



# Learning environments that promote positive body image

Early learning services and schools are ideal places to foster positive body image culture, model healthy body acceptance and appreciation of diversity.

## What can learning communities do?

Some strategies involve a policy response, while others need action at the individual level. They can be integrated into the work you are already doing to enhance children and young people's mental and physical health. Here are some examples that can be introduced at classroom, whole learning community and wider community levels.

### In the classroom

- Teach social and emotional skills in the classroom, including acceptance and self-awareness, especially of one's body.
- Display posters and other materials that reflect the diversity of children and young people in terms of body shape, size, ability and ethnicity. This ensures your learning community is inclusive of all children, young people and families.

- Promote a healthy culture by modelling and promoting positive body image, an enjoyment of sport and non-competitive activity, and an acceptance of everyone's strengths and skills.
- Help children and young people develop a strong sense of self, as well as the skills to buffer unhelpful messages about beauty and appearance ideals to build a positive body image.
- Supply education about fitness and nutrition that has a positive focus on energy, fun, social connection and overall health and wellbeing, rather than a negative focus on weight and dietary control.
- Avoid weighing children and young people, and other activities that ask them to calculate body mass index, record food intake or encourage calorie counting.

### Across your learning community

- Establish effective policies and practices that aim to promote respectful interactions and

prevent appearance-related teasing and bullying.

- Support those who are teased or bullied because of their appearance, body size, shape, abilities or ethnicity. For more information visit [beyou.edu.au](http://beyou.edu.au)
- Ensure food served in services and schools is nutritious and balanced, and that food and lunch box shaming is discouraged.
- Provide staff with professional development opportunities to build knowledge and skills on the topics of body image, healthy eating and exercise behaviours.
- Incorporate media and social media literacy education to help children and young people develop their critical processing skills.

### Partner with families

- Provide information for families about how they can help their child or young person develop a positive body image and a strong sense of self.
- Cultivate a welcoming environment for families, so they feel comfortable and confident discussing any issue, reiterating and modelling the messages at home and asking for help if needed.
- Incorporate the messages of acceptance and diversity of body size, shape and appearance in homework activities and projects completed at home.

### Be You Professional Learning

You can learn more about fostering the mental health of children and young people in the [Mentally Healthy Communities](#) and [Family Partnerships](#) domains.

### References

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## External links

Butterfly – [National Helpline](#)

headspace – [Food for Thought](#)

Mental Health First Aid Australia – [What do we need to know about young people and eating disorders?](#)

National Eating Disorder Collaboration – [Eating Disorders in Schools: Prevention, Early Identification and Response](#)