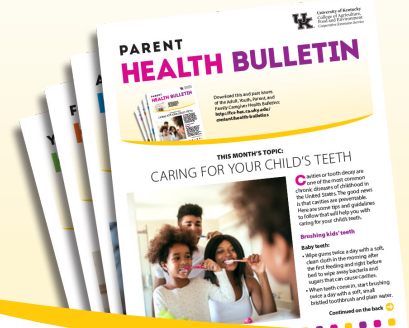


PARENT

HEALTH BULLETIN



FEBRUARY 2025

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

SUPPORTING SELF-LOVE THROUGH A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE



February may get you thinking about hearts or love. Love for children, family, friends, someone special, or even yourself. What are some ways you show children you love yourself? A positive body image is one piece of self-love. Body image is the way you think and feel about your body. When children have a positive body image, they have greater confidence, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

Body image is affected by social media, pop culture, friends, and family. Body image changes over time, and your child will need support as they grow and change. Children can have a negative body image at any age. But adolescence is the time of highest risk for developing a negative body image.

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An important first step is to reflect on your body image.

Do you talk in a positive or negative way about your body?

The way you feel and talk about your body, or other people's bodies,

will affect how your child feels and talks about their body.

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You are an important resource to support your child. Regardless of the age of your child, these tips can help your child, and you, develop a more positive body image.

- **Be a positive role model.** An important first step is to reflect on your body image. Do you talk in a positive or negative way about your body? The way you feel and talk about your body, or other people's bodies, will affect how your child feels and talks about their body. Also consider the eating and physical activity habits you model. Eating nutritious foods and doing physical activity set a positive example for children about how to care for their body.
- **Talk about health and habits instead of weight.** Skip talking about diets or losing weight. Instead, focus on how eating nutritious foods provides energy to play, learn, and grow. Encourage your child to be active in ways they enjoy. Discuss how they feel after eating tasty, nutritious foods or after physical activity. Help them link the benefits of food and activity to what their body can do and how they feel, not its size.
- **Honor bodies as they are.** Bodies come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Talk in a way that celebrates differences. Focus on what bodies are capable of rather than how they look. Rather than

praising your child for how they look, provide praise about character traits like work ethic, courage, or humor. Teach your child a person's value is not linked to their body size or appearance.

- **Teach children to be critical consumers of media.** The media often portrays edited or unrealistic images that can lead to harmful comparisons. Discuss images and messages your child sees online. Manage settings and help your child unfollow accounts that say harmful things about body size or extreme diet or activity behaviors.
- **Encourage your child to talk with a trusted adult.** Preparing children for the changes they will experience as they grow and develop can help them understand and adjust to changes. Let children know you are available to talk about feelings, changes, or concerns with their body, or they can talk to another trusted adult.

REFERENCE:

Mental Health Foundation. (2019). Body image report – Executive Summary. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/articles/body-image-report-executive-summary>

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