



This week is **Mental Health Awareness Week:** **May 13th -19th 2019**

Lead by the [Mental Health Foundation](#)

The aim of Mental Health Awareness Week is to raise awareness through campaigning, fundraising and education.

Mental health affects us all:

**1 in 6 adults in the past week experienced a common mental health problem such as anxiety or depression*

**50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24*

Through addressing mental health in our schools, homes and workplaces, we are able to be more preventative towards mental health problems.

The theme this year is **Body Image - How we think and feel about our bodies.**

Society, the media, social media and our cultural environments all present an airbrushed perfect body creating how we 'should' look. These external pressures create internal negative self-perceptions when we take a look in the mirror.

I co-led an exercise with Year 10 students this week on Body Image. The themes that came out of the session and that students focused upon, was negativity about their bodies. Negativity about height, weight and health, all stemming from others perception of them and social media.

Body Image in the past has had a heavy focus on girls, but it is just as much as an issue for boys. See an this BBC article to learn more : <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-37010205>

The reason for such a low awareness amongst males is due a culture where males are less likely to open up and share how their feel or reveal their vulnerabilities with others.

That's why it's important to start the conversation and support one another against these out of control ideals.

So this week, start a conversation about Body image with your child.

- * ***Identify what affects how we see ourselves: Discuss what triggers our negative thoughts and challenge the limiting beliefs about body image.***
- * ***Find ways to deal with external pressure and negative comments:***
 - Walk away from mean comments / switch channels on your social media
 - Stand up to mean comments
 - Talk it out with someone you trust
 - Focus on someone, a role model with a positive body image that breaks the stereotypes

Focus on what is in your control, which is how you talk to yourself and how you can view yourself:

Here are some top tips to try out that promote a healthier body image:

- * **Accept you're amazing self:**
Practice regular acknowledgment of the parts of your body or your appearance that you like.
- * **Make a list of the functions your body performs that you enjoy:**
Such as walking, swimming, yoga, dancing, cycling.
- * **Become aware of your inner critic:**
Cut down or work towards stopping checking your body for flaws and ask what would I say to my best friend about their body image?
- * **Look in the mirror and say something positive, get used to complimenting yourself:**
Buy a new outfit that expresses your style.
- * **Treat your body with care:**
This can be exercising, taking a bath, give yourself a foot massage, eat something healthy and nourishing, like a smoothie.

Below are a few great resources for you to use when addressing this with your child:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/body-image/>

<https://www.dove.com/uk/dove-self-esteem-project/help-for-parents/media-and-celebrities/women-in-the-media.html>

For having a conversation with boys:

<http://mediasmart.uk.com/parents-guardians>

From your wellbeing practitioner Nikki