

IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD IS STRUGGLING WITH BODY DISSATISFACTION OR DISORDERED EATING, DON'T BE AFRAID TO SEEK HELP

**Beat - 08088 010677**

Offers support for those with eating disorders and families who have children that are affected (33)

**The Mix - 08088 084994**

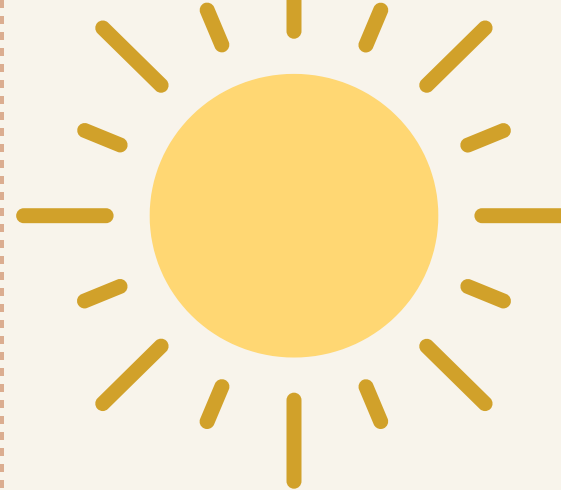
Phone line open between 4pm-11pm for under 25s (34)

**Young Minds - 08088 025544**

Parents helpline that offers advice for supporting young peoples mental health (35)

**Family Lives - 08088 002222**

Chat to a trained family support worker if you have any concerns about your child experiencing an eating disorder (36)



# THE POWER OF WORDS

sowing seeds of security through  
your speech

Discussing eating disorders and body dissatisfaction  
in children



# BODY DISSATISFACTION AND DISORDERED EATING IN CHILDREN

But aren't eating disorders just experienced by young women?(1) Children are just picky eaters(2)... It's not that they have poor body image, they don't even understand what that is!

Though it may be uncomfortable to think about, our children are not protected from body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. These too common misconceptions can cause the struggles our children are dealing with to go unnoticed and unattended.

## Did you know:

- 34% of 5 year old girls restrict their food intake (3)
- 50% of 8-12 year olds want to loose weight (4,13)
- Children as young as 6 have been diagnosed with eating disorders (5)
- 64% of 3-5 year old girls of 'normal' weight are dissatisfied with their body (6)
- 13% of young people will experience an eating disorder by 20 (7)

## DEFINITIONS

**Eating Disorder:** A behavioural condition associated with disturbances in eating and invasive negative thoughts and feelings, often regarding body dissatisfaction, that interfere with every day life. (8)

**Body Dissatisfaction:** Experiences of distress and negative thought patterns surrounding the way a person feels about and perceives their body. (9,13)

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

### Eating Disorder:

- Abnormal food intake; restricting or excessive eating (10)
- Secretive eating behaviours (11)
- Food rituals (12)
- Excessive exercise (10)
- Purging behaviours - vomiting (10)
- Drive for thinness (though not always present) (1)

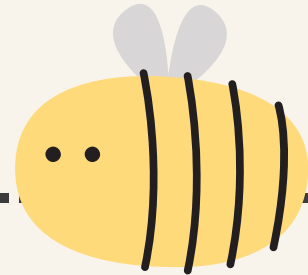
### Body Dissatisfaction

- Dieting behaviours (13)
- Expressing concerns over weight and shape (13, 14)
- Low self-esteem (14)
- Anxiety (14)
- Comparison (15)

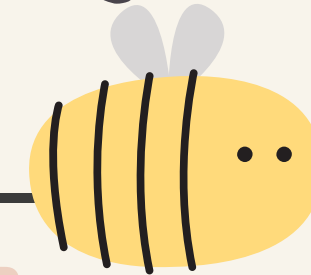


# GREATEST IMPACTS ON BODY DISSATISFACTION AND EATING DISORDERS

## Childhood



## Teenage Years



### Family Behaviours

- Children copy modelled behaviours, therefore disordered eating in parents predicts disordered eating in children (16,17,18)
- Dieting in parents predicts children dieting; dieting increases the chances of future eating disorders (19)
- Parents control the amount and the types of food children consume, which has a direct impact on future eating habits (20,21)

3

### Negative Fat Talk

- Children have lower body satisfaction if their parents encourage thinness and dieting (22)
- Negative fat talk about child's weight is associated with disordered eating and body dissatisfaction (22, 23)
- Labelling foods as 'good' or 'bad' gives food moral value, which leads to guilt and anxiety around eating, which can develop into an eating disorder (24)

### Peers

- Teenage girls base their body satisfaction on how attractive their peers view them (15)
- Close friends typically have similar levels of self-esteem (15)
- Teasing and bullying can trigger body dissatisfaction and eating disorders (15,25)
- 15% of young people think their peers would like them more if they were thinner (25)

### Media

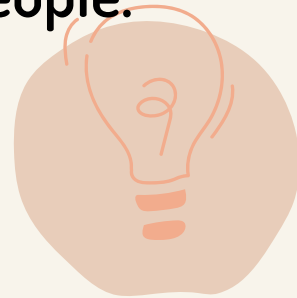
- Influence of media outweighs the influence of parents in teenagers (26)
- Children and teenagers consume around 5 hours a day of media, showing unrealistic thin beauty ideals for girls and muscularity ideals for boys (27)
- Time spent on social media positively correlates with increased disordered eating and body dissatisfaction (28)

4

# INFLUENCE OF WORDS

Though factors can affect body satisfaction in teenage years, a child's view of the body is formed around the age of 7 and remains relatively stable over time (29). The most influential factor in forming this view is the way parents speak about weight and food (30). Therefore, it is important that the words you speak to your child instil security about their worth, that is is not found in their body or the foods they consume, but who they are as people.

## Top Tips



### 1. Don't assign moral value to food

Labelling food as good and bad leads to guilt around eating (24). Instead talk about how all foods have different uses. Some keep us full, some give us energy, some help repair our body and others make us happy!

### 2. Don't assign worth to peoples bodies

Avoid commenting on yours, your child's or other people's bodies, but if it comes up, remain neutral (31). Weight is nothing to be feared!

### 3. Encourage your children to listen to their hunger cues (32)

Don't punish your children for not eating everything on their plate. Forcing children to eat overrides their hunger cues, which can lead to binge eating disorders (20).

# ADAPTING THE LANGUAGE

Instead of...

'Don't eat all that chocolate in one go, it's bad for you.'

Try...



That chocolate looks yummy, let's eat some of that and grab some other food as well that will keep your tummy full.

Instead of...

'You can't have dessert until you finish your meal.'

Try...



If your body doesn't want anymore food that's fine, I will leave your tea in the fridge. You can ask me to get it if you would like more later.

