

How to improve your body confidence

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When it comes to self-acceptance and how we feel about our bodies, we can be hard on ourselves. So how can we improve our attitudes about our bodies? Baylor College of Medicine's Dr. Elizabeth McIngvale gives her tips on how to achieve a positive self-image.

"When it comes to how we view our bodies, [social media](#) can be a contributing factor, society plays a huge factor and then there are specific mental health conditions centered around eating disorders that can significantly impact body image," said McIngvale, assistant professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor. "Additionally, the people we surround ourselves with can play a part in how we see ourselves."

When it comes to seeing images on social media, McIngvale said the most important thing for people to remember is that we should not compare ourselves, especially to unrealistic images.

"Many times we compare ourselves to images that are airbrushed and filtered, which is not where we should be placing our importance or our significance," she said. "Often when people go on trips, for example to the beach, one might get caught up looking at images on social media and think that is what they are supposed to look like in a swim suit, and they forget the real importance of the trip, which is to spend time with the people they care about."

Doing activities you enjoy either with others or by yourself can make you feel healthier and improve your self-care greatly, McIngvale said.

You have to transition your thinking away from traditional thoughts about how to view your body.

McIngvale recommends practicing positive self-talk. This can be done by reminding yourself that you are worthy, you are beautiful and also by being keenly aware that beauty is much more than the way you look on the outside.

"Beauty is not just physical. It is who you are as a person. It encompasses what you do for others and who you are as a part of society and your community," she said. "It is important to remind yourself of your worth and of the things that you love about yourself."

When you find yourself making comparisons to others, McIngvale emphasized that you should not feel that it is abnormal, because almost everybody does so and almost nobody feels like they are perfect.

"Often if I say to someone, 'I want you to find one person's body that you want,' most people will actually say 'I didn't find that one person because I want her legs and I want her upper body and I want her stomach.' The reality is that we all have areas of our body that we like compared to areas that we don't like as much. It is about honing in on the qualities that you like about yourself, practicing acceptance and treating yourself better. Health is not synonymous with looks, we must remember that," said McIngvale.

Body image is not rooted in substance, she explained. It changes every day and often even if we reach our ideal body goals, we still are not satisfied because we have a continuously unsatisfactory attitude toward ourselves. The focus should be on health and wellness not [body image](#).

"Remember to think about your attributes that make you feel good and that are rooted in substance," McIngvale said. "You should always be

keeping yourself motivated about the traits that you love most about yourself and are most proud of about yourself. Often these qualities have nothing to do with looks but instead are focused on principles important to you and the way you define who you are and what you do."

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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