

# 13 tips to help your child build a healthy body image

Children of all ages are exposed to ideas about thinness by parents, peers, and other sources. Starting in grade school, children may become more aware of body image as they compare themselves to others. Adolescents often become extremely concerned about their bodies and their weight. This is understandable since dramatic physical changes are occurring. Unrealistic media images of the ideal body also add to their concerns.

Here are 13 ways adults can help children and teens develop a healthy view of themselves:

1. Compliment children about the things they do, not always on how they look. Talk in terms of your child's health, personality, achievements in school, activity level, and other healthy lifestyle choices.
2. Avoid making comments that link being thin to being popular or healthy.
3. Teach children to take good care of their bodies.
4. Take some time to look at your own beliefs and attitudes about dieting and weight. Are you always on a diet? Do you get upset or anxious if you miss a workout? Remember that you are a powerful role model for your child.
5. Try not to say negative things about your own body or compare your body to other people's bodies.
6. Avoid criticizing other people, including family members, for the way they look, especially in front of children and teens.
7. Avoid pushing children and teens to excel beyond their abilities in school, sports, or other activities.
8. Give children and teens some freedom to make choices that are appropriate for their age and maturity.
9. Hold children and teens accountable and responsible for their actions.
10. Talk with children and teens each day to find out what is happening at school and with their friends. Listen to their concerns.
11. Give children and teens support. Help them solve their own problems in ways that they think will work. Avoid giving too much advice or trying to solve their problems for them. Be prepared to help them if their solutions do not work.
12. Talk with children and teens about their heroes and favorite adults in their lives. Encourage them to have many different kinds of heroes.
13. Praise children and teens for the things that make them different from other people.

**Help is available. For additional information, visit [MagellanHealth.com/MYMH](https://www.MagellanHealth.com/MYMH)**

Source: Healthwise