



EDUCATEEMPOWERKIDS

A SIMPLE LESSON FOR
TEACHING YOUR CHILD ABOUT

BODY IMAGE



BACKGROUND

Most children start off life with no preconceived notions about their own bodies. They think of their bodies only when they wonder if they can do a cartwheel, climb the monkey bars, go to the bathroom alone or feel hungry. They think of their body in terms of what it can help them physically do. But as they grow, kids are bombarded by images in the media and others' ideas about what the body should look like. At some point, (generally around age 8) they begin to question whether or not they have the "right body".

**It is recommended that you use the media literacy lesson as a precursor or in conjunction with this lesson.*

PREPARATION

- Review the objective of the lesson and understand why it is important to talk to your child about having a healthy body image.
- Do not suggest to your child that he or she may become dissatisfied with his or her body.
- Address body image issues that are present or as they occur in the future with physical development. It is important to be positive and stress health, not image during this lesson.
- Familiarize yourself with the glossary terms. Prepare to have a discussion, and to listen and hear your child's thoughts and feedback.

Think about your own body image issues, where you got them and how you can help your child avoid those pitfalls. Parents themselves often struggle with body image, this doesn't mean you can't teach it. In fact, it can make you a better teacher and more sensitive to this issue.



OBJECTIVE

Help your child understand that his or her true worth comes from intelligence, kindness, and respecting others and not outward appearance. The goal is to teach your child not to compare him or herself to others and understand the ways the media and other sources will try to influence their self-image.

WHAT IS BODY IMAGE?

An individual's feelings regarding their own physical attractiveness and sexuality. These feelings and opinions are often influenced by other people and media sources.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE A HEALTHY BODY IMAGE?

Developing a healthy body image is integral to understanding our worth and effects our sense of inherent value as human beings. People with a healthy body image are more likely to feel good about themselves as their bodies grow and change with puberty and other life events. They are also more likely to have a healthy sense of self-worth. A person with a healthy body image focuses on what the body can feel and do not what it looks like.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD

- How important is the way we look?
- Where does negative body image come from?
- Why is being concerned about being a good person more important than worrying about the way we look?
- Why is being healthy more important than fitting a certain mold of bodily perfection?

OTHER POINTS TO MAKE

- A person's body will change and grow a lot in his or her lifetime. It's important to accept and love your body no matter what.
- People come in all shapes and sizes because we're not meant to all be the same
- Overall health is much more important than shape or perceived imperfections.

FOLLOWING UP

- From a young age, reassure your child that he or she is beautiful but always pair these compliments with one unrelated to his or her appearance.
- Point out images in the media to your child and remind them that this is a not a standard they or anyone else should hold themselves to.
- This will not be a one-time discussion, you'll want to reiterate these principles continuously. This lesson will likely lead to other valuable discussions like anatomy, media literacy and puberty, all of which can be found in ***30 Days of Sex Talks, Empowering Your Child with Knowledge of Sexual Intimacy*** (available on Amazon.com).

RELATED DISCUSSIONS

(which can be found in 30 Days of Sex Talks)

Being Media Savvy

Liking Yourself

Respecting Others

Self-worth/Self-esteem

GLOSSARY TERMS

Body Image-An individual's feelings regarding their own physical attractiveness and sexuality. These feelings and opinions are often influenced by other people and media sources.

Media Literacy-The ability to analyze and evaluate media. People who are media literate can understand the messages they receive from radio, internet, television, magazines, books, billboards, video games, music and all other forms of media.

Self-Esteem/Self -Worth-An individual's overall emotional evaluation of their own worth. Self-esteem is both a judgment of the self and an attitude toward the self. More generally, the term is used to describe a confidence in one's own value or abilities.