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Lesson:
Teaching
**Healthy Body
Image to Boys**



Body image is an important topic to discuss with both girls AND boys. Images found on social media, television, and movies that they are exposed to have an impact on them. However, the topic of maintaining a healthy body image is frequently overlooked in boys. From low self-esteem to mental disorders such as **muscle dysmorphia**, many issues can stem from a boy's negative body image.

BACKGROUND

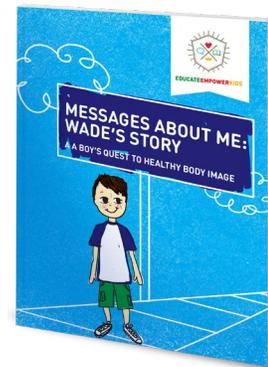
We talk a lot about body image in relation to **self-esteem** or **self-worth**. We talk to our girls about how the media distorts the way that their bodies “should” look and how to counteract that influence, but we frequently fail to notice the impact media has on our boys. It has become increasingly apparent that media does have an effect on a boy's body image. As a result, more emphasis must be placed on talking with our boys about it.

PREPARATION

Read the lesson and understand why body image is important to discuss with boys.

If you are a father giving this lesson, think about your own body image and what it has been built upon--media, family example, etc. If you are a mother giving this lesson, talk to your spouse, father, brother, or other good male figure in your life about their perception of the effect that media has had on their life and their body image.

Read the book, *Messages About Me: Wade's Story: A Boy's Quest for Healthy Body Image*.



OBJECTIVE

Help your son understand that he is a strong and unique individual who is loved because of who he is, and that he is appreciated for his actions, talents, interests, and hobbies. Help him understand that his value should not be solely based on how much he works out at the gym, the sports he plays, or clothes he wears.

LESSON: WHAT IS BODY IMAGE?

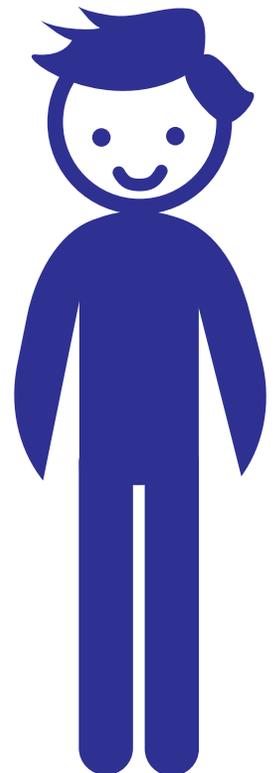
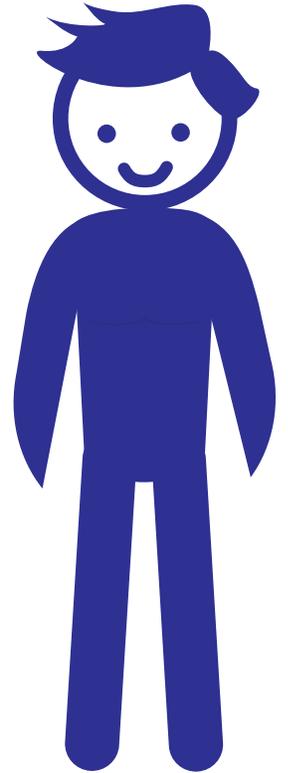
DISCUSS

How can media distort or change the way that boys see their body? There are a lot of ways that the media alters the way bodies are displayed, making many of the bodies that we see unnatural and physically impossible for us to attain. It's important to keep in mind how much can be altered "backstage." Listen to your child and talk with them about any concerns, questions, or thoughts that they may bring up.

Discuss the difference between being healthy and being a specific size. Everyone is built and shaped differently. As you help your boys come to recognize what a healthy body looks like, they'll develop a greater appreciation for their own bodies, as well as gradually learn to recognize the false side of body image portrayed in media and pop culture.

Body image is the positive or negative way in which we perceive our bodies. These positive or negative perceptions of our bodies can stem from innumerable sources all around us.

As we help our children to become more aware of their own perceptions of themselves, we can help them more fully understand what might influence those perceptions. The more we can discuss these topics with our young boys, the easier it will become for them to be able to sort out the positive or negative perceptions of their bodies. This even extends to how our boys will approach the task of maintaining a healthy body. Having a positive body image should always include a knowledge of what our children need to stay strong and healthy.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD

- Q Why is it important to have a good opinion of your body?
- Q How can we appreciate our bodies? How can we show that we appreciate our bodies?
- Q Think of someone you love and respect. What do you love about that person? How much of that has to do with their body shape or size?
- Q Why is being concerned about becoming a better person more important than worrying about the way we look? (from *Messages About Me: Wade's Story*)
- Q How do we find the balance between trying to improve ourselves in healthy ways and accepting ourselves as we are? (from *Messages About Me: Wade's Story*)
- Q In advertising, what kind of things do you see about people's bodies?
- Q How can you choose to be happy about your body even when you may not have what the movies and TV say is the "perfect" body?

FOLLOWING UP/ACTIVITIES

Have your children pay attention to the media and see if they can recognize times where a message about body type is being sent. Make it a daily or weekly competition to see how many examples they can find.

Especially as your son begins to hit puberty, have conversations about body image multiple times. Help him remember that he does not need to look like the media's portrayals of men in order to be valued, attractive, or "manly". Remember to teach and exemplify appreciation for our bodies.



RELATED DISCUSSIONS

All found in *30 Days to a Stronger Child*

Positive Self-Talk

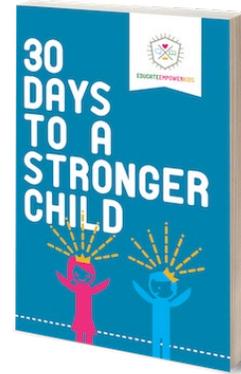
Healthy Eating

Self-Confidence

Boundaries

Optimism

Empathy

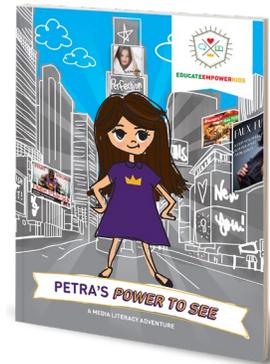


RELATED ARTICLES AND RESOURCES

Four Ways to Instill a Healthy Body Image in Your Children

Petra's Power to See (available on Amazon)

Teaching Self-Confidence in a Selfie Culture



GLOSSARY

Body Image: The positive or negative perceptions of our own bodies.

Muscle Dysmorphia: A subtype of body dysmorphic disorder; an obsession with becoming muscular generally affecting men that typically stems from a negative body image

Self-worth: Recognizing that you, as a person, are worth a great deal; knowing that you are of value.

Self-esteem: Synonymous with self-worth

CITATIONS

Hibbert, C. (2013, March 09). Self-Esteem vs. Self-Worth: Q & A with Dr. Christina Hibbert [plus video]. Retrieved June 27, 2018, from <http://www.drchristinahibbert.com/self-esteem-vs-self-worth/>