

CREATING A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

BY NATASHA DEVON MBE, AUTHOR, PRESENTER AND ACTIVIST

What is body image?

Body image is how you think and feel about your body and appearance. It's your mental picture of yourself. Some people have a positive body image, while others have a negative one, which can affect various aspects of their lives.

When we have a positive body image:

- We appreciate what our body can do.
- We understand attractiveness is more than looks.
- We live our lives without constant worry about appearance.
- We take care of ourselves because we feel worth it (e.g., healthy eating, exercise).
- We enjoy being with others without negative comparisons.
- We don't miss out on events due to body concerns.
- Recognising that beauty comes in all shapes, sizes, and forms.

Signs of a negative body image include:

- Not appreciating yourself.
- Being dissatisfied with your appearance.
- Being overly critical of your body.
- Disliking specific aspects like skin or size.
- Frequently thinking negatively about your looks.
- Hiding your body with baggy clothes.
- Worrying about others' opinions of your looks.
- Letting appearance concerns affect other areas of life (e.g., socialising, joining activities).

Resources to boost body positivity

Videos to watch:

- Dr Thomas Curran on Perfectionism. Teenagers today are more likely to be perfectionists than previous generations, and this can play out in anxiety around having the 'perfect' body. In this TED Talk, Dr Thomas Curran explains what perfectionism is, why it isn't a good thing and what we can do about it linked below.
- If you want to know more about perfectionism you can also watch this animated video with BBC Bitesize linked below.
- Dr Jean Kilbourne, Killing Us Softly Trailer (TRIGGER WARNING ON THIS FOR ANYONE AFFECTED BY EATING DISORDERS OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE). This brilliant documentary looks at the way women's bodies are turned into 'things or parts of things' in media and advertising and the way that impacts women's body image and the way girls and women are seen by society linked below.

Books to read:

- Megan Jayne-Crabbe, Body Positive Power
- Molly Forbes, Every Body
- Laura Thomas PhD, Just Eat It
- Shahroo Izadi, The Kindness Method
- Natasha Devon MBE, Clicks - How to Be Your Best Self Online

Things to try:

- One of the most effective ways to improve body image messaging is by curating your social media. Remove toxic content and add positive, evidence-based messages. Follow the linked activity sheet below for a step-by-step guide.