

BODY IMAGE *Tips* YOUNG PEOPLE

Did you know that body image is how you FEEL and THINK about your body? It's actually not about what you look like!

No two people were born to look or be the same. Celebrating and embracing our differences is really important. There isn't a right or a wrong way to look.

Beauty and appearance ideals exist in all societies and they are all unhelpful! These ideals don't encourage uniqueness but instead suggest that everyone 'should' and 'could' look a certain way, which is unrealistic! Spending time, money and energy on changing your appearance is exhausting and research tells us that altering your appearance won't help your body confidence or self-esteem in the long run. What will help, is reminding yourself that you have the power to change the way you see, think and feel about how you look.

Here are some positive tips to help you:

You are so much more than your appearance. You are not an 'object' or a 'thing'. You are a human being. Your weight, body shape, muscles, hair/skin colour, complexion, height does not define you. Your appearance does not determine your worth.

Avoid making unhelpful comparisons. The more you compare your appearance to siblings, friends, celebs, sport stars or anyone, the more unhappy you'll feel. It's ok to admire beauty in others, but avoid devaluing your own body if you do.

Treat your body well. Your body is the only one you're ever going to get. It might not look exactly as you'd like, but it does so many amazing things for you. Speaking kindly, finding exercise and activities that you love, eating mindfully and taking time out to rest, demonstrates body respect. It's really important that you avoid any kind of restrictive diet and excessive exercise plans. They do not work or help your body confidence (no matter how much advertisers try to make us think otherwise).

Keep yourself media and social media savvy.

What you see may not always be! It's important that you stay savvy when looking at media and social media images. Photoshop, hair and make-up, endless filters and editing tools work to create the highly stylised and perfect images that you see – on celebrities and our friends. You never really know what is going on behind the image, remember, no one is perfect.

Go easy on yourself... AND your friends! Body bullying and food shaming is never ok. Speaking kindly to yourself and your friends – face to face and online – is the only way. If you wouldn't say it to a friend, avoid saying it to yourself. If you couldn't say it to someone's face, don't say it to them online. Words can build people up or tear them down. Use your words carefully (to yourself and to others).

Have fun with your appearance but don't let it rule your life. It's ok to take pride in your appearance and have fun with fashion and styling (if that's what interests you), but obsessing and worrying about how you look is not good for us. Remember, you are more than your appearance, so spend time doing the things that make you feel good.

Surround yourself with people who accept you as you are. Changing your appearance to fit in won't make you a better, more lovable person. If a person or group doesn't like YOU for who YOU are, then it's time to find some new people to spend time with. You are enough just as you are.

If your body image is getting you down or you are worried about a friend, talking helps and Butterfly is here to listen:

National Helpline on **1800 ED HOPE (1800 33 4673)** or **support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au**