ Shapesville (authors: Andy Mills & Becky Osborn)
- ✓ Brave Girl Eating (author: Harriet Brown)
- ✓ Skills-Based Learning for Caring for a Loved One with ED (author: Janet Treasure)
- ✓ The Body Image Workbook (author: Thomas Cash)

## ☐ Recommended Websites:

- ✓ [www.emilyprogram.com](http://www.emilyprogram.com)
- ✓ [www.aedweb.org](http://www.aedweb.org)
- ✓ [www.maudsleyparents.org](http://www.maudsleyparents.org)
- ✓ [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

Q & A Time!

Thank You!

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