

# Go Beyond Your Comfort Zone

PARENTS ASK:

## What's a comfort zone?

We all have comfort zones. There are some physical activities we feel OK doing. But not all activities. There may be others we're not comfortable doing. We put limits on ourselves. We only do what we feel safe doing. We stay in our comfort zone.

Being overweight can cause your child to feel bad about her body. She may not feel comfortable doing some things. Or she may not like the way she looks. So she avoids them.

Maybe she doesn't like how she looks in her swimsuit. She thinks others are thinking about how big she looks. So she avoids going to the beach or the pool. Or she may go, but hides her body under a big t-shirt. She narrows her comfort zone. She misses out on the fun of swimming and playing in the water.

Or, she might not like how she looks playing basketball. She thinks she looks fat. She thinks she looks clumsy. So she doesn't try when anyone else is around. She hides in her comfort zone.

PARENTS ASK:

## What's wrong with my daughter staying in her comfort zone?

It can keep her from doing GREEN activity. It can keep her from doing things with other people. It can keep her from doing a lot of things she might like to do. It can make it harder to like herself. Sure, she may feel safe. But *she's missing out on a lot of fun* when she limits herself like this.

PARENTS ASK:

## My child feels bad about his body. It limits what he does. What can I do to help?

Sit down with him and make a list of GREEN activities his friends do. Write down activities he might like to try. Then ask him: *What activities do you stay away from? What feelings or thoughts keep you from doing them? What would*

### KEY GOALS

## Accepting her body will help your child meet 4 key goals:

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

*you like to try if you felt more comfortable?"*

Go through the activity in the Help Sheet with your son. It will help you both see if there are



You and your child miss out on a lot of fun when you limit your comfort zone.

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

- ▶ How to tell if feelings about her body limit your child
- ▶ How to help your child expand her comfort zone so she can do more things



some ways he is limiting what he does because of feelings about his body.

PARENTS ASK

### How can I help my child learn to go beyond her comfort zone?

You can do a lot to help her learn to do things she isn't comfortable with now.

- ▶ First, help her identify an activity that's a little beyond her comfort zone. It should be something she would like to do if she felt OK about herself. She might feel a little uncomfortable thinking about doing it. But not too uncomfortable. Start with something she has the best chance for success with right away.
- ▶ Then ask her: *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 accept your body more? Would you like to try things that will let you have more fun? Will you try some things that you would like to do even if you are not 100% comfortable?*
- ▶ Then, help your daughter make a plan to try the activity. Ask her questions about her motives, her skills, and her support. Does she

need to learn new skills to do it? Help her think about:

- ▶ Why she wants to do it
- ▶ What skills she has
- ▶ What could help her

PARENTS ASK

- ▶ Encourage her to believe in herself. Tell her to think positively and enjoy herself. Tell her to try it! Praise her for doing it. Remind her that she expands her comfort zone one step at a time.
- ▶ Help her think about how it went after she's done an activity. Ask:
  - ▶ What was fun about it?
  - ▶ What was uncomfortable?
  - ▶ How did you handle the discomfort?
  - ▶ How did you handle being teased, if you were?
  - ▶ What would you have done differently, if anything?
  - ▶ How do you feel about yourself now?
  - ▶ Have you praised yourself for doing it?
  - ▶ Are you ready to try it again?

### My son wants to wait to do sports until he loses 50 pounds. He hates the way he looks. Is this OK?

It's not a good idea. Your son needs to be realistic about his goals. He needs to take things one step at a time.

Sometimes people get confused about their goals. They want to see big changes in their bodies right away. But that doesn't work. It's not a realistic goal. Sure, losing weight can be a long-term goal. Getting stronger can be a long-term goal. That's OK. But he needs to be patient. Progress comes one step at a time.

Explain this to your son. He needs to set realistic goals. He

Plan ways for your child to go beyond her comfort zone one step at a time.

Your daughter may feel uncomfortable in both a swimsuit and gym clothes. She doesn't play basketball or go to the beach. But she's more comfortable in her gym clothes than in a swimming suit. So you could encourage her to try basketball. She'll have fun. She'll learn to feel better about her body. Now gym clothes aren't so bad. That's a win.

After a while she may be ready to try going to the beach. That would be another small win, even if she kept her shorts and t-shirt on most of the time. This is how she could take one step at a time. Each step expands her comfort zone.

Alicia's mother heard about a soccer league for girls at the Y. She told Alicia about it. "It's for girls your age," she said to Alicia. "You like soccer. Why don't you sign up?"

"No. That's not for me," said Alicia. "I wouldn't feel comfortable."

"Why not? I know you like soccer. You could have fun and get some physical activity," her mother said.

"It's how I look. I look fat in gym clothes. Just look at my legs. Look at my thighs," Alicia said. "Besides, I'm clumsy. I don't play that well. I'd be the worst player on the team."

"That's OK," her mother said. "You'd be on the team. You'd be having fun. You'd be with people you like. You'd get better over time. Let's see if we can make a plan. Maybe there's a way you can expand your comfort zone."

"All right. Maybe we can find a way," said Alicia. They talked it through and made a plan. Alicia said she would try it for a while. She decided to try expanding her comfort zone.

- ▶ She would wear sweatpants. "I'll feel more comfortable that way," she said.
- ▶ She would focus on her goals. She would think about what she was doing. She would not compare herself to other people. "One goal is to try hard. Another is to learn to pass the ball better. I won't worry about how many points I score."
- ▶ She would think positive thoughts. "I'll remind myself that I'm out there trying, and that's progress," she said.
- ▶ She would also ask her friend Anita to join her. "That way we can support one another," she said.

After the first game, Alicia said, "It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. In fact, it was kind of fun. But I still didn't feel completely comfortable." Her mother praised her for trying.

During the second game, she got really hot and sweaty. She decided to take off her sweatpants. She was nervous about it. "But so what," she said to herself. "What these girls think isn't the end of the world. Besides, Anita's heavy, and she's wearing shorts." So Alicia took the risk. She wasn't as hot, and no one said a word about her legs. Soon she really got into the game. She forgot about how she looked.

Alicia told her mother what she had done. Her mother was very surprised and happy for Alicia. "I'm really proud of you," she said.

"You've expanded your comfort zone. This is a small win. You can build on it. It will help you learn to try other new things. You can expand your comfort zone little by little." Alicia thought so too.

What do you like about what Alicia's mother did?

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Is there a situation you'd like to handle like this?

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Tell your child to be fair to herself when she compares herself to others.



What you compare yourself to can have a lot to do with how you feel about yourself.

Go over these tips with your child:

- ▶ Be fair to yourself when you compare.
- ▶ Compare only when it makes you feel good about yourself.
- ▶ Use your positive thinking skills when you slip-up and compare.

can't suddenly have a different body. Instead, he needs to change the way he feels about his body. These are realistic goals:

- ▶ *To accept his body as it is.*
- ▶ *To expand his comfort zone.*
- ▶ *To feel OK about trying new things.*

### **My daughter compares herself to others a lot. She ends up feeling bad about herself. How can I help her?**

PARENTS ASK

Most of the time comparing is not helpful. It can make you feel bad about yourself. It can make you feel bad about your body. This can limit what you do.

Lots of times we aren't fair to ourselves. It's not fair for your daughter to compare herself to someone who is really good at something. She's not a professional model. She's not a professional ball player. She's not a pro. So it's not fair to compare herself to one.

It's not fair to compare herself to the best player on the team. Or to one of the older kids. Or to someone who has practiced more. That's not fair either.

Sometimes it's OK to compare herself to someone she is learning from. Maybe someone is teaching her to play ball, a guitar, or chess. Maybe someone is teaching her to sing. It's OK to see how much she is learning. How much she is improving.

### **What should I say when my child slips up and compares herself to others?**

PARENTS ASK

Tell her to turn her negative thoughts into positive thoughts. She should think about her positive qualities. About all the things her body can do. Remind her that she is learning how to do something new. Praise her for this. Praise her for trying. Praise her for going beyond her comfort zone.

### **How to help yourself move beyond your comfort zone**

- ▶ Learn how my feelings about my body limit what I do.
- ▶ Learn what triggers bad feelings about my body.
- ▶ Stop comparing myself unfairly to others.
- ▶ Learn to expand my comfort zone.

### **How to help your child move beyond her comfort zone**

- ▶ Help her recognize what triggers her bad feelings.
- ▶ Help her plan to move just beyond her comfort zone.
- ▶ Teach her to avoid comparisons.



# Go Beyond Your Comfort Zone

## How Does Body Image Limit Your Child?

Your child has some questions in the Help Sheet that will show how feelings about her body limit her activities. Go over it with her. Ask if there are other ways that are not on the chart. Ask about her feelings. Ask about what your child would like to change.

## Help Your Child Move Outside Her Comfort Zone

Your child has an activity that will help her plan how to do an activity that is just outside her comfort zone. Go over the activity with your child. This is an important activity. Help your child do a careful job of planning. Spend some time talking about your child's motivation and support, as well as the plan itself. Help your child evaluate what happened when she went outside her comfort zone. Help her compare what happened to what she planned for.

## How Does Your Body Image Limit You?

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

0	1	2	3
<i>Almost Never or Never</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Almost Always or Always</i>

- \_\_\_\_\_ Looking at myself 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. \_\_\_\_\_

## Try An Activity Just Outside Your Comfort Zone

*Make a plan to do it. Think about your motives, your skills, and your support.*

Activity:

### My Motives – Why I want to do it

Why would I like to do it? What makes it fun?

What makes it uncomfortable?

How will I feel about myself if I learn to do it and feel OK?

### My Skills

How can I handle feeling uncomfortable? Or being teased?

What could I say to myself?

What skills will help me do the activity?

### My Support

Who could encourage me? Or do it with me? Or teach me to do it?

How should I ask for support?

## How Did It Go?

*What happened when you went outside your comfort zone? Evaluate a challenging activity that you tried.*

Activity:

Date I did the activity:

Compare what happened to what you planned for:

What did you learn?

What are you most proud of?

What would you do differently?

# Go Beyond Your Comfort Zone

## Tips for not making harmful comparisons about your body

Go over these tips with your child. Make sure he really understands them.

- ▶ Be fair to yourself when you compare yourself to others.
- ▶ Try not to let being teased limit what you do.
- ▶ Use your positive thinking skills when you slip-up and compare.

## Teach your child to go beyond her comfort zone.

- ▶ Help her think about activities she would like to do if she felt more comfortable with her body.
- ▶ Help her pick an activity that's just a little beyond her comfort zone. Start with one she has the best chance of success with right now.
- ▶ Encourage her to try the activity. Make a plan to do it. Consider:

Why she wants to do it	What skills she has	What could help her
How will you feel about yourself if you do it?	What skills would help you do the activity?	How would support help you?
What makes it uncomfortable?	What could you say to yourself?	Who could do it with you?
Why would you like to do it?	How could you handle being uncomfortable?	Who could encourage you? Who could teach you to do it?
What would make it fun?	How could you handle being teased?	How will you ask for support?

- ▶ Put the plan to work. Encourage friends and other family members to support her.
- ▶ Encourage her to believe in herself. To think positively and enjoy herself.
- ▶ After she's done an activity, ask about how it went:
  - ▶ What was fun about it?
  - ▶ What was challenging?
  - ▶ How did you handle the challenge?
  - ▶ How did you handle being teased, if you were?
  - ▶ What would you have done differently, if anything?
  - ▶ How do you feel about yourself now?
  - ▶ Have you praised yourself for doing it?
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