

# BODY IMAGE

## TEN WAYS TO HELP YOUR DAUGHTER LOVE HER BODY\*\*

### 1. Give Her Permission to Love Her Body

This can open the door to the kind of talk you wish you had with your mother. Talk to your daughter about your own early experiences that may have led you to mistrust, dislike, or become critical of your body. Point out to her how unrealistically slender images portrayed in the media often lead girls and women to feel shame about their own physiques.

### 2. Model a Healthy Body Image

If you have engaged in any putdowns of your own body, decide right now to end this self-destructive behavior. No more obsessive weighing of yourself. Put an end to complaints about your own body. Tell your daughter that you have been wrong to be so critical about your body.

### 3. Teach Her to Make Eye Contact

Our eyes are part of our body, too! Explain that our eyes can convey silent and powerful messages. Eye contact is one way of showing respect and empathy. Show your daughter how to narrow her eyes and how shooting sparks of anger can protect her personal space. Point out people you might know who know how to use their eyes effectively.

### 4. Encourage Her to Participate in Sports

Because the focus on sports requires participants to view their bodies as functional rather than decorative, female athletes can develop an unwavering sense of their physical competence.

### 5. Challenge the Media

Tell your daughter that successful women in the real world come in all sizes; explain the transformation models undergo to become “camera ready”; limit fashion magazines in your home.

6. Help Her Understand the Difference Between Emotional and Healthy Eating

Does your daughter use food as a mood enhancer? Does she overeat when she is lonely or bored? Does she eat secretly? Speak to her about making the connection between feelings and overeating. Encourage her to talk about feelings and come up with a plan that can change what she does when she's in a situation in which she usually overeats.

7. Understand How Perfectionism and the Need to Please Are Linked to Eating Disorders

As with overeating, chronic undereating has been linked to emotional factors. Research has shown that having a poor body image is a significant predictor of future eating disorders. Do you see perfectionist tendencies in your daughter? Does she become anxious or depressed when she can't accomplish impossibly high goals? The need to please is a problem for many girls and women. Model self-care and taking care of your own needs.

8. Respect Her Pulling Away

Adolescence is a confusing time. Many girls feel self-conscious about their bodies and are aware of their new more womanly body. Be respectful of her boundaries when it comes to hugging and touching, knock on her door before entering. Girls may feel particularly apprehensive with their dads.

9. Watch Those Teasing Words

Many dads use teasing as a way to communicate with their daughters. This can often be fun for younger girls, but may not be for pubescent girls who may feel acutely sensitive about their changing bodies. Once good-natured teasing crosses the line, it becomes shaming behavior. Shame destroys self confidence.

10. Teach Her About the Wisdom of Her Body

Do you pay attention to what your body might be telling you about your health or an unhealthy situation? Do you adequately respond to feelings of fullness and hunger? Teach her to listen to her body's wisdom.

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\*\*Taken from "101 Ways to Help Your Daughter Love Her Body" by B.L. Richardson and E. Rehr.