

What is 'Body Image'?

'Body image' is a term that can be used to describe how we think and feel about our bodies. E.g.,

- How we view our bodies and how accurate this perception is.
- How satisfied we are with our bodies and appearance.
- How we experience our bodies in our environment.
- How much we value what other people think about our bodies and appearance.
- How much other people's opinions about our appearance affect our feelings about ourselves.

Self-esteem and body image

Self esteem is how you value and respect yourself as a person. A person's body image can affect how they feel about themselves and their self worth with some people placing the majority of their self worth on how they look. Therefore, the way a person feels about their body image can hugely affect their self esteem which then consequently affects their mental health and wellbeing.

What can affect our body image and self-esteem?

- **Social media:** Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, BeReal, Facebook.
- **Media: TV, magazines, advertisements:** The media can often present an 'ideal' or an unrealistic image. These images can also be edited, filtered and manipulated which can lead to feelings of comparison, inferiority and low self esteem.
- **Family and friends:** The views of those closest to us can hugely influence our relationship with ourselves and self esteem. For example, if a certain body 'standard' is celebrated or comments are made about weight and appearance.
- **Confidence and anxiety:** Having low confidence and anxiety can often impact the way someone feels about themselves and their own self worth and appearance.



PROMOTING POSITIVE BODY IMAGE



Spotlighting Social Media

Social Media can be both a positive and negative place. It is hugely influential in today's world and it is the biggest factor in affecting body image for 11-16 year olds.

We now have a huge social media culture and influence, which means images are accessible at all times of the day, in the palm of your hand. These images can be edited or filtered in seconds with a touch of a screen, and put out into the world.

Further, there has been a huge increase in social media 'influencers' and seemingly 'normal people like us' who look a certain way on social media. This has enforced an idea that anyone and everyone could/should look a certain way or lead a certain life. There is a belief that if you look this way, you will get more likes and followers. This idea can hugely affect a young persons self-esteem.

How can we promote positive body image and self-esteem?

The following strategies can be effective in our approach to develop positive body image and self esteem:

- Self-esteem approach
- Critical thinking development

Self-esteem approach

In a self-esteem approach, there is a strong emphasis on celebrating everyone's unique qualities, talents and abilities. This approach aims to enable young people to feel proud and confident about who they are and to value their own and each other's individuality.

This approach also supports young people in learning strategies to protect and build confidence in themselves and others.

Self-esteem activity ideas:

- Practicing positive affirmation.
- Iceberg activity, e.g., the part of the iceberg that you see is so small, underneath the surface is the biggest part. What are the amazing things about you that people can't see with their eyes?
- Journaling.
- Yoga and mindfulness.
- Celebrating accomplishments.
- Exploring new hobbies and interests.
- Kind words and comments towards one another.

Critical thinking development

Children and young people need to be able to evaluate media content and recognise how the content they are exposed to can affect their own behaviour, emotions and beliefs.

This can help develop their resilience to many varied pressures and risks both offline from peers, family - and online, from the influence of advertising and celebrity culture on their self-esteem and body image.

This skill is essential and will become even more important as new issues emerge and technology continues to develop.

Critical thinking checklist:

Who? Who posted the image? Were they reliable and what other content do they usually post? Are they coming from a particular perspective?

What? What did they say about the image? Could the image have been edited or show a limited perspective?

Why? Why did they post it? How did they want you to feel, or what did they want you to do?