

BODY IMAGE NOTES - Raising Girls 2/19/20

Video clips from Allure 6-18 year girls discussing body image and Embrace film clip about loving your body no matter the shape or size.

Carrie Kirkpatrick reviewed slide highlights:

FOOD, BODIES, BEHAVIOR

What are the issues I have about food, bodies and behavior?

It is important to look at ourselves as parents and how we relate to food and our bodies....to also consider how we are talking to and what messages we are sending to our kids. We often comment on our kids' looks, which only reinforces to them that their looks are important, rather than their character or internal qualities. Start to notice your language to your kids... "you look pretty" or ' your hair/clothes/makeup/outfit look great today' vs. 'you worked hard on that project' or 'your dedication to your soccer practice is awesome'.

What is the current overall body image climate our kids live in?

Looks and physical appearance are considered to be of primary importance in our socio/cultural environment today. Girls and women are particularly targeted by often being defined or defining themselves by their bodies or appearance. There is often a lot of shame and secrecy around the word 'body'. Internet information and access also influences disordered eating and is only reinforced by the images our kids see on social media and apps like photoshop and snapchat that allow users to modify their appearance. We are constantly bombarded with images of perceived beauty and youth in our society...think skinny, long straight hair, big bust and booty, full makeup, provocative poses etc.

In our 'healthy' Jackson community, what is the local experience?

There is a higher than average level of eating disorders in our physically active community. The ages of eating disorders like anorexia nervosa (inability to maintain weight, restricting food intake, over exercise) and bulimia(purging, vomiting, laxative abuse) co op health and wellness and are starting in kids as early as 7-8 years old. Eating disorders also have high mortality rates if left unaddressed.....early intervention is the best chance for recovery.

When to be concerned about and seek professional help.

When kids express body discontentment, it is often the tip of the iceberg and linked to sadness, loneliness, depression and anxiety. 'I am so ugly I hate myself'. Body Image disturbance impacts self esteem and often leads to substance abuse (drugs for weight control). It is important to have a candid, calm and non-judgemental discussion with kids about what is truly going on with them. Take stock of how you view your own body and how you speak about it is the most important piece you can manage in messaging to your kids and tuning into their experience.

Some Red Flags to look for...

Parents often miss overexercise, bingeing, purging and disordered relationships to food and bodies. Look for rapid weight loss, rituals or rules around food, becoming suddenly gluten free or vegetarian, eliminating or restricting certain food groups, a sudden interest in animal activism,

cutting food into small bites or separating food on a plate, not wanting to eat with other people, missing meals or compulsive exercise.

Q & A with local experts Nicole Rue Psy.D, Sadie Monaghan Ph.D, Mary Ryan R.D.

- We are programmed to compliment people on their LOOKS rather than who they ARE
- Notice our tendency to reassure or 'cheerlead' our kids when they make negative comments about their body- instead try to uncover what is driving or underneath their comments.
- Consider your child's relationship to food, their body, their parents and peers - kids go through phases in their self perception and relationship to food and their bodies
- Use reflective listening and motivational interviewing techniques to facilitate discussions with your children ' I have noticed..... Help me understand..... How can I support you in..... That must be hard...'
- Belonging, acceptance and control are the primary factors influencing eating disorders....there is no one cause. Social pressures only reinforce losing weight. -Perfectionism is a key factor for anorexia. Often sensitive, people pleasing kids succumb to disordered eating.
- Eating disorders are elaborate and creative coping mechanisms that work well at first until they become unhealthy/psychologically & medically unsafe. They thrive in secrecy.
- There is NO WRONG BODY. We often identify feeling bad with feeling fat, when actually it is okay to be in a bigger body. Don't talk badly about anybody's body.
- If a child asks to lose weight, dig a little deeper and ask why don't they accept themselves as they are, what is the desire to lose weight really about? Are they experiencing bullying, or are they experiencing discomfort with their body?

RESOURCES:

TheBodyPositive.org

Body Respect - Linda Bacon

The Triple Bind - Stephen Hinshaw Ph.D

Embody - Connie Sabczak

Beauty Redefined - twins in Utah

THINGS TO SAY.... (FROM THEBODYPOSITIVE .ORG)

Why do you feel that way ?

It's ok to have those feelings...

What do you think would happen if
you looked the way you want to ?

What's a part of your body you
really like ?

What are some awesome things your body can do ? I have felt that way about my body too...

Let's recite an affirmation together

I feel sad knowing how many girls and women hate their bodies and feel they need to change them.