



School Counsellor Newsletter

Edition 45

Promoting positive body image in boys: Let's talk about social media

This newsletter is the fourth in a series inviting parents to learn about how behaviour and language can contribute to body image, shape and weight concerns – along with unhealthy eating – among boys. This newsletter focuses on key messages about social media. It is based on the excellent advice provided by The Psychology Hub's registered nurse and therapist, Anna Comins, and senior clinical psychologist, Jo Vallance, in the livestream they delivered to the Medbury and Christ's College parent community on 7 September. This newsletter is targeted at older boys but it is important for parents of younger boys to be aware of these issues as they grow up.

Social media presents a number of challenges when it comes to body image, especially as social media creates immense pressure and is often tied in with acceptance by friends. More often than not, social media promotes an ideal of what boys and young men should look like, suggesting what the perfect, toned body is. Unfortunately, social media often presents a one-sided, unhelpful, unhealthy and unattainable body image for most boys. Extreme diets and workout routines often lead to a body type that is not functional and is often unhealthy to maintain. Trying to attain such a perfect body may be unhealthy and may take away from other aspects of your son's life as social media suggests that what is most important is appearance, rather than taking a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. If your son is looking at 'perfect, toned body' images often enough on social media this may become the "expected norm" for him.

As a parent, it is important to be curious, calm and non-judgmental as best you can and most importantly have conversations with your son about what he is looking at online and through social media. You can show an interest and talk to your son by asking questions such as "Who are you following at the moment?" and "Does this person make you feel good about yourself?" Young people are often not able to see that something is biased or unrealistic and they may also not understand the lucrative market that is health and body magazines. As an adult you have a vital role to play alongside your son's social media use: have conversations, be curious and be the voice of reason in an unrealistic online world.

Whilst a lot of online information can be damaging, a powerful online source of support which you may wish to look into further is ['The Butterfly Foundation'](#), an Australian organisation that focuses on support for eating disorders and body image issues, including information and programmes for working with young people.



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Jenelle is a Registered Provisional Member with NZAC (New Zealand Association of Counsellors).

If you wish to discuss the services the School Counsellor can provide, please see your son's homeroom teacher or Warren Durant:

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