
PRETTY POWERFUL PARENTS' GUIDE

OVER 50% OF PRESCHOOL AGED GIRLS ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR BODIES

Parents play a significant role in shaping their daughter's body image from an early age. What we say in front of our daughters has the power to influence their body image.

LANGUAGE FOR A HEALTHY BODY IMAGE:

- **Who you are is more important than how you look.** Emphasise your daughter's qualities that are not related to their appearance, like their personality traits. E.g., "you are generous, kind, thoughtful etc."
- **Everybody is special and deserves respect.** Communicate unconditional acceptance to let your daughter know that she is valued for who she is, not what she looks like.
- **Having fun is more important than being the best.** Communicate that it is more important to have a go and have fun, rather than to be the best and win or look a certain way.
- **Everyone is different, and that's a great thing.** Celebrate diversity with your daughter by explaining that everyone is different and differences are natural and healthy.
- **Healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes.** Help your daughter to understand that there is not just one 'ideal' type of body. All different body shapes and sizes have value, beauty and can be healthy.
- **Everybody is special and different in their own way.** Show your daughter that everyone has something special to offer and should be respected regardless of their size, shape, appearance and abilities.
- **Health is more important than looks.** Encourage your daughter to eat fruit and veggies to 'be healthy', 'feel good', and 'have energy', rather than lose weight or avoid getting fat.
- **Sometimes foods and everyday foods.** These terms can be used rather than labelling foods as 'good' or 'bad' or something that will make you fat.
- **Everybody has their own strengths.** Help your daughter to develop their confidence in their skills and abilities that are not related to their appearance. E.g., "You are very good at counting, drawing, imagining etc."

LANGUAGE TO TRY TO AND MINIMISE:

- **Try to minimise using words that make fun** of, or are negative about your daughter's appearance, particularly their weight.
- **Try to minimise speaking critically about other people's body** shapes and appearance.
- **Try to minimise the word dieting** in your house. Try to make this a more positive message by saying 'you are looking after your health by eating nutritious foods' rather than focusing on weight loss.
- **Try to minimise making critical comments about your own weight** or appearance because this may encourage your daughter to develop the belief that the certain body types are unacceptable. Be aware that you are a role model.
- **Try to minimise talking about exercising for weight loss or muscularity.** Instead, communicate a positive message by saying 'exercising for health, feeling good and having energy'.
- **Try to minimise labelling foods as "bad", "junk" or "foods that will make you fat"**. Explain to your daughter the difference between "sometimes foods" and "everyday foods".

Tips based on:

McCabe, M. P., Mellor, D., & Mealey, A. (2016). An educational programme for parents on the body image of preschool-aged boys. *Journal of health psychology*, 21(7), 1241-1248.

Hart LM, Damiano SR, Paxton SJ & Jorm AF. Preventing body dissatisfaction and unhealthy eating patterns in children: Strategies for parents of preschoolers. La Trobe University, Melbourne 2014.

References

Tatangelo, McCabe, Mellor, & Mealey, 2016

PRETTY POWERFUL CAMPAIGN

Words are powerful! It's important that we not only try to minimise negative comments about our bodies, but that we voice positive ones in front of our daughters. During the month of August, we are going to be focusing on 4 key 'I AM' phrases, one per week that we are encouraging parents to share with their little girls. Each phrase will seek to teach them the truth about their bodies and how they are valued.

01 EXPLAIN

Explain the week's key phrase to your little girl, and have them say it out loud every day for that week.

02 DEMONSTRATE

Do an activity that shows your little girl how she can live out the phrase. We'd love you to **share this with us** through [facebook.com/prettyfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/prettyfoundation) or [instagram.com/pretty_foundation](https://www.instagram.com/pretty_foundation) and use the hashtag **#prettypowerfulwords**

03 DIG DEEPER

We've created some amazing supporting activities for each week. You can download the activity sheets at www.prettymfoundation.org