

BODY CONFIDENCE KIT

for Caregivers




Dove
Self-esteem project



MOONBUG

Blippi

We're on a mission to change beauty...

Will you join us?

Since 2004, the **Dove Self-Esteem Project** has helped over **114 million** young people reaching their full potential with body confidence education. But the job isn't done yet.

Body image concerns start to manifest as early as **4 years old**, and it worsens growing up. That's why the **Dove Self-Esteem Project** is partnering with **Blippi** to create Dove's first body image intervention for kids as young as **4 years old**.

The Dove Self-Esteem Project and **Blippi**, together with the **Centre for Appearance Research**, have created **The Blippi's Wonderful Talent Show**, an upbeat and interactive set of edutainment videos aimed at building self-esteem and body confidence in the next generation of young people.

This booklet has been developed with body image experts to support parents, grandparents, caregivers, mentors, aunts, uncles, or trusted older friends in having conversations with young people in their lives on body confidence.

You can adjust the conversation and vocabulary to the right tonality for your child as needed.

The content is taken from the Dove Self-Esteem Project Confidence Kit, full tool available [at this link](#).



Appreciate your own body to help your child

To support your child develop body confidence and self-esteem, a powerful strategy is to model body confidence.



Accept and appreciate yourself and your body

Self-criticism is common among children – how often have you urged your child not to put themselves down? But sometimes adults have low self-esteem and low body confidence too, and it's possible that you could be inadvertently teaching your child bad habits through the example you set by criticizing yourself. Have you ever found yourself looking in the mirror and frowning, or complaining about how you look? You may not even realize you're doing it.

Body confidence starts with loving who you are

Worryingly, research shows that parents, caregivers, family members and mentors who are unhappy with their bodies are more likely to have children that also experience low body confidence. What's more, you're missing out on the benefits of increased body confidence, including better physical and mental health and well-being, happier relationships and more confidence at work and home. It's not easy to change the way you feel about your body, but the good news is that we're going to share some tips on how you can foster greater appreciation and acceptance of your body. In turn, your child will pick up on your positivity.

Body Acceptance

Action Checklist



Take a trip back in time

Look at pictures of yourself from a few years ago. You may find that although you were dissatisfied with your body at the time, you now realize you looked fine. Also it's important to focus on the memories and experiences gained as opposed to what your body looked like. This is a great exercise to help you accept and enjoy your body as it is.

Give your body credit for all it has experienced

Remember, your body has lived, worked and moved you through life. You've cared for your child and others, and weathered various battles. It is natural that our bodies change as we age. Yours is actually quite amazing and taking a moment to feel grateful for your body and what it has done can improve your body confidence. This is a great exercise to help you accept and enjoy your body as it is.

Write down 3 things you are grateful for that your body has allowed you to do/experience.

Don't compare yourself to celebrities and influencers

Remind yourself that the images in advertisements and on social media are often digitally enhanced in extraordinary ways using filters, retouching and may be created with AI and more!

They are not realistic and it's not fair to compare yourself to them.

Focus on the positive

Discuss with your child the things you like about each other's personality, achievements and talents. Only remark on positive aspects and try to give specific examples. Listen to the qualities your child admires in you, and remind yourself of them when you need a boost.

Pick a code word with your child that they can use when you are being unkind or negative toward yourself. This will help you both stay aware and empower your child to champion body confidence.

Appreciate yourself

Every morning for a week, stand in front of a mirror and write down or mentally note five things you like about the way you look and five things you like about your personality.

Talk to your child about how you feel about your own body. Focus on the things you appreciate about it, particularly emphasising its functions (e.g., creative expression, movement, physical senses, and its power to rest, heal and restore).

Body Functionality

Feel good by focusing on feelings and what our bodies can do

The way we talk to children about their bodies can have a real influence on how they think and feel about themselves. Talking about the way our bodies work and what they allow us to do, rather than what they look like, can help improve body image and self-esteem.

This will help them to develop positive feelings about their body and help to buffer the negative impact that the media or their peers may have. Also, by focusing on how our bodies make our lives so special and different, your child will learn to value personal qualities in themselves and in others too.

Lets get started



Why is it important to talk to my children about what their body can do?

Childhood is a crucial stage in the development of attitudes and behaviors towards our bodies. Research shows children as young as three already have the attitude that 'thin is good and fat is bad', and children under the age of 10 can also develop negative attitudes towards visible differences such as facial scarring.

Conversations about bodies, including their shape, size, skin colour, hair texture and facial features, tend to come up in all sorts of ways with young children.

But rest assured, research shows that talking to young children about body image is not harmful if we communicate appropriately.

How do I talk to my children about their bodies?

The best way to talk about bodies is to focus on what they can do rather than what they look like – including our senses, creative and intellectual pursuits, as well as movement. Doing this early and often can help to develop children's self-worth beyond their appearance and reduce the risk of them developing body image concerns as they grow up.

The aim is for them to appreciate that their body is valuable and something to be grateful for and to respect, not only because of how it looks. If your child learns to relate to their body from the inside (how it feels and what it can do), not just how it appears on the outside, they will be more likely to appreciate and take care of their body throughout childhood and beyond.

Body image expert and mother of two, Dr Stephanie Damiano says, "I try to talk to my children about how amazing our bodies are because of all the things they can do. It could be asking 'what is one thing you're happy your body helped you do today?'"

You can also model this by talking to your child about what your body lets you do.

Body image expert and mother of three, Dr Zali Yager adds, "my kids always find the least appropriate time to lift up my shirt and ask why my tummy is wobbly like jelly. This is a great time to model appreciation of your own body functionality. But, it does help if you have thought out a few responses ahead of time, as this doesn't come naturally to many people!

Saying things like: 'My wobbly tummy helps me to have a nice soft lap for you to cuddle up on to have soft squishy hugs', or 'my strong legs let me pick up all of the toys that you have left on the floor' can show your own acceptance of your body which can help your children develop the same attitudes."

**At the end of the day,
my five-year-old
daughter and I often
talk about our favourite
thing we did with
our body that day.**

Dr Stephanie Damiano
Body Image Expert

Does this mean I can't compliment my child on the way they look?

Complimenting your children on how beautiful they look comes very naturally to most parents, and this is OK, but try to balance this with compliments about other qualities and talents.

While many people think that complimenting their children on their appearance will boost their body confidence, doing this a lot can potentially reinforce unrealistic standards and ideals of beauty, and it can send a message to children that their looks are among their most valuable qualities. This is a message they will already be surrounded by in the media, in books, and from peers – so focusing on their other attributes can help balance things out.

Ideas for talking to children about what their body can do rather than what it looks like

All bodies, no matter their ability or looks, are worth celebrating, appreciating, and respecting. For example, you can encourage your child to be grateful for:

- ➔ How their **senses** allow them to taste delicious cakes, to read their new book, and to listen to their favourite music.
- ➔ How their **bodily functions and systems** allow them to sleep so they can restore energy and lay down new memories, to digest their food to create energy, and to breathe! And just how clever is it that their skin grows new cells all the time so it can heal!
- ➔ You can also focus on their special **qualities and skills** that their body allows them, such as creativity and communication: their hands allow them to draw, their vocal chords to sing and laugh with their friends, their arms to hug and their brains to read and make up funny stories.



Body Functionality

Action Checklist



Create opportunities for body appreciation

Give your child opportunities to appreciate their body for what it can do, rather than what it looks like. Focus on qualities that make your child different from you and other people, illustrating how everybody has unique abilities and qualities, making human beings so exciting.

Encourage your child to come up with their own suggestions, framing them as their super powers. You could also get them to write down positive affirmations to repeat to themselves, beginning with “I am...”, such as, “I am thoughtful, caring and fun!” or “I am awesome, brave and strong!”, or to have a bedtime ritual to take a moment to each say the thing we were grateful to our bodies for that day.

Avoid complimenting your child on their appearance

If other people comment on your child’s appearance you can try reframing the message in your response. You could say “There are more interesting things we could talk about than the way we look. Did you know that [...] and I recently learnt to [...] together, and [...] was fantastic at it!”. This way, you are encouraging not only your child but also those around them to focus on things other than appearance, in a gentle way.

Don’t focus on their weight

It may feel important to talk to your child about their weight for health reasons, however there is evidence that being criticized about their weight or encouraging weight loss in children can be really harmful, and leads to longer term body dissatisfaction, disordered eating, and weight gain. Weight does not need to be part of a discussion about health, you can focus on healthy behaviors. Frame healthy behaviors as fun and collective for the whole family e.g., family walks in nature, or eating a more colourful, diverse range of foods.

Reframe the conversation

If your child is talking about their body, for example, saying that they are too fat/short/dark/ugly, try to resist the automatic response to reassure them that they are not. This sends the message that certain appearances are inherently ‘bad’, and implies that changing your appearance (e.g., losing weight) is good. Instead, focus on the qualities that make your child amazing, and tell your child that, for example, fat is not a bad thing but that in fact it is essential to keeping us warm and storing energy so we can live.

**YOU ARE
ONE of a KIND!**

Celebrating Individuality

Get your child to reflect on their unique attributes, their heritage, and their talents to unlock their confidence.

In today's society it has become common, even on trend, for people to talk negatively about themselves. This is particularly true when it comes to criticizing their appearance as a short cut for expressing emotional upset. Sometimes when they feel sad or lonely or lacking in energy, children express this as feeling "fat" or "ugly." But fat and ugly aren't feelings, and speaking in this way blunts emotional vocabulary and places undue emphasis on their looks. Recognizing our unique attributes and talents and allowing ourselves to value these characteristics is important to developing high self-esteem.



Celebrating Individuality

Activity Instructions

Use this fun and practical activity to help you and your child reflect on what you like about yourselves.

Use the prompts below in a way that feels comfortable and fun.

For example, you could:

- ➔ Talk through your answers to the prompts on the way home from school or around the dinner table.
- ➔ Sit down together with your favourite notebooks and use them as journal prompts. Then, if you're both comfortable, swap journals and reflect on your responses.
- ➔ Draw your responses, and explain to each other what you've drawn - display the artwork on your fridge or walls.
- ➔ Take photos of objects, people and places that represent your responses and create a shared photo album or post them on social media.



Screenshot the next page, encourage your child to fill it in and then share on social media tagging **@dove**.

I am unique in many ways. This includes:



Three things I enjoy doing are:



Three things I am good at are:



I appreciate my body because it allows me to:



**I am really proud about my family's
background and culture because:**



www.dove.com/selfesteem



We hope that the Body Confidence Kit for Caregivers has been helpful to you and the special child in your life.

Do share the activities and advice with them, and keep our action checklists in mind to help initiate conversations and keep transmitting body confident messages. Most importantly, keep talking to your child about what they think and how they feel. Doing so will foster trust and help them see that you respect and love them for the unique and special person they are.

And remember, occasional worries aside, this is a hugely exciting and rewarding time for you, watching your child grow up to be confident and independent, embarking on a happy, fulfilling life.

You are a key part of that process, so enjoy it.

Want more?

We have a range of resources – including videos, activities, case studies and professional advice available at dove.com/selfesteem

