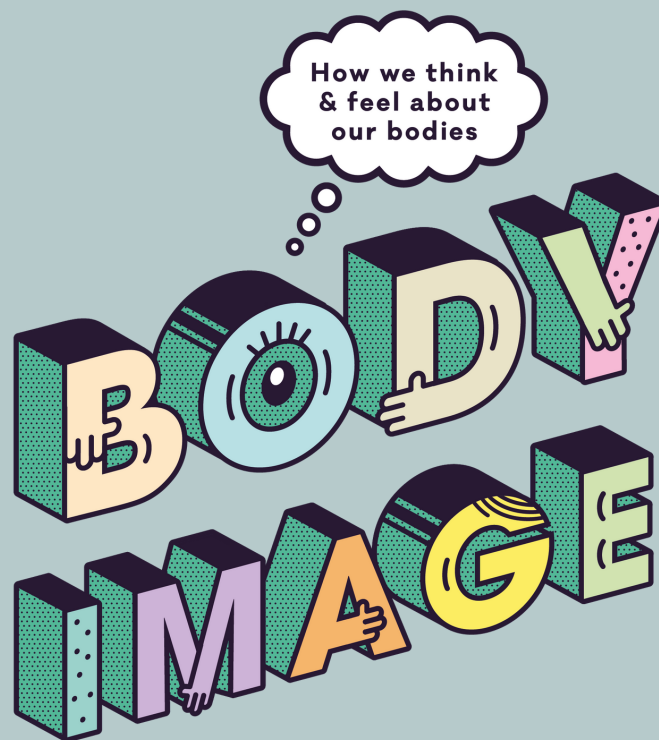




Peer Education Project



A Guide for School Staff



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"Treat yourself in the same way that you would treat others - acknowledge the negative thought and then ask yourself what you would say to a friend."

**Peer Educator
Peer Education Project**

What is b👁️dy image?

Body image is how we think and feel about our bodies.

These thoughts and feelings can impact us throughout our lives and affect how accepting we are of our bodies and appearance, how much we value our bodies, and how we perceive our bodies in our environment.

Good body image is described as feeling comfortable with and accepting of our bodies. We can be appreciative of our bodies for their abilities as well as have a healthy balance between valuing how they look and valuing other aspects of ourselves.

"A HEALTHY BODY IMAGE ISN'T A DESTINATION. IT'S ABOUT THE JOURNEY TOWARDS ACCEPTANCE."

MHF Young Leader 

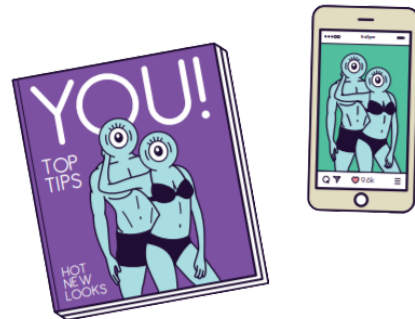
In contrast, having poor body image is feeling unsatisfied or uncomfortable with our body – either due to its appearance or the way that it functions. This is described as 'body dissatisfaction'.

School is a critical time for young people, as they go through a huge amount of change, and these changes can impact their body image. The relationship we have with our body image can affect our mental health and wellbeing. As school staff, you are a key support to pupils. It is important you feel empowered to not only understand and recognise the signs of body image difficulties, but also where to signpost and seek support from.

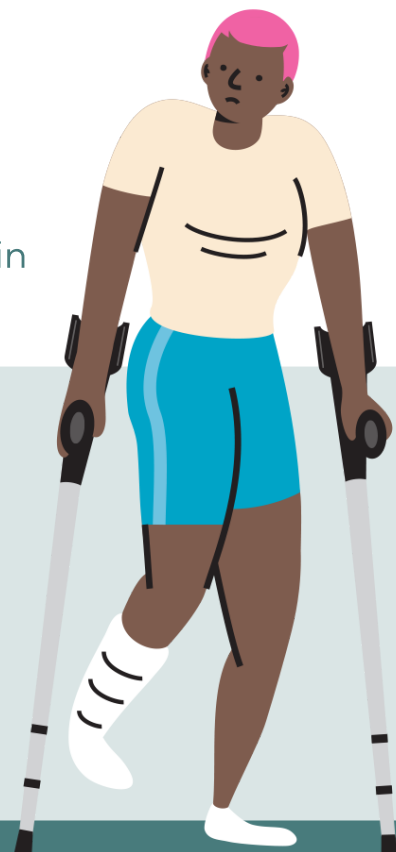
What affects body image?

There are many factors that can affect your pupils' body image – both positively and negatively. Such as:

- Their thoughts and feelings towards their own body
- The media and social media
- Parents and family members
- Peers, especially close friends
- Health conditions or disabilities
- Life changes that affect how our bodies look and function, like puberty
- Ethnicity and culture



You can find more information about how these factors affect body image in our [Body Image Report \(2019\)](#).



How does **b**dy image link to mental health?

Body image is closely connected to our sense of self, our wellbeing, and our mental health. At times, we may feel unhappy with our bodies – many of us do.

When a pupil's thoughts and feelings about their body get in the way of them taking part in everyday activities and enjoying things they usually enjoy, it can indicate they are struggling with their body image.

Poor body image can be a risk factor for mental health problems such as anorexia and depression, but this is not always the case.

However, developing self-confidence and acceptance of our own body has been linked to good mental health and healthy ways of looking after ourselves. For example, eating a healthy, balanced diet.



Spotting the signs of poor bdy image

Many young people may be concerned with their body image – it's something we can all experience from time-to-time. However, there may be times when your pupils feel very worried about their appearance, and you may notice changes in their behaviour or views on related topics.

By understanding and recognising when body image concerns are negatively impacting pupils' mental health and wellbeing, support can be put in place quickly.

Here are some signs of body image concerns to look out for in your pupils:

- Noticeable changes in their mood and interaction with others.
- Showing signs or expressing worries about how they look.
- Feeling pressured to cover up parts of their body and not wanting to engage in activities where their bodies will be on show e.g. swimming or Physical Education lessons.
- Expressing rigid thinking patterns about what is a 'good' vs 'bad' body type.

If you are worried about a pupil, speak with your designated safeguarding lead as a matter of priority.

Top tips for supporting pupils to develop good body image?

In the classroom

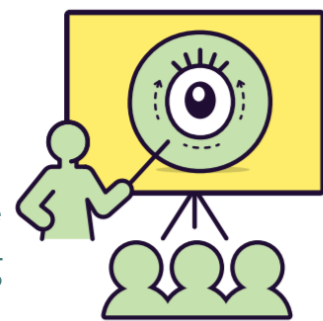
Read the [PSHE key standards in teaching about body image](#).

Reinforce good body image messaging through using diverse resources that show different body sizes, shapes, heights, skin colours, abilities, and disabilities, etc.

Provide opportunities for pupils to improve their digital literacy. Encourage pupils to be mindful of their screen time, paying attention to the accounts they follow and how they make them feel.

Explore the different languages used around body image. For example, understanding what body shaming is and how to spot it.

Encourage the use of healthy body image language in both staff and pupils, avoiding reinforcing negative and stereotypical views on body image.



Top tips for supporting pupils to develop a good body image?

In the classroom

Use the [teacher resources on body image](#), developed as part of the [Dove Self-Esteem Project](#).

Highlight the changes young people's bodies may go through in their lives and how they can deal with these changes to maintain a healthy mental wellbeing.

Use lessons, assemblies, and extra-curricular sessions to encourage pupils to focus on the health of their bodies, rather than appearance.

BBC Teach:

Use these [films to bust body image myths and investigate body image ideals with your class](#) (Key Stage 3 and 4).

Use these [clips to help pupils unlock growth mindset ideas](#) (Key stage 2).

Top tips for supporting pupils to develop a good body image?

Across the school

Provide school staff with mental health training, with a specific focus on body image, to recognise the early signs that may suggest a pupil is struggling with their body image.

Engage parents and caregivers with the body image topic e.g. sharing the Body Image Parent and Caregiver guide from this school pack, or directing them to our [Mind Over Mirror - Parenting for a healthy body image guide](#).

Develop effective policies and practices that do not tolerate appearance-related bullying, such as body shaming, and proactively support children and young people who are teased or bullied as a result of their appearance, body size or shape, ability or ethnicity.


[BEAT provide training for school staff on how to recognise the signs of an eating disorder](#) in their pupils and how to support them.



Personal stories


Click on each story to read further.

Danny's story
A fixation on body image and deep feelings of shame



100k views
View all 1205 comments
1 DAYS AGO

Frances' story
How I think and feel about my body




100k views
View all 1205 comments
1 DAYS AGO

Paul's story
Feelings about my body image are a 'work in progress'



100k views
View all 1205 comments
1 DAYS AGO

Kerry's story
I constantly battle with my body image



100k views
View all 1205 comments
1 DAYS AGO

Michael's story
When my body changed I didn't know how to feel



100k views
View all 1205 comments
1 DAYS AGO

Tyra's story
Mind Over Mirror - Facing my mirror



100k views
View all 1205 comments
1 DAYS AGO





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