



School Counsellor Newsletter

Edition 42

Promoting positive body image in boys

This newsletter is the first 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.

Whilst we often associate females with issues around body image in recent years there has been a growing increase in the number of males who are dissatisfied with their bodies. It has been suggested that as many as a third of people with eating disorders are men or boys. It is becoming more common for males to be dissatisfied with their body shape leading to anxiety, depression, health concerns and mental health issues. Yet, male body image issues can often go unnoticed as there is a perception males are more secure about their body image. The media, including social media, is described as playing a role in this issue, for example portraying the ideal male body type as strong and very muscular.

This trend is worrying but it is not the intention of this newsletter to cause alarm. The intention is to focus on what you can do to support your son. I strongly encourage all parents to become more informed about this issue so that you can notice signs of body image issues and most importantly check in with your language and behaviours to ensure that the messages you are sending to your son are helpful. Here are two action points to consider:

1. [Watch the livestream](#) hosted by the Christ's College and Medbury School wellbeing teams on 7 September at 7pm. Registered nurse and therapist, Anna Comins, and senior clinical psychologist, Jo Vallance, will detail healthy beliefs and behaviour to boost confidence and wellbeing among boys. Working in private

practice at the Psychology Hub in Riccarton, both Anna and Jo support young people who have body image concerns, eating disorders and associated problems.

2. Consider these proactive approaches as a parent:
 - **Be a Good Role Model:** Watch how you speak about your own appearance. If you are outwardly critical of your own body, your son could apply that negative view to his body.
 - **Educate on Media Manipulation:** Teach your son that the media constantly portrays unrealistic images of men and women. They are photoshopped to create perfect skin and physiques, implying that only this perfect standard is acceptable. It's not real.
 - **Nurture Personality and Interests:** Help your son shift his focus from perceived physical flaws to his interests or talents. This will nurture his inner qualities and build self-esteem.
 - **Compliment Deeper Qualities:** Praise a kind heart, giving nature, sharp brain, and all of the deeper qualities your son possesses.
 - **Listen Without Judging:** Listen to how your son feels without trying to argue him out of feeling that way.
 - **Provide Healthy Role Models:** Look for role models in your son's interest areas such as the arts, music, academia or sports.
 - **Get Outside Help:** If you notice irrational beliefs or behaviours in your son, seek the help of a trained medical professional.

If you would like to know more about the resources that have been used in creating this newsletter please do not hesitate to make contact.



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

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