

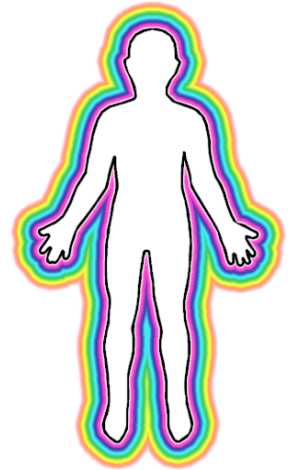
Body Image

What is Body Image?

Body image is how we think and feel about ourselves physically, AND how we believe others see us.

Body Image is made up of 2 themes:

1. Body Perception – which is our assessment of the physical aspects of our body and the extent to which this assessment is accurate.
2. Body Satisfaction – this is the extent to which we are content with our body shape and size.



Body Image through a CBT lens

We often use CBT to show how our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and physical signs can impact upon each other.



Thoughts - The way you think about our body is your cognitive body image. This is not always a correct representation of how you actually look and can lead to a preoccupation with body shape and weight.



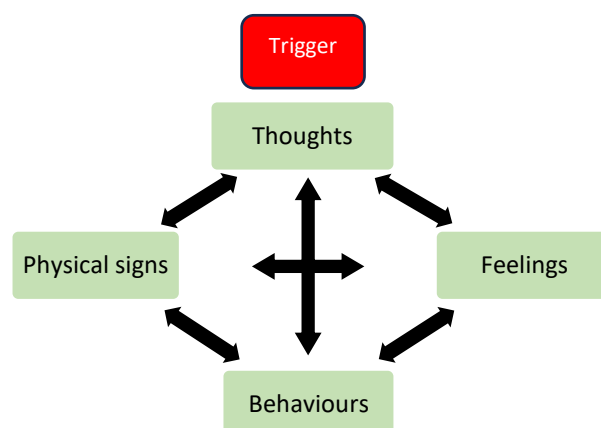
Feelings - Feelings may include happiness, worry, disgust or shame. This is often summarised as the amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction you feel about your shape, weight and individual body parts.



Behaviours - Behaviours you engage in is as a result of your body image. When a person is dissatisfied with the way they look, they may employ behaviours as a means to change appearance or isolate themselves.



Physical signs - This is how your body physically reacts when you have thoughts and feeling about your body image. This is based on the amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction you feel.



Body Image Language

Being mindful of the language we use around Body Image is important! The following terms show what is acceptable and what isn't acceptable (based on Mental Health Foundation Scotland, 2020).



Good Body Image

Body Acceptance

Poor Body Image

Body Dissatisfaction



Healthy Body Image

Body Positive / Positivity

Body Hate

The term 'Good Body Image' is commonly used to describe the ability to separate one's value as a person from how one looks.

The term 'Poor Body Image' is commonly characterised by a dissatisfaction with appearance and the engaging of behaviours such as hiding, checking, avoiding and fixing in order to deal with the dissatisfaction.

Who is affected by poor body image?

Age – can occur at all ages but is generally shaped during late childhood and adolescence

Gender – can occur in all genders but is commonly assumed that females are more likely to experience it than males.

Disabilities – those living with a physical or visible disability are subject to a higher risk.

Body Size – those with higher weight are at an increased risk due to societal standards and focus on weight

Personality Types – those with perfectionist tendencies, high achievers, those who internalise beauty ideals and often compare themselves to others.

Young People (*stem4*, 2022)

77% (3 in 4) young people are unhappy with how they look

To feel better about their bodies, 48% of young people have dieted, skipped meals or fasted, taken supplements to lose weight or gain muscle.

45% of young people have received negative and hateful comments about their appearance.

They say that this has then caused them to: withdraw, exercise excessively, stop socialising, drastically restrict their food intake, or self-harm in some way.

Causes of Poor Body Image

Societal Messages - The acceptance of certain body types and looking a certain way to be classed as 'ideal'.

Stigma and Shame - Linked to societal messages – the stigma and shame around certain body appearances.

Media - Exposure to images / videos of 'ideal' bodies. These are assumed to correlate with having 'ideal' lives.

Advertising - Products to change our bodies to make them 'ideal'.
Cosmetic surgery, fillers, weight loss supplements, steroids, beauty and hair products and more!

Interaction with others - Overhearing or being part of discussions with family, friends or others can have a significant impact upon how you see yourself.

Bullying - People who are bullied about their appearance are likely to adopt a poor body image outlook.



Signs to look out for:

Avoiding	Fixing
Avoidance of certain situations that may provoke distress: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- In public places- Social situations- Physical contact with others- Being seen without makeup- Being near people you think are attractive- Buying new clothes- Looking at yourself undress- Being seen in bright lights / from certain angles- Letting people see parts of your body you don't like- Looking in mirror / reflective surfaces- Dressing / undressing in front of others- Conversations about physical appearance- Opportunities for others to make comments about you- Physical / active sports- Having photos taken- Trying on new clothes in a shop	Involves trying to adjust, alter or improve your appearance in some way: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Taking steroids- Dieting excessively- Exercising excessively- Weightlifting excessively- Picking skin- Grooming excessively- Using clothes to look different- Buying lots of beauty products- Buying lots of new clothes- Using medications, treatments or ointments excessively- Using tanning products or sunbeds excessively- Skipping meals- Spending a long time getting ready to leave the house- Frequently visiting appearance related professionals- Sourcing lots of information on methods of appearance improvement- Vomiting after eating- Taking protein supplements

Checking	Hiding
<p>Checking your body in order to feel better about your appearance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seeking reassurance about how you look - Comparing yourself to others - Checking appearance in the mirror - Measuring parts of your body - Checking your body through touching, poking, prodding, squeezing, pinching 	<p>Hiding to prevent others from seeing how you look and the bad things you think could happen as a result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wearing sunglasses - Wearing baggy clothes - Wearing hats - Using makeup - Using your hands - Hiding behind your hair - Positioning yourself in certain ways - Using low lighting or darkness

Tips for improving Body Image

1. Recognise diversity – everyone is unique.
2. Appreciate your body – for what it can do, your skills and qualities rather than how you look.
3. Be mindful of language – model positive behaviours and language around others.
4. Social media cleanse – avoid being preoccupied by what we see on social media.
5. Set health-focused goals rather than weight-related
6. Take care of yourself – reach out to others if you need help.



(National Eating Disorders Collaboration, Mental Health Foundation)

Support

