

BUILDING A HEALTHY BODY IMAGE IN A BODY OBSESSED WORLD

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Objectives

1. Attendees will learn about body image development and trends during the lifespan.
2. Attendees will learn about how obsessive exercise, social media, and dieting can affect body image and learn ways to respond.
3. Attendees will participant in experiential body acceptance exercise to increase positive body image.

Who I am

- Private practice counselor
 - BA: Art and Psychology
 - MA: Counseling
- Former art teacher and case manager
- Experience with substance and alcohol use disorders, college counseling, and eating disorders
- **Fun fact:** I have two cats named after psychologists!



Alyee Willets, human, LCPC, CMHC

Body image

- The mental representation an individual creates of themselves.
 - → Emotional response
- Often formed when we are very young and can continue to change throughout our lifetime.



Body image in the lifespan

- Self-system begins in infancy
- “Looking glass self” - James Cooley
- Girls report more dissatisfaction with their appearance than boys starting in early adolescence.
 - Why is this?

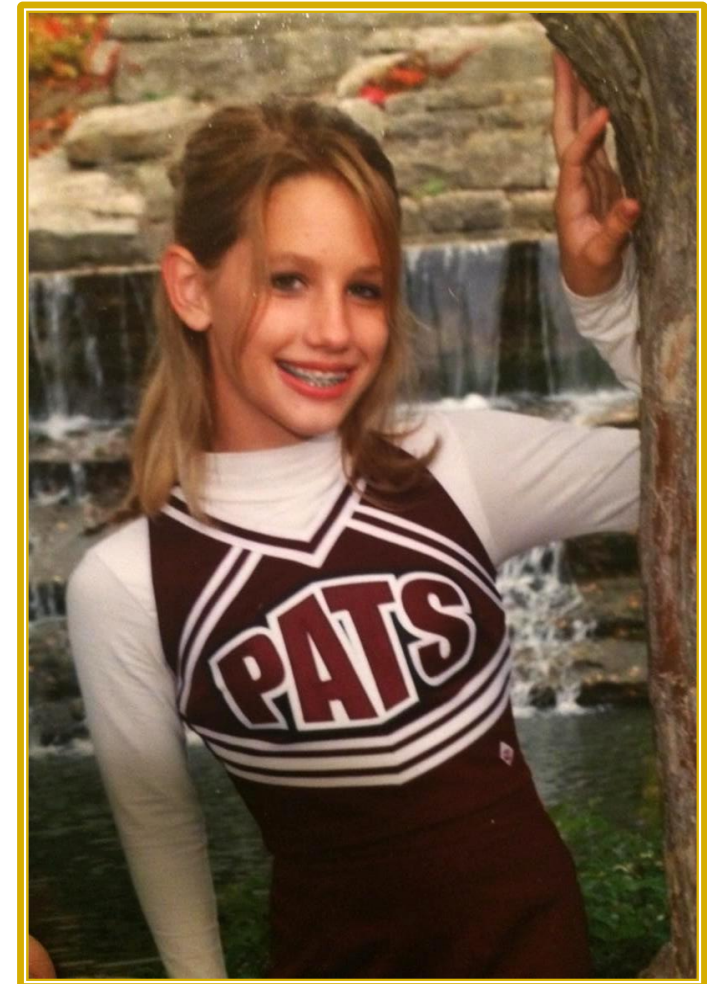


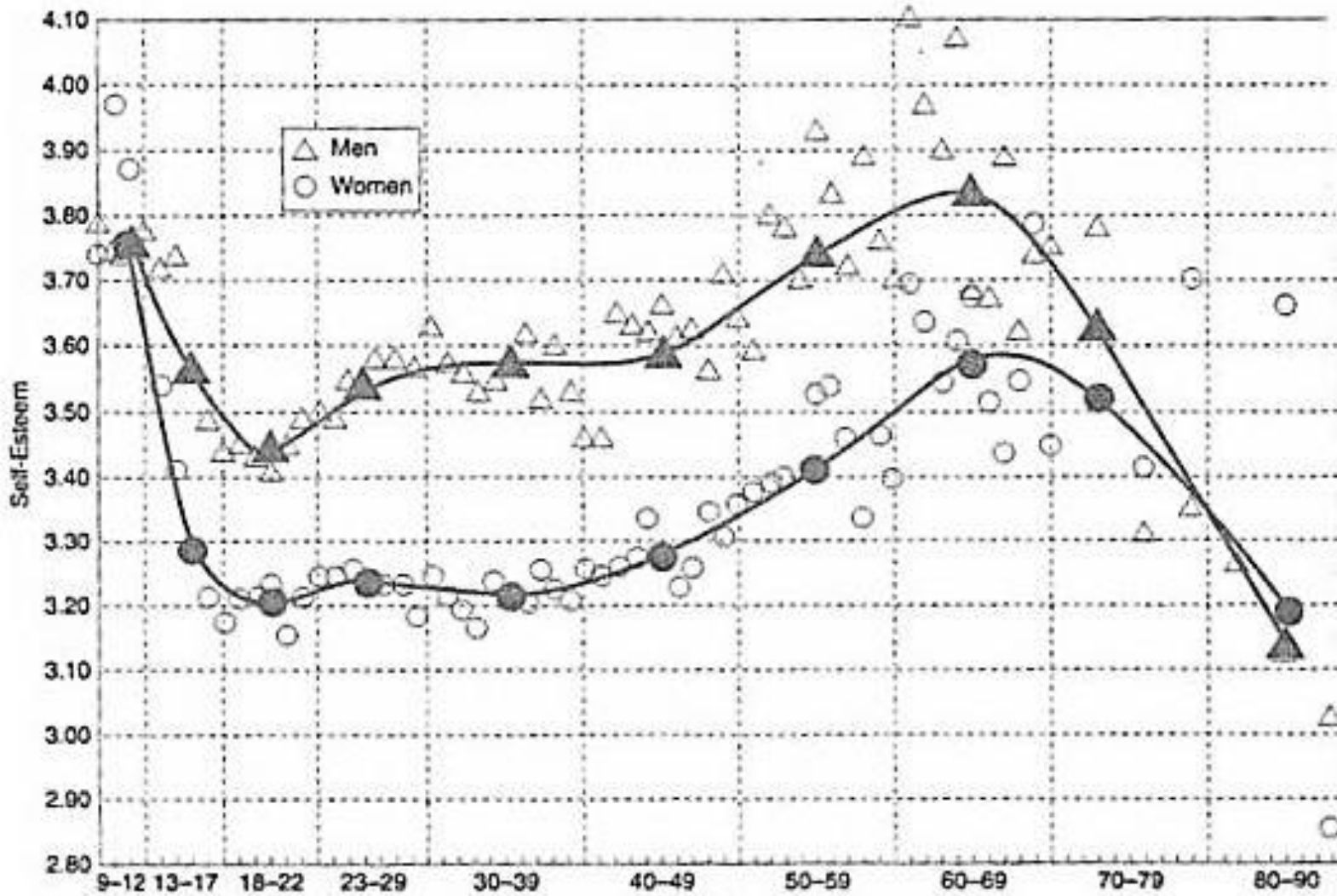
Body image in the lifespan

- Late childhood = self-esteem drop
- About 40% of girls and 25% of boys begin dieting in adolescence.
- Early puberty = higher risk for eating disorders
- More likely to have sex at a younger age
- May try to avoid puberty through restriction or dieting
- Peer rejection predictive of later problems

Body image in the lifespan

- Early recognition is associated with better outcomes
- American Academy of Pediatrics recommends screening all pre-teens and adolescents for eating disorders
- Eating disorder treatment admissions among adolescents and young adults have increased significantly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic





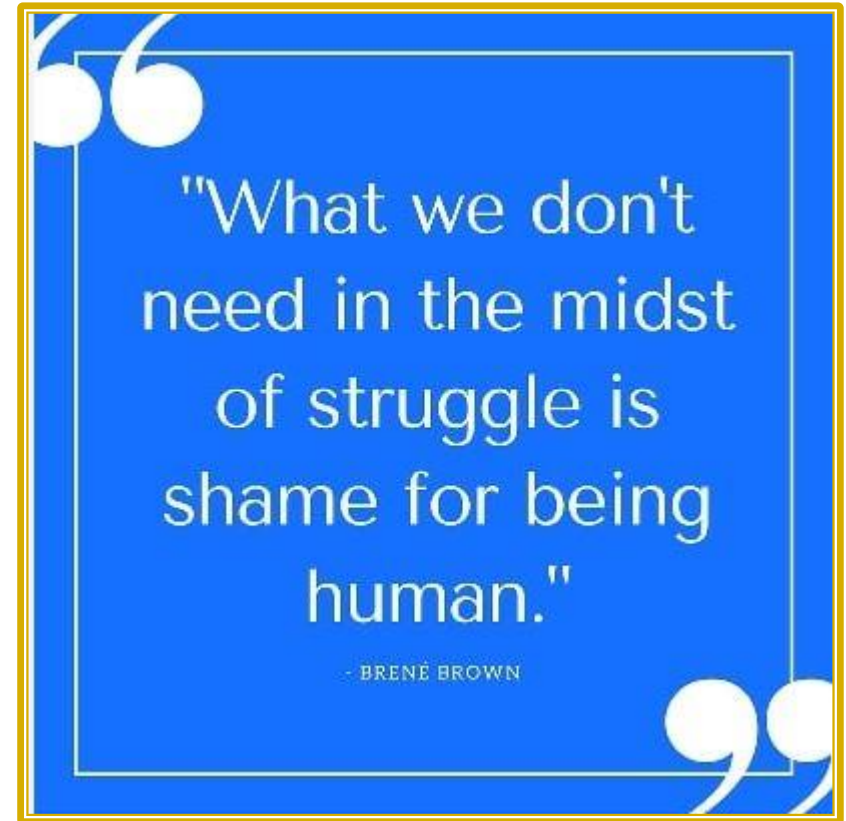
Robins, R.W., Trzesniewski, K. H., Tracy, J. L., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2002). Global self-esteem across the life span. *Psychology and Aging, 17*, 238.

Risk factors for negative body image

- Victim of bullying
- Hx of abuse/trauma
- Hx of mental health concerns
- Image focused sports
- Frequent dieting
- Personality traits
- COVID era
- Medical issues affecting intake
- Early puberty
- Age
- LGBTQIA+ community
- Social media
- etc...

Body image and shame

- Embarrassment: Least powerful, fleeting, funny, normal.
- Guilt: "I did something bad."
- Humiliation: People believe they deserve shame, they do not believe they deserve humiliation.
 - Angry; will tell someone.
- Shame: "I am bad."



Body image and social media

- In 2017, a survey of Facial Plastic surgeons found that 55% of surgeons reported seeing patients who requested to improve their appearance in selfies.
- As of October 2022, approximately 80 lawsuits have been filed in US against social media causing harm to adolescents.
- Comparison to lives and images that aren't real

Practicing critical awareness

- When we are aware of the shame messages we are receiving, we can recognize and share our experiences.
- Sharing with safe individuals reduces feelings of shame and increases connectedness, a direct opposite to the belief that “it’s just me that’s like this.”
- Everyone experiences shame. Whether we acknowledge it or not, it is there and will affect us at some point in our lives.

Body image and exercise

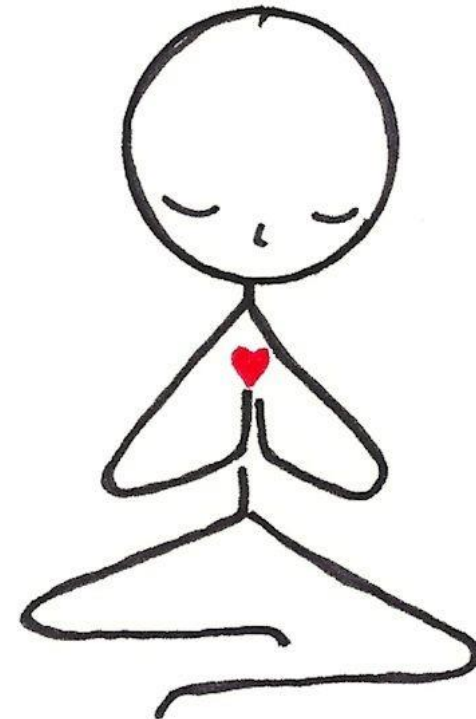
- Protective factors:
 - ↑ self-esteem
 - ↓ anxiety, depression, confusion, and anger.
 - ↓ self- and body-image concerns and obsessive self-monitoring
- Risk factors
 - Decreased intake
 - Eating disorder risk



Body image and exercise

Engeln, Shavlik, and Daly (2018)

- Body satisfaction increased after 16 min of aerobic activity
- Function-focused = greater body satisfaction and positive affect, “strong”
- Appearance-focused = self-objectification, “ashamed”



Application

Conceptualize exercise as a way of improving overall well-being:

- **Ex:** "Honor your body, push yourself for whatever goal you have, whether it be getting stronger, relieving stress, running your fastest mile, but also modify as you need and respect your body."

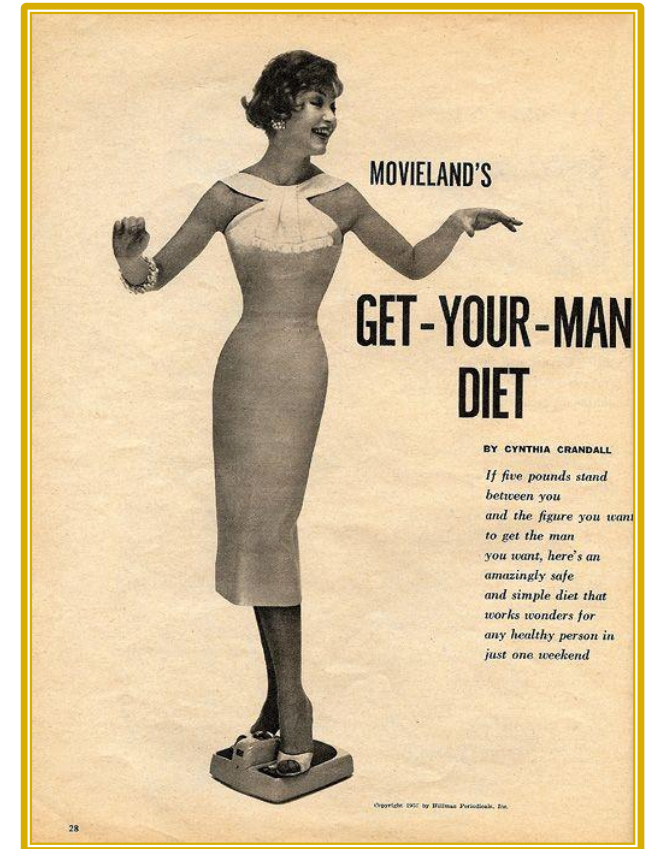


Dieting risk

- 35-57% of adolescent girls engage in crash dieting, including fasting, self-induced vomiting, diet pills, or laxative use (Boutelle, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Resnick, 2002; Neumark-Sztainer & Hannan, 2001; Wertheim et al., 2009).
- Girls who diet frequently are 12 times as likely to binge as girls who don't diet (Neumark-Sztainer, 2005)
- 95% of all dieters will regain their lost weight in 1-5 years (Grodstein, Levine, Spencer, Colditz, & Stampfer, 1996; Neumark-Sztainer, Haines, Wall, & Eisenberg, 2007).
- 35% of "normal dieters" progress to pathological dieting. Of those, 20-25% progress to partial or full-syndrome eating disorders (Shisslak, Crago, & Estes, 1995).

Ditch the diet talk

- Keep mealtimes/plans consistent
- Eat the same foods as your child
- Refrain from negative comments about food
- Distractions at the table
- Serve a variety of foods (frozen foods, desserts, fruits, grains, etc.).
- Reinforce what your loved one is working on with their treatment team
- Ask your loved one how they want to be supported at meal times



Warning signs of an eating disorder

- Preoccupation with weight/body shape
- Change in appearance
- Physiological changes
- Eating in secret
- Avoiding eating in public
- Extreme dieting, including restriction of foods/meals
- Decrease in academic or athletic performance
- Disappearing after meals
- Vomiting
- Isolation
- Excessive exercise

What's next?

- Set up a treatment team:

- Therapist
- Dietitian
- Physician
- Psychiatrist
- Educate yourself on eating disorder signs, symptoms, and care options
- Be open to being open

- Other helpful resources:

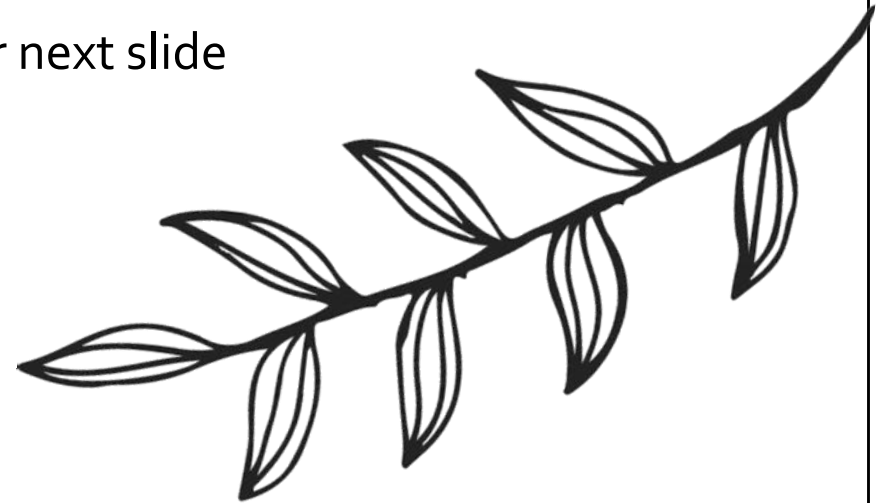
- Eating Disorder Hope
 - Hotline list
- NEDA
 - Local and national
- Free assessments are often offered through treatment centers





LET'S PRACTICE

Please take out a writing utensil and piece of paper for our next slide



Body image exercise

- Take a minute to think about your feet or hands, where they have taken you and what they do for you, daily, without recognition.
- Write a note to that body part expressing gratitude for all that it has done for you.
- If a hand or foot does not resonate with you, choose different body part that you feel comfortable with exploring.
- We will come back together in several minutes.

Final thoughts

- Body image is formed from a young age and is impacted by many factors.
- Protective factors include increasing positive experiences, having positive role models, and participating in a sport.
- Everyone experiences shame, but the more aware we are of it, the less it will impact us.
- Body image can be improved at any age through body acceptance, functionality, and neutrality.
- You are not alone... help is available!

"And I said to my body softly,
'I want to be your friend.' it took
a long breath and replied,
'I have been waiting my whole
life for this."

Nayyirah Waheed



www.paigefieldsted.com



Questions?



Other therapeutic body image interventions

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Dialectal Behavioral Therapy (DBT)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Shame Resilience
- Mindful movement
- Focus on spirituality
- A focus on body acceptance and neutrality rather than solely focusing on body positivity, which may not be attainable for everyone.

Further reading/resources

Informational: Eating disorders and mental health issues

- Healing Developmental Trauma: How Early Trauma Affects Self-Regulation, Self-Image, and the Capacity for Relationship, by Laurence Heller Ph.D. and Aline LaPierre Psy.D.
- Set Boundaries, Find Peace: A Guide to Reclaiming Yourself, by Nedra Glover Tawwab
- Helping Your Child with Extreme Picky Eating: A Step-by-Step Guide for Overcoming Selective Eating, Food Aversion, and Feeding Disorders, by Katja Rowell MD
- ARFID Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder: A Guide for Parents and Carers, by Rachel Bryant-Waugh
- Intuitive Eating, by Evelyn Tribole, RDN, MS and Elyse Resch, RDN, MS
- Binge Eating Disorder-The Journey to Recovery and Beyond, by Pershing and Turner
- Life Without ED, by Jenny Schaefer
- Perfectly Imperfect: Compassionate Strategies to Cultivate a Positive Body Image, by Amy Harman, LMFT, CEDS
- Being You: The Body Image Book for Boys, by Markey, Hart, and Zacher
- Reclaiming Body Trust: A Path to Healing and Liberation, by: Kinavey and Strutevant
- Anxiety Relief for Teens: Essential CBT Skills and Mindfulness Practices to Overcome Anxiety and Stress, by Regine Galanti PhD

Recommended readings continued...

Support specific:

- Talking to Eating Disorders: Simple Ways to Support Someone With Anorexia, Bulimia, Binge Eating, Or Body Image Issues, by Jeanne Albronda Heaton Ph.D
- How to Raise an Intuitive Eater: Raising the Next Generation with Food and Body Confidence, by Sumner Brooks
- When Your Teen Has an Eating Disorder: Practical Strategies to Help Your Teen Recover from Anorexia, Bulimia, and Binge Eating, by Lauren Muhlheim, PsyD
- Loving Someone with an Eating Disorder: Understanding, Supporting, and Connecting with Your Partner (The New Harbinger Loving Someone Series), by Dana Harron PsyD
- Helping Your Child with Extreme Picky Eating: A Step-by-Step Guide for Overcoming Selective Eating, Food Aversion, and Feeding Disorders, by Katja Rowell MD

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