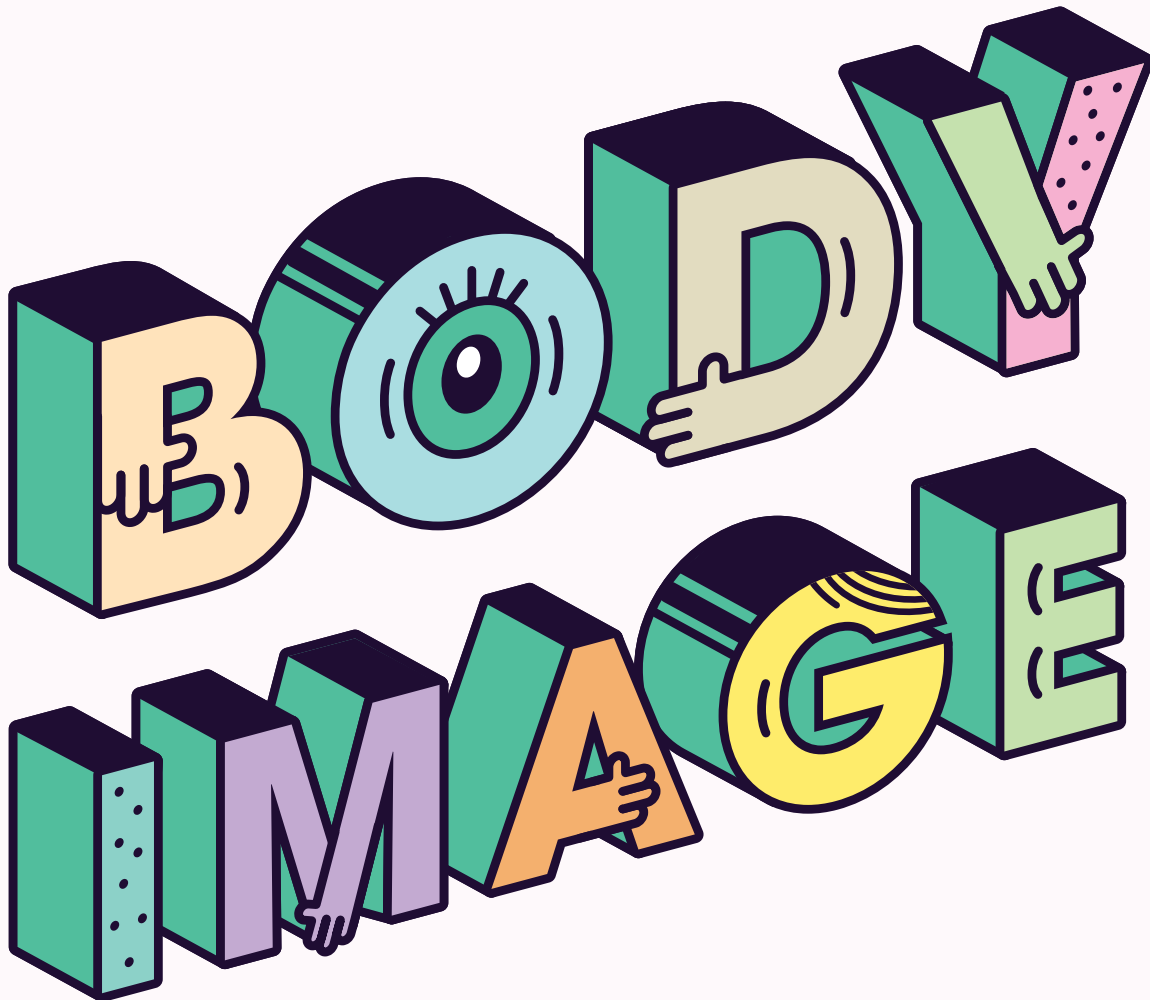




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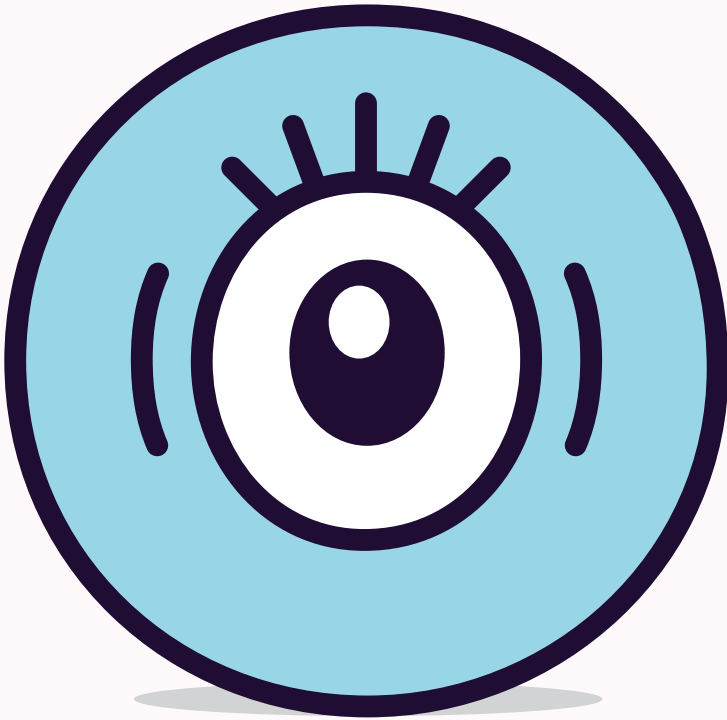


**How we think and feel
about our bodies.**

A guide for caregivers



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

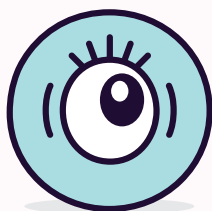
Often, when we talk about poor body image, we are referring to a feeling of being unsatisfied with our body – either because of appearance or the way it functions. This is described as 'body dissatisfaction'.

In contrast, healthy body image can be described as being satisfied with our body, holding respect, appreciation and acceptance of its abilities, and having a healthy balance between valuing our body and valuing the other aspects of ourselves that make us 'us'.

Body image concerns are not mental health problems in and of themselves, however, they can be a risk factor for mental health problems.

The relationship we have with our body image can affect our mental health and wellbeing. Often, the challenge as caregivers is knowing what you can do to help your child or young person develop and maintain a good body image. 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.

This guide provides tips and resources on how to support yourself as a caregiver, as well as your child or young person with developing a good body image.



Supporting yourself with developing a healthy body image

Resources to support yourself

Mental Health Foundation resources

Our vision at the [Mental Health Foundation](#) is for a world with good mental health for all. With prevention at the heart of what we do, we aim to find and address the sources of mental health problems so that people and communities can thrive.

[Tips on looking after your mental health](#)

Read these tips on how to look after your mental health.

[Tips on how to manage and reduce stress](#)

Read these tips on how to manage and reduce stress.

[Tips to improve body image](#)

Read these tips on improving how we feel about our bodies and helping us protect, promote and maintain a healthy body image throughout our lives.

[How we think and feel about our bodies podcast](#)

Listen to this podcast discussing body image, the link to mental health and the experiences of poor body image.

[A personal story on body image](#)

Read this personal story on overcoming challenges with body image.

Other resources

[Understanding body image and mental health](#)

Read this guide on what body image is and how it can affect mental health.

[Practising meditation for a healthy body image](#)

Read this guide on how meditation can help us develop a healthy body image.



Support services for adults

Samaritans

Samaritans are open 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk.

Call: **116 123** (free)

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Post: Freepost SAMARITANS LETTERS

The Samaritans Self-Help app is a tool to track how you're feeling and receive tips on things you can do to look after yourself.

Samaritans also have a Welsh Language Line on **0808 164 0123** (7pm–11pm every day).

Hub of Hope

Hub of Hope is a UK-wide mental health service database, allowing you to search for local, national, peer, community, charity, private and NHS mental health support. You can filter results to find specific kinds of support.

Mind

Mind offers advice, support and information to people experiencing mental health difficulties, and their family and friends.

InfoLine: **0300 123 3393**

Lines are open Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm (except bank holidays).

Email info@mind.org.uk

Side by Side

Side by Side, hosted by Mind, is an online community where you can listen, share and be heard. The online community is moderated to keep the community safe and supportive.

Beat: Eating disorders

Beat provides helplines for anyone who would like to talk to someone about eating disorders.

The helplines are open 365 days a year, 1-9pm on weekdays and 5-9pm on weekends.

Helpline (England): **0808 801 0677** (free)

Helpline (Scotland): **0808 801 0432** (free)

Helpline (Wales): **0808 801 0433** (free)

Helpline (Northern Ireland):
0808 801 0434 (free)

Young Mind's Parents Helpline

Young Minds provides a parent helpline for parents and caregivers seeking detailed advice, emotional support and signposting about a child or young person up to the age of 25.

Call: **0808 802 5544** (free), available Monday – Friday, 9:30am - 4pm.

Webchat: available Monday – Friday, 9:30am - 4pm.



Supporting your child or young person with developing a healthy body image

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

Here are some signs of body image concerns to look out for in your child or young person:

Noticeable changes in their mood and interaction with others.

Changes in their eating and exercise patterns.

Showing signs or expressing worries about how they look.

Avoiding any photos being taken of them.

Spending a significant amount of time editing photos and using specific apps to alter their appearance significantly.

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 types.

If you are worried about your child or young person, it is important to give the time and space at home to allow for conversations about how they are feeling and the concerns they have.



[MHF Tips for Young People on Body Image](#)

Share these top tip postcards, written by The Mental Health Foundation, to support your child or young person to develop good body image.

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

[A resource pack to support conversations at home](#)

Read this activity pack for ideas of how to talk about feelings between you and your child or young person.

[A guide on parenting for a healthy body image](#)

Read this guide for tips on how to open conversations around body image with your child or young person.

Here are some top tips for supporting your child or young person to build a good body image:

Check in with your own body image.

Try and model positive behaviour - avoid criticising your own appearance (or that of others) around your child or young person, and model healthy eating and activity.

[Tips to improve body image](#)

Read these tips on improving how we feel about our bodies and help us protect, promote and maintain a positive body image throughout our lives.

Myth-bust the “perfect body” together.

Talk with your child or young person about how many body images on television, social media and magazines are retouched or changed so the bodies appear “perfect” – and that often it is very hard to notice! Encourage them to not see bodies as ‘perfect’, but as unique to each person.

Give character-based and achievement-based compliments.

It is important to encourage your child or young person to think about their value beyond just their appearance, and instead appreciate what makes them who they are. You can still compliment their appearance, but it’s also helpful to focus your compliments on non-appearance-related qualities and efforts.

Value health not weight.

Focus on the health benefits that a good body image can bring and celebrate individuality.



Encourage communication about their feelings.

Support your child or young person to feel comfortable to express their emotions and communicate their feelings about their bodies.

Tips on talking to your teenager

Read these tips on how to encourage your child or young person to share their worries.

Teach your child or young person that all bodies deserve respect.

Show that people deserve respect regardless of body shape, size, skin tone or ability.

Be active together.

All children need regular physical activity they enjoy. It doesn't matter what they do, but it is important they are active in some way.

Monitor phone and app use.

Support your child or young person to spring-clean the apps and social media accounts on their smartphone, and encourage them to spend less time on their phones. You can model positive behaviour by spending less time on your phone.

Report adverts that encourage unhealthy relationships with the body.

If you see an advert in a magazine, on television, or online that you think presents an unhealthy body image as aspirational, you can complain to the [Advertising Standards Authority](#).



Support services for young people

The Mix

The Mix offers online information as well as helpline support to under-25s about anything that's troubling them.

Email: via their [online contact form](#)

Call: **0808 808 4994** (free)

Telephone services available 4pm – 11pm everyday.

Text: **THEMIX to 85258**

The text service is free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK.

One-to-one chat: Free [1-2-1 webchat service](#)

The webchat is available 4pm – 11pm, Monday to Saturday.

Childline

A support service for anyone under 19 in need of support.

Call: **08001111** (free)

Telephone services available 24-hours a day, every day.

Young people can [sign up](#) for a free Childline locker (real name or email address not needed) to use Childline's free [1-2-1 counsellor chat](#) and email support service.

Shout

A support text service, available 24-hours a day, every day.

Text: **SHOUT to 85258**





[mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

 [Mental Health Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/MentalHealthFoundation)

 [mentalhealthfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/mentalhealthfoundation)

 [@MentalHealth](https://twitter.com/MentalHealth)



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