

10 THINGS PARENTS CAN DO AND BE TO TEACH BODY POSITIVITY



Research has shown that children and youth who DIET are much more likely to develop eating disorders; and the earlier the diet begins, the more likely that a significant eating disorder could occur. Body positivity begins at home: here are some suggestions for parents to help children develop positive body image.

“BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE . . .”

1) Stop talking about your weight.

Don't constantly criticize your own appearance. Value yourself more for your character. Learn the difference between weight and health and concentrate on HEALTH enhancing behaviors.

2) Make a list of people you admire.

Practice taking ALL people seriously for what they do, not how they look. Give boys and girls the same opportunities and responsibilities. Work for and speak out for the rights - fairness, equity, safety, respect, control of their bodies - of all those with marginalized identities.

3) Encourage critical thinking about media messages.

Talk with your children about the pressure to “look good”, and the ways in which media images are manipulated. Discuss the dangers of dieting. Teach them to be critical viewers of social media; in fact, consider limiting their access to it. We know negative body image correlates directly with the use of social media.

4) STOP WEIGHING YOURSELF! Get rid of the scale. Do not equate certain foods with positive or negative behavior, or morality. Eliminate commenting on weight or body size - period. Don't diet, and don't EVER restrict calories for your children.

5) Concentrate on things you like & do well. The more you enjoy your life the less critical you will be of your body. Learn to accept compliments graciously. Focus on the things – family, friends, and faith – which bring true joy from within. Tell your children – frequently – that you love and accept them just as they are. This builds self-esteem.

6) Get physical for FUN! Choose to move for your heart health, not to change the size of your body. Any kind of movement can help; perhaps do something together as a family. Have fun. Do NOT communicate the message “I can't do _____” until I look a certain way.

7) Spend your dollars wisely. Support retailers who portray diversity in their advertising and hiring practices. Research the businesses whose values align with yours, and support them. Consider carrying a note card listing these businesses as a reminder. Teach children to be responsible shoppers.

8) Voice your opinion. Write letters, send emails, or call about products you won't buy – and state the reasons why. Businesses really do want to hear from you, and may respond with change.

9) Be a role model. Notice, in a complimentary way, how people vary. Express appreciation for body diversity. Don't judge others by their appearance. It shouldn't be more acceptable to practice “weightism” than any other form of prejudice.

10) Break barriers. Protest; stand for what's right. Many inspirational people have blazed new trails. Help your children recognize and celebrate the achievements made by them. Seek friendships with like minded others.

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