



Tips for Parents: Girls' Body Image

You've likely heard quite a bit about how the media makes girls feel about how they look. But you may be unaware of just how much this affects the girls in your life. In a world where what most girls hear is most important about themselves is their appearance, girls learn to hate how they look and fail to value themselves for their intelligence, personalities, ability to communicate and have good relationships, how well they do in school, and what they do to help others.

Some girls look at images of other teens and women that suffer from eating disorders, nicotine and drug addiction and otherwise unhealthy bodies—that have had plastic surgery and/or have been airbrushed to look even thinner or curvier—and want to do everything in their power to look that way.

You may also be unaware of how much that you say and do contributes to this self hatred. Do you spend a lot of time putting your own appearance down? Do you complain about being overweight, that your hair is ugly, or that you need plastic surgery or lots of makeup to look good enough? Do you praise your daughter for the efforts she makes? Do you value her first and foremost for who she is rather than how she looks?

Yes, the media is largely to blame. But as parents and teachers, there is much we can do to offset its influence on our girls. By stressing that girls and women have far more value than their sex appeal, showing girls that health is more important than being skinny, and expressing appreciation of a girl's character and efforts, you can do much to help.

For an in-depth conversation about media and body image as well as the sexualization of girls, take a look at these resources:

- [American Psychological Association's Report: Sexualization of Girls](#)
- [WebMD's Helping Girls with Body Image](#)

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