

The Confidence Kit

Building body confidence in you
and the young people
in your life



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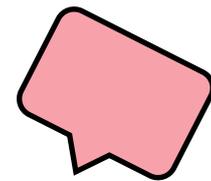
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We're on a mission to change beauty.

Will you join us?



At Dove, we're on a mission to encourage children to think positively about their bodies and the way they look, enabling them to reach their full potential in life.

The Confidence Kit has been written by experts and designed for adults, like you, who want to help a special child in their life develop body confidence. So, whether you're a parent, grandparent, caregiver, mentor, aunt, uncle, or trusted older friend, this kit is for you!

We are on a mission to help more than

**250
MILLION**

children around the world with Dove's self-esteem building programs and body confidence education.

Studies show that adults are important body confidence role models for the young people in their lives. Equipped with the right advice, tools and skills, you can have a positive impact on a special child in your life by helping them to feel more comfortable and confident in their bodies. We hope the advice and activities outlined in this kit will help you on this journey!

We know that body image is an important influence on children's physical and mental health, their education aspirations, and their relationships. By investing time in the articles and activities in this kit, you're investing in the health and well-being of your child.

These lessons have been written for adults looking to help children and teenagers.

Feel free to select the articles and activities that best suit the developmental stage your child is at.

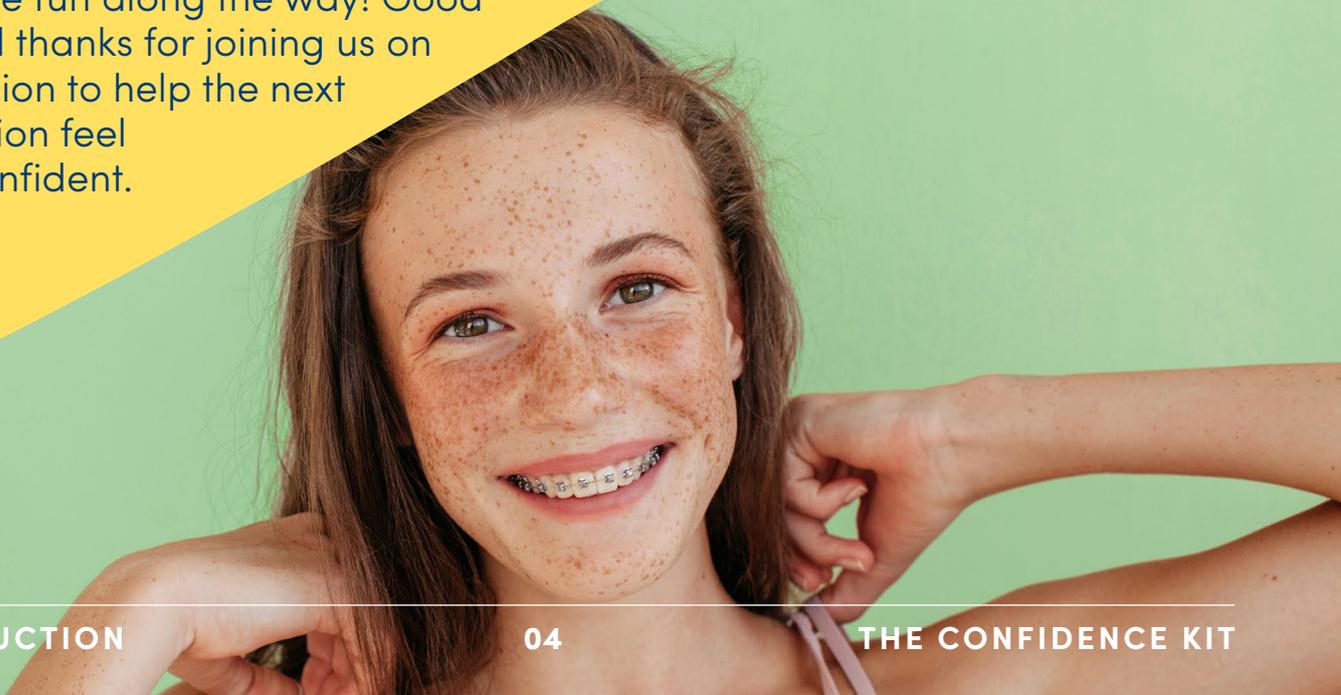
Just remember to keep an open mind and have fun along the way! Good luck and thanks for joining us on our mission to help the next generation feel body confident.

Self-Esteem

Our overall judgement of our self-worth

Body Confidence

How we think and feel about the way we look and what our bodies can do



Appreciate your body to help your child



If you want your child to grow up with high self-esteem and body confidence, there's a simple thing you can do: 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 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. 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.

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

Reconnect with your body

Take time to recognise the functions of your body by using it. Doing some gentle neck and back stretches, create something with your hands, or do some deep, slow breathing to feel your body's power and presence.



Focus on positivity

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 positivity.

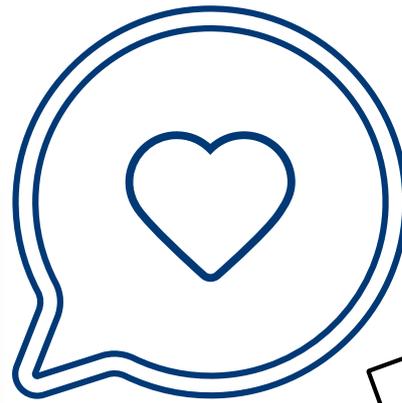
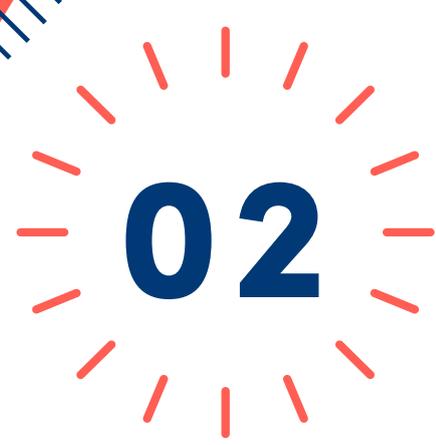
Appreciate yourself

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).

Social media

Filters & 'The Selfie Talk'



Some 'talks' are a rite of passage growing up, like when you sit down to chat about dealing with the class bully or topics like sex, consent and puberty.

Now, with the rise of social media, selfies and filters that distort how you look, there's never been a better time to have 'The Selfie Talk' and help your child navigate the online world.

Let's get started



How does social media affect well-being?

With over a third of teenagers spending three hours a day (or more) scrolling on their feeds, it's safe to say social media isn't going anywhere. It can help us stay connected to friends and family, record memories, learn about people from different backgrounds, and even master the latest dance craze.

So, why is it that the more time children spend on social media the more likely they are to experience low self-esteem, mood and body confidence?

Scientists now think that it's *how* (rather than *how much*) children use social media that shapes whether it will positively or negatively influence their life.

Actively engaging with others and sharing content can make us feel connected and boost our mood. But spending lots of time passively scrolling can make us feel lonely and disconnected, too. It can also make us focus on how we look and feel like we're not good enough if we don't look a certain way.

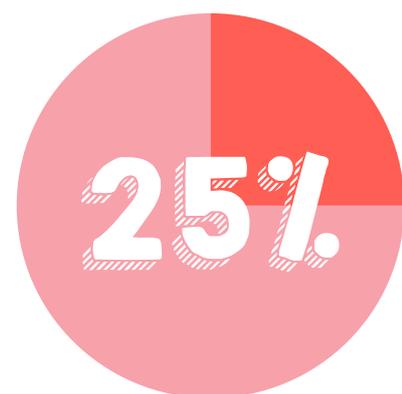
When it comes to the relationship between social media and low body confidence, seeking validation via likes and comments, and making comparisons to others can also have a negative effect. One of the main causes for this is that many of the photos we see online are digitally distorted and not representative of real life.



of teenagers spend at least three hours a day scrolling on their feeds



of girls say they compare the way they look to other people on social media



of girls think that they don't think they look good enough without photo editing

Digital distortion vs. reality

We tend to only see the highlight reels of people's lives on social media and most people only share the 'best' photos of themselves. If the images your child is seeing online are all carefully curated, edited and filtered, this can negatively impact their body confidence.

With four out of five girls saying they compare the way they look to other people on social media, posting the 'perfect selfie' can feel like an obligation rather than a bit of fun. Our recent research shows that girls take on average up to 14 selfies in an attempt to get the right 'look' before choosing one to post. Filters also allow us to alter our appearance to mimic unrealistic beauty standards by removing blemishes, brightening skin, making eyelashes longer – the list goes on.

Taking selfies and using filters can be a source of creativity and self-expression. But when they're used to conform to society's beauty standards, or, because your child doesn't feel confident posting unedited pictures, it's a sign that it might be a problem. In fact, a quarter of girls think that they don't think they look good enough without photo editing – so, there's never been a better time to have 'The Selfie Talk'.



Girls take on average up to

14

selfies in an attempt to get the right 'look' before choosing one to post



The Selfie Talk

Action Checklist



- Understand digital distortion**
Talk through the techniques and tools people use to edit their images and make a list together. Search for 'A Selfie' on YouTube, a short film by the Dove Self-Esteem Project. It helps to reveal the posing, camera angles, special lighting, make-up, filters that go into the 'perfect Insta-shot'.
- Avoid the comparison trap**
When your child is scrolling, remind them that they're seeing someone else's carefully curated highlights reel. Discuss whether or not social media images are a fair target for comparison (hint: they're not). If they're a teen, watch 'Girls Room' at [Dove.com/GirlsRoom](https://www.dove.com/GirlsRoom), a 6-episode drama series that addresses social media, body image, and comparison.
- Put the 'social' back into social media**
Talk about ways to use social media more purposefully to actively connect and interact with other people. Remind them to unfollow accounts that don't make them feel good, or use the 'hide' function on apps like Instagram.
- Tackle cyberbullying**
Develop a plan for how they will cope with bullying online. In addition to telling a trusted adult when they see it, remind them that many social media platforms offer functions to hide, block and report bullying online.



- Create diverse, real content**
Discuss ways to create a more uplifting, diverse and positive online space for themselves and others. Talk about how they can spend more time posting things that reflect their interests, activities with friends and personal qualities that have nothing to do with how they look. Challenge each other to give up filters for a month and see how it makes you feel!
- Learn how to spot advertising**
With social media influencers becoming more popular than ever, it can be hard to spot what's an ad and what's not. Scroll through your child's social media feed together and practice spotting posts that show sponsored content and those that don't.
- Log out**
Encourage your child to take occasional breaks from social media if they feel overwhelmed or are not enjoying it. Set screen time limits and take a walk, call a friend, or get them to make something creative with their hands – whatever they like doing away from their screen.

Detox Your Feed: The Parents' Guide

The impact of toxic beauty advice on social media



1 in 2 girls say toxic beauty advice on social media causes low self-esteemⁱ

There's no doubt about it – young people love social media. 66% of girls spend 1+ hours on it every weekday.ⁱ Their social media feeds have replaced celebrities as their source of inspiration and entertainment. And it's where they go for tips and advice – especially when it comes to beauty.

This can be a positive thing. Social media can be an empowering space for teens to express themselves and build self-confidence. It can also inspire them, allowing them to see more authentic, diverse representations of beauty.

But this isn't always the case. While social media is becoming a more inclusive and diverse space, it can also promote toxic beauty advice that can be harmful for your child's confidence and body image.

In March 2022, a report by the Dove Self-Esteem Project asked more than 1,000 girls aged 10-17 about beauty standards on social media – and the results were shocking. 1 in 2 girls say toxic beauty advice on social media causes low self-esteem.ⁱ This needs to change.

Join us on our mission. Let's make self-esteem boosting advice the norm on social media. It's time to help your child detoxify their feed, so they can define beauty on their own terms.



What is toxic beauty advice?

Toxic beauty advice normalizes unrealistic beauty standards, promotes potentially harmful beauty practices (like cosmetic surgery), and suggests the key to self-worth and success is physical 'perfection'.

Here are just a few examples of toxic beauty trends on social media:

#Fitspiration

#Fitspiration, also known as #Fitspo, implies that an 'ideal' body can be achieved by following an account's diet and exercise advice, or purchasing products and services they're advertising. #Fitspo posts promote narrow definitions of beauty and position exercise as a way to achieve these ideals.

#Fitspo posts often sexualize and objectify women's bodies (e.g., zoomed in headless bodies or body parts, revealing clothing and passive poses) and encourage viewers to place greater emphasis on how their body looks – not what it can do or how it feels. At the start of 2022, over 74 million Instagram posts were tagged with #Fitspo.



#Thinspiration

Also known as #Thinspo, #Thinspiration often shows images of extremely thin bodies, quotes discouraging eating, and advice on maintaining and concealing disordered eating behaviors. While many social media platforms have attempted to restrict access to this type of advice by removing the hashtag #Thinspo from their search functions and banning toxic accounts, young people can still find ways around these restrictions by changing hashtags and usernames.

Research shows just
10 minutes
of exposure to #Fitspo
and #Thinspo posts leads to
lower body confidence, self-
esteem and mood in social
media users.

Cosmetic and surgical procedures

Some accounts, including popular cosmetic surgeons, post advice that normalizes and minimizes the pain associated with undergoing cosmetic and surgical procedures like fillers, injectables, 'butt lifts', breast augmentation and 'nose jobs'.

This advice implies that cosmetic procedures are a solution to achieving the 'ideal' body, but it overlooks how many of these procedures can carry significant health risks.

Studies show that exposure to this type of advice can increase the likelihood of girls wanting to undergo these procedures. Studies also suggest that viewing #Fitspo and #Thinspo posts do not lead to healthy behavior changes.

That's why it's so important for us to act now and help young people detoxify their social media feeds from toxic beauty advice.

Toxic beauty advice: quick definitions

- + Toxic beauty advice: Social media accounts and posts that normalize unrealistic beauty standards and promote potentially harmful beauty practices
- + #Fitspo: A trend which tells young people the perfect body can be achieved with diet programs and products like diet supplements
- + #Thinspo: A trend which often shows images of extremely thin bodies or shares quotes discouraging eating
- + Cosmetic and surgical procedures: These can often be, expensive and potentially dangerous. For example DIY fillers, injectables, gluteoplasty (also known as a 'butt lift'), breast augmentation and rhinoplasty (also known as a 'nose job')



Detox their feed in 4 steps

Help your child detoxify their feed.

Step 1: Prep.

4 out of 5 girls want their parents to talk to them about how to manage toxic beauty advice online.¹ So, the first step to helping your child detoxify their feed is getting to grips with social media.

Start by spending time on popular social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat and Twitch.

Get familiar with these platforms and check out the safety functions that enable users to block, report and unfollow toxic accounts.

Follow the accounts your child engages with most and discuss what types of posts and videos they like and why.

Step 2: Chat.

We want to start the conversations that will help your child identify toxic beauty advice and think more critically about how they can detoxify their feeds.

Remember: It's about regularly checking in and making social media a safe and positive space together – not controlling your child's accounts.

Let them know you've read some interesting stats (like those in the Dove Self-Esteem and Social Media Report) and that you'd love to hear their thoughts too. You can also show them the accounts you've been following recently and ask them what they think of their posts.



Remind your child not to compare their beauty to anyone else



56% of girls say they can't live up to the beauty standards projected on social media.ⁱⁱ



Here are some helpful conversation prompts:

Comparing yourself to others on social media can be problematic as posts can be digitally distorted, professionally produced and far from real life. This is known as 'the comparison trap'. And adults can fall into it too.

When your child is scrolling through their feed, discuss if some of their favorite accounts are a fair comparison to their own life. Highlight the widespread use of digital distortion and filters – not to mention the fact that some accounts hire professionals to produce their posts.

Ask them to consider if these accounts have the qualifications to be trusted sources on topics like nutrition, exercise and beauty standards.

Remind your child that even celebrities can experience low body confidence, self-doubt, online trolls and struggles with mental well-being.

And encourage them to remember that what they see in their feed is somebody's carefully curated highlight reel – it's rarely real life.

If they're a teen, you can also invite them to watch Girls Room, our six-episode series for young people that explores the comparison trap, social media and self-esteem. Or our short film A Selfie, which shows some of the techniques used to digitally distort social media posts.

[Click here for Girl's Room films](#)



Find examples together

#Ad

Activity Instructions



Start by finding examples online. Search #BeautyHack on TikTok or Instagram. Or scroll through your feeds together to find ads from accounts you already follow. You'll soon find that many social media posts are paid ads, and sometimes not authentic advice.



When you spot an ad, here are six questions you can ask your child:

- + What is being sold in this post?
- + Is the person giving authentic advice or posting about this product because they're being paid to do it?
- + Why do you think this company paid this person to post this image? Is it because they're experts? Or is it because they have a big following?
- + Does the post make unrealistic promises about what will happen if you buy this product?
- + Is it fair to compare the way you look to the person in this post? Or have they used filters, editing apps, special lighting or digital distortion?
- + Over time, what impact could this advice have on young people's ideas about beauty and self-esteem?

Step 3: Detox

Activity Instructions



- + Spend 10-minutes scrolling through your feeds together, thinking about how certain posts make you feel.
- + Discuss what accounts make you feel uplifted and inspired. And which ones negatively impact your self-esteem or body confidence.
- + Next, show your child how to block or report toxic beauty advice (if they don't know already).
- + Now, make a pact to detoxify your feeds together by unfollowing or hiding the posts that make you both feel self-doubt.
- + If they feel good not seeing these posts for a week, encourage them to unfollow those accounts for good.
- + Our report found that 72% of girls felt better after unfollowing toxic beauty advice¹, so detoxifying your feeds is a practise worth keeping.



Follow positivity

Now that you've both detoxed your feeds, it's time to follow truly positive role models that educate, inspire, spark joy and creativity, and make you feel empowered and uplifted.

To keep each other's feeds a space of positivity, set calendar reminders or make a note in your diaries to do a 'tune-up' once a month by unfollowing toxic beauty advice.

Remember: Social media is designed to deliver content to users based on what they engage with the most. This means the posts your child likes and the accounts they follow shape what content they see in future. The same goes for adults too.

Step 4: Repeat.

To encourage new habits and spark change, ask your child to share what they learnt with the hashtag #DetoxYourFeed, so they can empower and uplift their friends and followers too.

And don't forget to speak to other parents, guardians and mentors to spread awareness of toxic beauty standards and advice on social media.

With your help, we can build self confidence and body confidence in 250 million young people all over the world.

Here are some authentic, unfiltered and inclusive accounts we love that promote a positive vision of beauty:

- + @tanyacompass
- + @hulisanravele
- + @itsmekellieb
- + @meganjaynecrabbe
- + @scarrednotscared
- + @megboggs
- + @emmadabiri

You could also encourage your child to follow accounts that inspire them to develop their creative skills or start a new hobby.

Beat Bullying

Is your child being teased about their looks?



From hurtful teasing to serious bullying, help your child navigate this emotional roller coaster.

Bullies are rarely original when it comes to their insults. What were the most common teases or taunts when you were young? 'Four eyes', 'freckle face', or 'fatty'.

Chances are, most of the names we remember being called as children are related to looks. Sadly, not much has changed for our children. One of the most common bullying experiences for students today is related to appearance. Bullies focus on physical characteristics such as body size, skin colour, hair style, height, skin and unusual facial features (e.g., scars, birthmarks), and personal style that may not conform to the latest trends.

First, we need to understand what we mean by "bullying." Children disagree, fight, tease and banter with their friends. Bullying is different. The US government's StopBullying website defines it as "unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose." It can happen online and in real-life.



Understand why bullies focus on appearance

“This is a stage when young people are discovering who they are and experimenting with how to express themselves. Appearance is a big part of that,” explains Liz Watson, a bullying expert who advises teens and caregivers on the issue. “Teenagers are exploring their identity through how they look, and they’re learning how society reacts to that.”

Help your child deal with bullying

You may be agonizing over the best way to talk to your child for fear of them withdrawing further. But, Watson says, it’s best to face it honestly. “You don’t have to mention bullying to start with,” she advises. “Instead, try something like, *I’m worried about you. I think you’re unhappy.*”

Or you may initiate a conversation in a more neutral way by asking questions about their day, including moments that they enjoyed or found troubling. For example: *What was one good thing that happened to you today? Any bad things happen? Did you sit with friends at lunch? What was your bus ride like?*

These questions might get them to open up. Perhaps also let them know that they won’t be in trouble and that you’re there to help – but make it clear that you can only do so if you know what’s happening. If they insist that nothing is going on, don’t push it. Just stay vigilant for any of the signs previously mentioned.

Be there for them

Dealing with bullying can take time, so be patient and try to understand what your child is going through. Show them you’re there to support them and reassure them that they don’t need to change their appearance – you can both find a way to tackle it together.

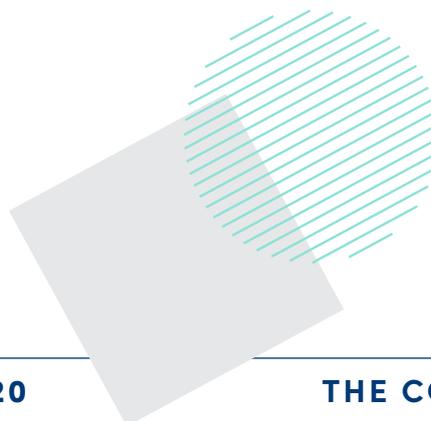
What are the signs of bullying?

- + **Change in behavior or emotional state**
Have they suddenly become more withdrawn or aggressive than usual?
- + **Physical signs**
Unexplained injuries, such as cuts and bruises or damaged clothes.
- + **Avoiding school**
Making excuses and faking an illness.
- + **Lack of interest**
Especially in the things they normally enjoy.

Other signs to look out for that might indicate they’re being bullied, specifically about their looks.

- + **Changing the way they dress or styling them self in more extreme ways**
For example, neglecting to wear their glasses or wearing a lot of make-up.
- + **Attempting to cover up**
Such as wearing baggy clothes that cover up their body shape, or wearing their hair over their face to hide their skin.

Of course, some of these signs can also be a normal part of a young person’s life, which makes it even more important to create an open dialogue together.



Beat Bullying

Action Checklist



○ Show your child they're not alone

Talk to them about your teenage experience. Maybe you were teased about a particular feature but now recognize it's a part of what makes you special.

○ Work together

Help them work out a strategy for dealing with bullies, but make sure you have their agreement about all the steps in the plan.

○ Reassure them

Tell them there is nothing wrong with the way they look and that you admire what makes them an individual.

○ Empower them

There are many reasons why people bully: They may have been bullied themselves or have low self-esteem. To understand a bully's situation and ultimately stand up to them is usually the best way forward. It takes courage, but success can really boost self-esteem, turning a negative experience into real empowerment.

○ Explain

Help them understand why people bully others. Sometimes, bullies feel emboldened by the anonymity of social media. Remind your child that it's okay to unplug and walk away from uncomfortable situations online. Other times, bullies can be experiencing problems at home or other factors that cause them to lash out. If your child is focusing on specific negative comments from bullies, help them create internal statements that lessen the negative impact of those comments (e.g., "I am a good person and I deserve to be treated kindly")' Help them to see how their happy family life is contributing to their confidence, and to have empathy for others who may be less fortunate.



○ Make a change

If the bullying is coming from their immediate circle of friends, encourage them to find a new group.

○ Acknowledge their emotions

Validate your child's feelings. If they feel undermined by taunts, gestures or other bullying, don't advise them to ignore what's going on. Listen to them and believe their story.

○ Spot patterns and block or report on social media

Find out where and when the bullying takes place. If they're being picked on at certain times or places, (e.g. at school, on an app) get them to recognize and avoid this, or ask friends to accompany them at those times. Remind them to use the block and report features on apps.

○ Get them to talk to a trusted adult

If it's happening at school, or involves students cyberbullying, help them develop the courage to talk to an adult at school. It's best to talk to a class teacher first and then work up from there if needed.

○ Talk to the school yourself

If they're unwilling to talk to their teacher, consider doing so yourself. Most schools have an anti-bullying strategy and will know how to approach the situation. But make sure they know exactly what you intend to do, so your child doesn't feel betrayed.

○ Judge if and when to get involved

It may be better if your child handles the matter independently, with your support in the background.

○ Get back up

Seek advice on reputable anti-bullying websites that offer children support from people their own age, or from counselors who can help your child improve how they feel and devise strategies to cope.

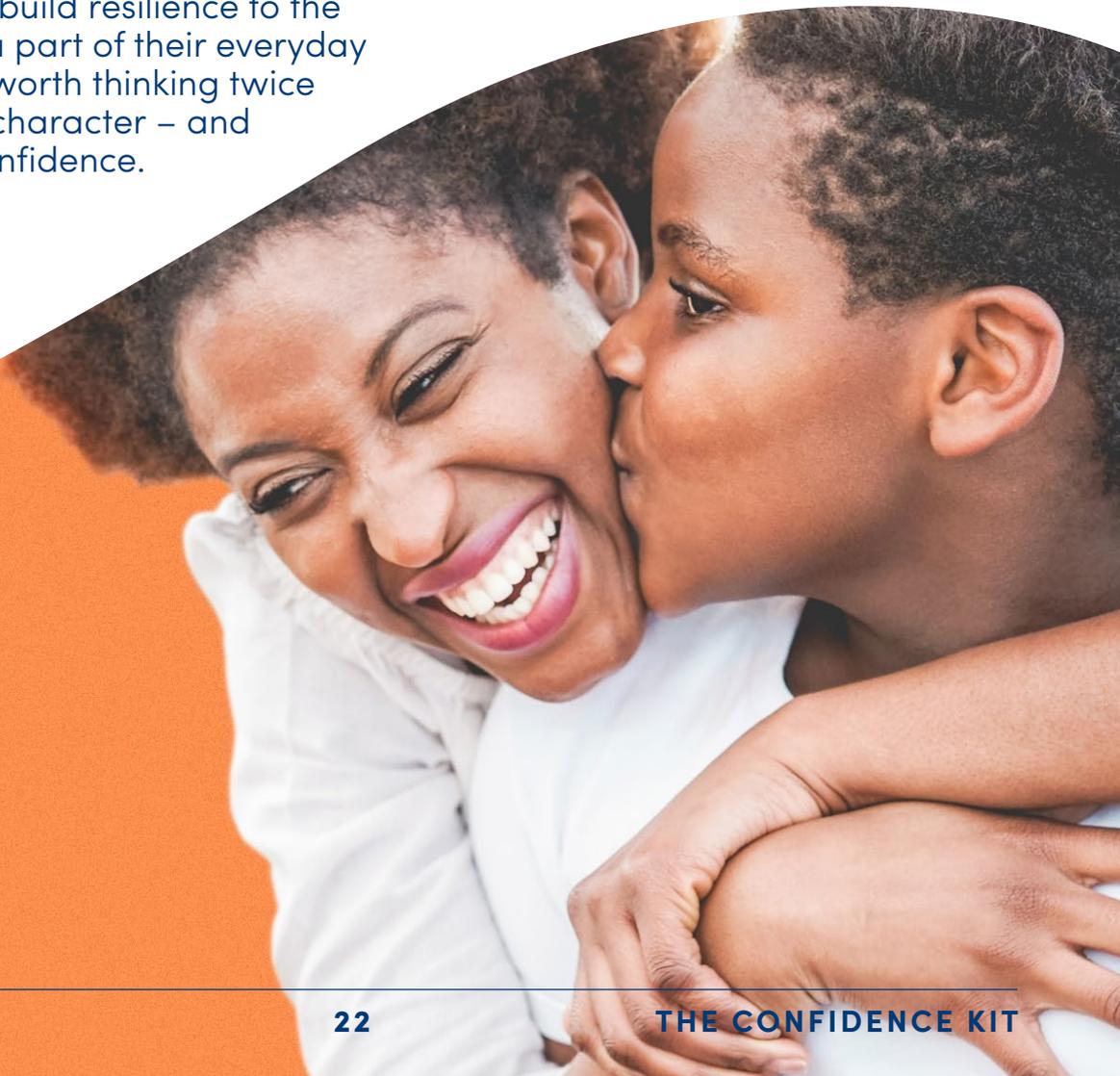
Family banter

When does it become family bullying?

Jokes and teasing are common in most close family relationships, but when it hits a nerve it can contribute to low self-esteem.

As your child becomes a teenager, they will naturally become more sensitive to comments about the way they look, and family members may not realize the impact of their words.

Of course, robust discussions and gentle teasing are a part of being a family. They can help children develop and explore their opinions, and build resilience to the criticisms that are a part of their everyday lives. However, it's worth thinking twice about what builds character – and what diminishes confidence.



Sound familiar?

A recent study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* estimated that up to half of teenagers experience appearance-related teasing from family members.

Even playful teasing from loved ones about appearance can have a deep impact on children, damaging their confidence in the long run.

Playful words can be very hurtful

“Children who experience criticism or teasing about their appearance from family members are more likely to try to control their weight in an unhealthy way, be dissatisfied with their body, compare themselves with friends, obsess over their looks, have lower self-esteem and experience more depression than children who aren’t teased,” says research psychologist and body image expert Professor Phillippa Diedrichs.

On the flip side, supportive and warm family relationships have a positive effect on body image and body satisfaction among children. So what’s the best way to handle the situation?

Take your child’s side and draw a line

Think carefully about where to draw the line between harmless banter and teasing that, however unintentional, may be damaging to your child’s body confidence. Taking action can help prevent this from becoming a family problem.

Coming up with proactive coping strategies for your child to use when they’re faced with family teasing is the first step. It may be as simple as ignoring unhelpful comments or something more overt, such as confronting the person making the remarks: Let them know how the teasing makes your child feel.

By acknowledging the hurtfulness of appearance-related teasing, actively discouraging it and helping your child to develop techniques to deal with it, you will have taken another important step toward nurturing and protecting their body confidence.

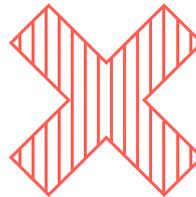
Avoid saying



“Hasn’t so-and-so’s skin gotten bad lately?”



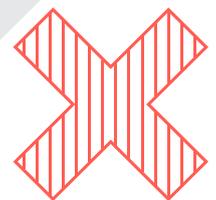
“You need to hit the gym to start looking like a man.”



“You’ll never get a date with hair like that!”



“Oh, that baby fat is so cute.”



Family Banter

Action Checklist



Look out for hurtful comments

Be alert at family gatherings and conscious of any comments or conversations about weight, body shape, skin colour, hair style or appearance that are negative or might make your child feel embarrassed or self-conscious.

Step in to change the subject

Try to steer the conversation elsewhere without making a fuss – you can approach individuals later if necessary – and check in with your child to let them know that those types of comments are not OK. Tell them they are great just the way they are and that you are there for them if they want to talk.

Have a quiet word

If someone in the family continues to tease your child (or someone else in front of your child) about their body or appearance in general, consider speaking with that person in private. Don't be overly emotional or confrontational, and keep your language neutral. Sometimes you will need to approach this in a subtle way, but equally there may be times when the situation calls for a more direct approach. A different approach is required for dealing with an adult family member than with a child.



Explain the situation

Stress the importance of avoiding talking about looks and placing too much emphasis on appearance or ask family members not to comment on your child's body or appearance at all.

Conversation Starters

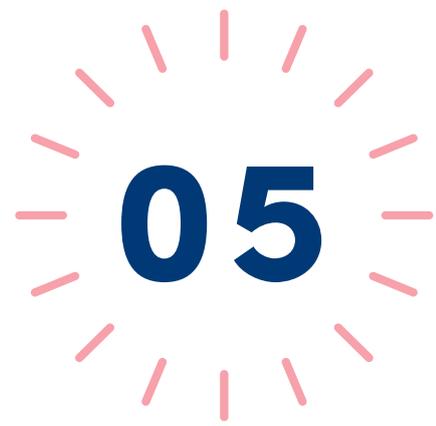
What are some comments family members have made about your child that really upset them? Is there anything they're really sensitive about?

Use what you learn to shape your conversation with other family members.

Does your child have the courage to talk to the rest of the family about how their words make them feel?

Improving Communication

Between you
and your child



Body Talk

How words can shape
body confidence.

Talking about your weight or complaining about your hair might seem like a great way to bond with other people, but it's worth considering what other effects this could have.

Stop the body talk – and other negative self criticism – and start a new kind of positive conversation. You'll notice how much better it makes you all feel.

Let's get started



Talking about our bodies is like an unwritten rule in some friendships and families. We do it constantly and automatically, in person and on social media. You know how it goes:

*“Gosh, my skin looks awful today”
or “Wow, you look great.
Have you lost weight?”*

93%

of women engaged
in body talk

Teach your child to talk positively about their body

If you're not guilty of these kinds of put-me-downs, then you're in the minority. A study published by *Psychology of Women Quarterly* found that 93 percent of women engaged in this type of behavior, dubbed body talk, and a study published in the *Psychology of Men and Masculinity* showed that men frequently do it too.

People who engage in body talk – irrespective of their actual size or appearance – are more likely to experience low body confidence.

Words can have a huge impact on our self-esteem, and constantly talking negatively about our bodies can reinforce the idea that there is only one type of body shape that is beautiful. It's a pattern we have to break if we want our children to grow up to be confident about the bodies they've got.

Jess Weiner
Body Image Expert



Focus less on body talk in everyday conversations

A mere three minutes of body talk can cause women to feel bad about their appearance and increase body dissatisfaction. Making the effort to cut it out should have a significant

By focusing less on weight, body shape and appearance in conversations, greetings and compliments, and comments online, you can break the habit of reinforcing beauty stereotypes.



impact on how you feel.

Watch those unhelpful compliments

Body talk doesn't just refer to body bashing. Talking about your appearance, even in a positive way, can reinforce unrealistic beauty standards. By telling a friend that they look great and following up with, "Have you lost weight?" you give the impression that their weight matters to you and reinforces the stereotypical view that thin equals beautiful.

Our children pick up on the kind of language we use and the topics of conversation we engage in. Eventually, it may start to sound as if our physical appearance is the main criterion for how we judge and value ourselves and others. Is this how we want our children to evaluate themselves?



We need to teach our children that

Beauty is a state of mind



If we value ourselves, it doesn't matter what the world says – we can walk with confidence.



Body Talk

Action Checklist



Tell your friends that you're bored of body talk

Be on red alert next time you meet up with a friend or look at friends' posts on social media. If they start any body talk, tackle the issue head on. For example, say, *"I care about you, and it hurts me to hear you talk about yourself that way."*

Take the one-week challenge

Challenge yourself to a week free from body talk and other negative self-criticism. Tell your friends and family what you're up to, so they can support you and even try it for themselves. Remember to practice this in person and on social media!

Pay attention to body talk on social media

The comments section of social media posts, particularly selfies and other photos, is a prime setting for body talk. Practice avoiding body talk by commenting on the setting, what your friends and family are doing in their photos, or how it makes you happy to see their photos, instead of how other people look.



Replace the negative with the positive

Take a body talk inventory and for every negative feature you come up with, think of a positive replacement that shows gratitude towards your body. For example, *"I'm so grateful that my hands allow me to create art"*, or, *"I'm so grateful that my stomach is a squishy resting place for your head when I read you a story"*.

Share the Body Talk Action Checklist with your child and encourage them to do the same with their friends.

What the ?!

A translation tool to share with your child to aid communication and avoid misunderstandings.



Do you and your child seem to argue over the smallest thing? Communicating should be easy, but miscommunication is even easier. You make a simple comment about what they are wearing, and they storm off, slamming the door. You ask what they had for lunch, and they assume it's an attack about their nutrition and eating habits

While it's likely you're just trying to show how much you care, their reactions suggest you're speaking a different language. Which is why we've created the *What the ?!* Parent Translator especially for your child, to help them understand what you're really trying to say.

Screenshot it and give your child a copy. It will help them understand that you don't mean to upset them when you talk about their friends, diet, appearance or social life, and may well improve communication between you both.

Make a pact with your child to give each other feedback when either of you say something that comes across as different from what is actually meant. Open and honest communication like this builds trust and strengthens your relationship for the long term.



What the ?!

What your parents REALLY mean when they say those nagging things.



Parents say

You're not going out dressed like that, are you?

You might hear

What are you wearing? You look ridiculous.

What they might mean

You look so grown up and that worries me sometimes.

Parents say

What did you have for lunch today?

You might hear

I suppose you skipped lunch again - as usual.

What they might mean

Looking after yourself is important, and I want to make sure you're eating well.

Parents say

You're on your phone AGAIN? You're always on your phone, texting friends you've only just seen.

You might hear

I don't think your friendships are important.

What they might mean

You've been with your friends all day. Making time for yourself and your family is also important.

Parents say

Oh, you're going out with them again?

You might hear

I hate your friend, and I don't trust them. They're a bad influence.

What they might mean

You've been with your friends all day. Making time for yourself and your family is also important.

Your parents probably don't mind that you're spending time with friends, so long as you make time for your family, too. They're genuinely interested in what you're up to, so why not tell them the highlights of your day?

When you are with a good group of friends, you feel happy and confident, so it's only natural for parents to show concern when they think you're hanging out with people who might make you feel bad about yourself.

Body Functionality

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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 self-esteem and body image. 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.

Let's 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 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 talk about 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.



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



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!

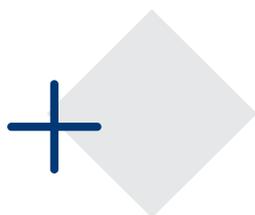
Saying things like: 'My wobbly tummy helps me to have a nice soft lap for you to cuddle up on to have soft squishy hugs', or 'my strong legs let me pick up all of the toys that you have left on the floor' can show your own acceptance of your body which can help your children develop the same attitudes."



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.

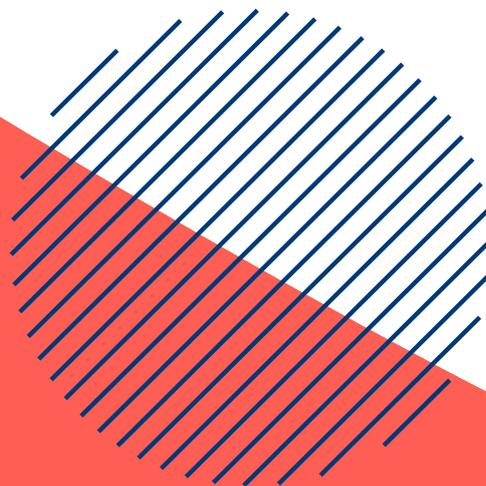
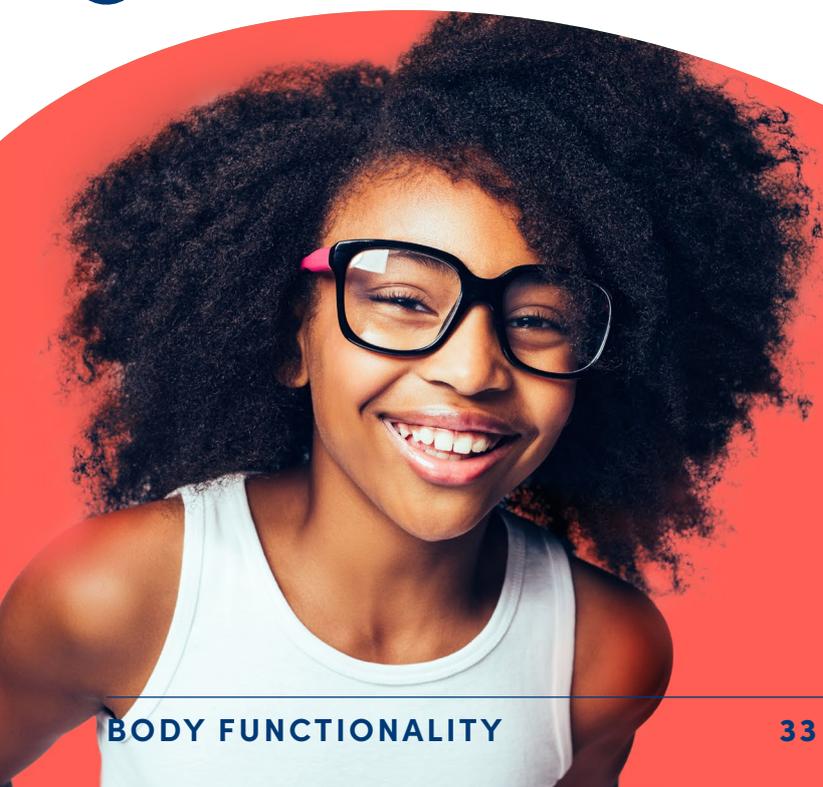
While many people think that complimenting their children on their appearance will boost their self-esteem, doing this a lot can potentially reinforce unrealistic standards and ideals of beauty, and it can send a message to children that their looks are among their most valuable qualities. This is a 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 and appreciating. 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 criticised 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 behavior 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.

Celebrating Individuality

You're one of a kind



Get your child to reflect on their unique attributes, their heritage, and their talents to unlock their self-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 positive 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

--

Over to you

We hope that the Confidence Kit 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 positive body image 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 into a confident, independent young adult 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



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