

Spotlighting Teen Issues

for
Teens

Weight and Body Image

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You can never be too thin or be too rich! This popular phrase has been around a long time, but it sends the wrong message. You can definitely be too thin although I'm not sure about too rich part.

There is a serious gap between what is accepted as the ideal body and the way normal people look. This is true for both males and females in our society.

You may believe the myth that you can, and should, achieve physical perfection in order to have value. Most people define physical perfection as an unhealthy standard of thinness that is unattainable for most people. Movie stars and models in today's popular movies and on TV have unrealistic body sizes. The typical movie star in the 1950's was a size 12; and Marilyn Monroe, a popular movie star then, wore a size 14 skirt. With each decade since that time, the ideal for movie stars has become thinner. Now computer retouching makes models appear perfect. Computers can create bodies that don't exist. When young people and some adults compare themselves to models and movie stars, they become dissatisfied with their bodies.

Young people who do not feel good about their bodies have a greater likelihood of developing an eating disorder and are more likely to suffer from feelings of depression, isolation, low self-esteem and obsession with weight loss. Below is a list of 10 "Will-Powers" for improving body image. These

are listed on the National Eating Disorders website www.NationalEatingDisorders.org.

1. Twice a day, everyday, **I WILL** ask myself: "Am I benefiting from focusing on what I believe are the flaws in my body weight or shape?"
2. **I WILL** think of three reasons why it is ridiculous for me to believe that thinner people are happier or "better." I will repeat these reasons to myself whenever I feel the urge to compare my body's shape to someone else's.
3. **I WILL** spend less and less time in front of mirrors – especially when that makes me feel uncomfortable and self-conscious about my body.
4. **I WILL** exercise for the joy of feeling my body move and grow stronger. I will not exercise to lose weight, purge fat from my body or "make-up" for calories I have eaten.



5. **I WILL** participate in activities I enjoy, even if they call attention to my weight and shape. I will constantly remind myself that I deserve to do things I enjoy, like dancing, swimming, etc., no matter what my shape or size.

6. **I WILL** refuse to wear clothes that

are uncomfortable or that I do not like but wear simply because they divert attention from my weight or shape. I will wear clothes that are comfortable and make me feel comfortable in my body.

7. **I WILL** list five to 10 good qualities that I possess, such as understanding, intelligence, or creativity. I will repeat these to myself whenever I start to feel bad about my body.
8. **I WILL** practice taking people seriously for what they say, feel and do. Not for how slender or “well put together” they appear.
9. **I WILL** surround myself with people and things that make me feel good about myself and my abilities. When I am around people and things that support me and make me feel good, I will be less likely to base my self-esteem on the way my body looks.
10. **I WILL** treat my body with respect and kindness. I will feed it, keep it active and listen to its needs. I will remember that my body is the vehicle that will carry me to my dreams!

I will choose to take care of myself and my body!



For More Information

National Mental Health Association
<http://www.nmha.org/>

National Mental Health Information Center, SAMHSA, HHS
<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/>

Weight Control Information Network, NIDDK, NIH, HHS
<http://win.niddk.nih.gov/index.htm>

National Eating Disorders Association
http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=337

National Eating Disorders Information Center
<http://www.nedic.ca/>

References

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<http://www.mediaed.org/videos/MediaGenderAndDiversity/SlimHopes/studyguide/SlimHopes.pdf>

Levine, M & Smolak, L. (2005). 10 “Will-Powers for Improving Body Image. National Eating Disorders Association.
www.NationalEatingDisorders.org

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