

## Need a self-image boost? Researchers say stop checking the mirror

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Women worried about their appearance could boost their self image by reducing certain behaviors such as mirror checking, according to a new study by Florida State University researchers.

The research team found that women who reduced the number of times

they checked or fixed their [appearance](#) showed substantial reductions in appearance concerns and other symptoms. Their findings were published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* .

"We looked at the impact that reducing these behaviors had on broad appearance concerns," said Natalie Wilver, a graduate student in [clinical psychology](#) who led the study. "What we found was that, compared to a group that was not asked to change their [behavior](#), limiting these behaviors lowered appearance concerns, [body dissatisfaction](#), depression, social anxiety and maladaptive beliefs about appearance."

Researchers identified 14 different appearance-related behaviors, including closely examining one's skin, hair, [upper body](#) and lower body; covering up or camouflaging aspects of one's appearance; asking others to comment on appearance; and comparing appearance to others. Over a two-week period, participants received a daily text message reminding them to reduce how frequently they engage in these behaviors.

Wilver said that, while not definitive, the findings are encouraging.

"This is an initial study, so it's important to be cautiously optimistic," she said. "But this initial evidence suggests that having folks decrease these behaviors is associated with positive outcomes."

The prospect of limiting these behaviors inexpensively and easily by sending reminders directly to a person's phone via text message is another positive, Wilver said.

"I am excited about the potential clinical implications of what could be swift and efficient action that could be taken to address appearance concerns," she said.

FSU Associate Professor of Psychology Jesse Cougle, who co-authored

the study, agreed that the text message method is also encouraging for its accessibility.

"It could reach a lot of people for little to no cost and be helpful to a substantial number of women," he said.

Cougle said that it's possible the study's findings might prove valuable to men, too.

"These behaviors are also likely important in men with appearance concerns, though we haven't yet examined the potential benefits of reducing them in this population," Cougle said.

**More information:** Wilver, Natalie L., et al. (2019). Effects of safety behavior fading on appearance concerns and related symptoms. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. Advance online publication. [doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000453](https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000453)

Provided by Florida State University

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