

# Learning to Accept Your Body

Being overweight can be stressful. Your child may feel uncomfortable about himself around others. He may hate to be in situations that could draw attention to his size. He may get teased about his weight. People may say cruel things about his weight. He may worry about what others are thinking about him. This happens all too often, and it isn't fun.

**Is there any way to protect my child from all the messages in the media on being thin? That's all you see.**

PARENTS ASK:

You're right. The media message is clear: *Thin is good. Heavy is bad.* But it goes beyond that. The media tries to convince us that people who are thin are happier. That they are healthier. More popular, sexier, and more successful in life. If you can just be thin, all your troubles are over.

All this can have a big effect on how we think. Your daughter probably needs your help to sort it out. Point out to her that the media message is not true. Much of what we see isn't real. Models spend hours working out with personal trainers. They often do unhealthy things to look the way they do. Then experts use computers to retouch their pictures. These people aren't what they seem to be. Nobody's that perfect.

Explain to your daughter that the message isn't true either. Being thin doesn't bring any of those things the ads promise. That's another lie. The truth is that how people live their lives determines how happy, healthy, popular, sexy, and successful they will be. That's how it works for thin people. That's also how it works for heavy people, for short people, and tall people.

Ask your daughter who should be in charge of how she feels

**KEY GOALS**

**Feeling positive about her body will help your child make progress on her 4 key goals:**

- ⊙ Limit RED foods
- ⊙ Increase GREEN activity
- ⊙ Hold Family Meetings
- ⊙ Keep Track of Weight

about herself. She or the media? Let her know she has a choice, and that you're on her side.

**How can I help my daughter feel better about her body? She's overweight and very aware of it.**

PARENTS ASK:

Explain to her that people with the same body size and shape can feel very differently about their bodies. How you feel about your body is a personal experience. There aren't any

**Being thin is the answer to all of life's problems. (not really.)**

## Here's what you'll learn about in this module:

- ▶ How the media can shape our feelings about our bodies
- ▶ How to tell if your child's feelings about his body limit what he does
- ▶ How to help your child find qualities to like about his body and himself



rules that say you should feel bad about your body when you reach a certain weight. The important thing is for her not to let negative feelings limit her.

Explain that it's not good to worry about her body. The more she worries, the more critical of herself she will become. She can learn to accept her body even if she is trying to lose weight. Most people would like to change something about their bodies. But they don't let that keep them from doing things or being with other people.

Learning to feel OK about her body is really important. If she can learn to accept her body, she will be more likely to do things in public. She'll have more fun.

Learning to accept her body will also help her feel better about herself.

One other thing. Tell her that this is possible. Your daughter can learn to accept her body. Even if she is overweight. Even if she is trying to lose weight. Other people have done it. She can, too, and you can help her do it.

**Point out that there's more to appearance than just size.**

**PARENTS ASK:**

**I tell my son not to worry about how he looks. But he does. What should I do?**

- ▶ Point out that there's *more to appearance than size*. Then try to help him find other positive qualities about his appearance.

People may admire your son's smile. They may like his confident posture. Or his energy. His sense of humor. How friendly he is. Or how clean and neat he is. They may admire what his body is able to do. Qualities like these usually make much more of an impression on people than size or shape. Help your son make a list of positive qualities about his appearance. That will help him feel better about his body.

- ▶ Point out that there are *other positive qualities that make him who he is*. There's more to him than his appearance.

His positive qualities make him attractive to others. Qualities like friendliness, loyalty, or a sense of humor. The way he uses his mind. The way he does the right thing. His interests. His cheerfulness and his honesty. His concern for others. Qualities like these make him who he is. Qualities like these are what others value most in him.

**Point out what your child does well. Praise your child's positive characteristics.**

Ask your son what good qualities he sees in himself. Tell him the qualities that you admire in him. These are qualities he can value in himself. Point out that these are some of the qualities he looks for in his friends.

**How can I tell if my daughter's feelings about her body affect what she does? How can I know whether or not she is limiting herself because of her body image?**

**PARENTS ASK:**

Ask yourself these questions. Does my daughter avoid:

- ▶ Looking at her reflection in a mirror?
- ▶ Looking at herself in pictures?
- ▶ Physical activity that might call attention to her shape or weight, like dancing, aerobics, or playing sports?
- ▶ Physical contact and hugs because it might show others how large her body feels?
- ▶ Places where much of her body is exposed, like the pool, the beach, and public

Tyrone looked over the list of things that people with a poor body image often avoid. He was surprised to see that he avoided so many situations. He avoided dancing. He thought he looked heavy. He felt clumsy. He also avoided social situations where food would be served. He didn't want people to see him eat and think about how much he weighed. He also learned that he didn't like to be in pictures or to look at himself in a mirror. He saw that his body image was limiting what he let himself do. He was missing out on a lot of things. He felt pretty bad. Then he talked to his father about what he could do.

Tyrone's father explained that he had a choice. "You can continue to limit yourself by feeling bad about how you look," he said. "Or you could take some risks. You could try new activities that you would probably enjoy if you gave yourself a chance."

Tyrone objected. He said that people would make fun of him for being heavy. "No, they won't," said his father. "Why do you think they are your friends, because of the way you look?" Tyrone said they are his friends because they like him.

"So what do your friends like about you?" his father asked.

After thinking about it, Tyrone made a list of qualities. He included his smile, his cheerfulness, and his willingness to help others. His father pointed out that Tyrone was also a good listener. He was always willing to help someone else. Then he said, "These are the reasons people like you. These are what people see when you enter the room."

That made sense to Tyrone, and he decided to take some risks. He would begin to socialize when there was food. He could tell his close friends how he was trying to manage his eating and ask them to encourage him.

He would worry about learning how to dance later. "This is a great start," his father said.

How did Tyrone's father help him?

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If you were in a situation like this with your child, what would you want to do?

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- ▶ dressing rooms or showers?
- ▶ Social functions where people can see her eat?
- ▶ Wearing clothes that might reveal her body's shape or size?

Teach your child to focus on:

- ▶ Positive qualities about her body
- ▶ Positive qualities that make her who she really is

If the answer is "Yes" to many of these questions, your daughter is probably letting some negative feelings about her body limit what she does. She is limiting the fun she could have doing more activities with friends.

If so, ask your daughter: "Is this OK with you? Do you want to continue to feel this way about your body? Do you want to continue to limit what you do? Or would you like to learn to

Encourage your child to find positive qualities in her appearance—and in her character.

accept your body? Would you like to try things that will let you have fun in other ways? Will you try some things that you would like to do even if you are not 100% comfortable?" Be sure to tell her you will help her.

## How to help your child

- ▶ Talk to your child about how the media can affect how we feel about our bodies.
- ▶ Identify ways your child's feelings about her body limit her.
- ▶ Help your child find qualities to like about her body and herself.
- ▶ Help your child learn what others like about her.

### SPECIAL FOCUS

## What can I do to help my child feel better about his body? I want him to feel better about himself and do more things that he likes to do.

- ▶ Encourage your child to talk to two friends about the positive qualities they see in him. Have him write down what they say and talk about it with you.
- ▶ Talk to your child about all the success he has had in the TLP program. About the weight he has lost. About how he has learned to keep track of his eating and activity behavior.
- ▶ Use Family Meetings. Tell your child some of the qualities you like about his body. Tell him other qualities you like about him. Ask him what qualities he likes about himself.

## How to help yourself

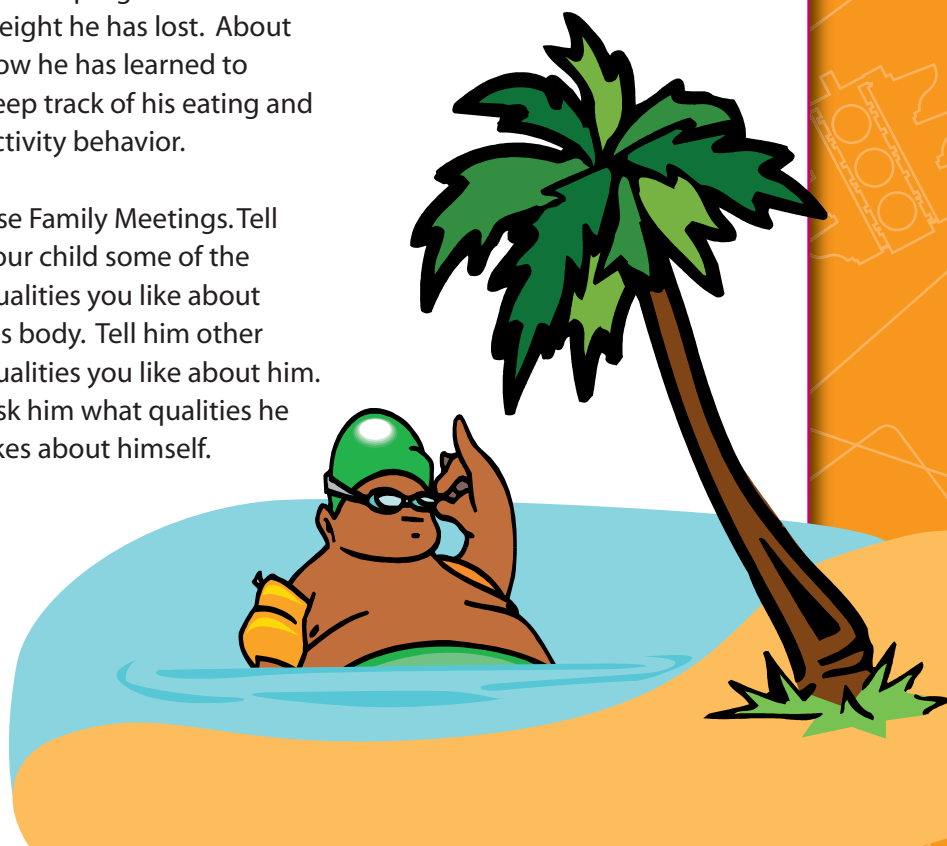
- ▶ Identify ways your feelings about your body limit you.
- ▶ Find qualities to like about your body and yourself.
- ▶ Learn what others like about you.

### PARENTS ASK

## What about my body? It's not so perfect, either. How can I talk to my daughter about accepting her body?

That's OK. In fact, it's something you can use to help your child come to better accept her body. Be sure that you don't say negative things about your body. Your child will pick up on that. Don't put yourself down.

It's fine to say that you are trying to lose weight. Just keep the focus on having a healthy body, not on appearances. That's a big part of the problem. The media gets us focused on appearances. On thinness or heaviness. But we want to focus



# Learning to Accept Your Body

## Help Your Child Identify Her Positive Qualities

*Help your child learn what attracts friends to her. Encourage your child to talk to 1 or 2 friends about the positive qualities they see in her. Ask your child what friends she would like to talk to. If she doesn't have any ideas, suggest two friends that you have thought of. Write their names down here:*

- 1.
- 2.

*Share with your child some of the positive qualities you see in her. Identify some positive qualities in your child's appearance. Identify other types of positive qualities that make her who she is. Make a list now so that you will be ready to talk to your child about this.*

Positive qualities about your child's appearance:	Positive qualities about your child's character:

## Help Your Child Expose the Media Messages

*You understand how the media tries to shape how we feel about our bodies. Use your understanding to help your child. Ask your child to find two images in the media that tell you how you should look. Go over them with your child. Talk about three things:*

- ▶ *The images*
- ▶ *What's not real in the images*
- ▶ *The messages they are sending*

*Ask your child what she thinks. Then share your thoughts.*

## Help Your Child Battle Back

*Talk to your child about these three questions:*

- ▶ *What's the truth about weight and happiness?*
- ▶ *What's the truth about weight and success in life?*
- ▶ *What would you like to say to the people who make the ads?*

*Ask your child what she thinks. Then share your thoughts.*



## Focus On Your Positives

*In the first column, write down what qualities best describe you as a person. What would your best friends say? Talking to them will help you get support from others. Write down the number that best fits how often you avoid each behavior.*

Qualities that describe me:	Qualities my friends say describe me:
Which of these qualities make you feel good about yourself?	
Which of these qualities do your friends say they value?	
What kind of qualities do you value in friends?	

## Does Your Body Image Limit You?

*How often do you avoid doing things because of your body image? Here are some behaviors commonly avoided by people because of thoughts or feelings about their bodies. How often do you avoid any of them? Write down the number that best fits how often you avoid each behavior.*

0=Almost Never or Never    1=Sometimes    2=Often    3=Almost Always or Always

*How often do I avoid...*

- Looking at my reflection in a mirror or a picture
- Physical activity that might call attention to my shape or weight, such as dancing, exercising, or playing recreational sports
- Physical contact and hugs because I might show others how my body feels
- Places where much of my body is exposed, like the pool, the beach, and public dressing rooms, or showers
- Social functions where people could see me eat
- Wearing clothes that might reveal my body's shape or size
- Weighing myself because I am uncomfortable with my weight

*Which of these things would you most like to change?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

# Learning to Accept Your Body

## Help your child expose the media message.

Talk to your child about how the media can shape our feelings about our bodies.

- ▶ The message in the ads is clear. If you can just be thin, all your troubles are over.
- ▶ But it's a lie. How you live your life determines how happy you will be.

## Help your child learn how to accept her body.

Go over these points with your child:

- ▶ There aren't any rules that say you should feel bad about your body when you reach a certain weight.
- ▶ People with the same body size and shape can feel very differently about their bodies.
- ▶ You can feel OK about your body even if you are trying to lose weight.
- ▶ When you accept your body, you are more likely to do things.

Point out that there's **more to appearance than size**. Then try to help your child find other positive qualities about his appearance.

- ▶ Ask what she sees as positive about her appearance.
- ▶ Tell her what you see that's positive.

Point out that there are **other positive qualities that make her who she is**. There's more to her than her appearance.

- ▶ Ask what her friends like about her.
- ▶ Tell her the qualities you admire about her.
- ▶ Ask what positive qualities she sees in herself.

Teach your child to focus on:

- ▶ Positive qualities about her body
- ▶ Positive qualities that make her who she really is

