



Statistics:

- It is estimated that eating disorders affect more than 5 million Americans each year.
— *National Institute of Mental Health, 2007*
- 90 percent of those who have eating disorders are women between the ages of 12 and 25.
— *The Center For Mental Health Services,*
- 50-88% of girls feel negatively about their body shape or size
— *EPM Communications, Youth Market Alert 2000, 12:8.*
- Thirty seven percent of articles in leading teen girl magazines also include a focus on appearance, and half of the advertisements (50%) appeal to beauty to sell their products.
— *National Institute on Media and the Family, 2006*
- In a study on fifth graders, 10-year-old girls and boys told researchers they were dissatisfied with their own bodies after watching a music video by Britney Spears or a clip from the TV show “Friends.”
— *Mundell, E.J. (2002, August 26). Sitcoms, Videos Make Even Fifth-Graders Feel Fat. Reuters Health*
- Poor body image is strongly associated with low self-esteem and low self-worth, two factors that can limit adolescent success.
— *Croll, J. 2005. Body Image and Adolescents. Guidelines for Adolescent Nutrition Services, eds. Stang, J. & Story, M.*

Tips and Recommendations for Parents:

● Set a good example:

Your attitudes and behaviors do matter! Try to model positive attitudes and healthy behaviors such as sensible eating, regular exercise and self-acceptance.

● Be attentive and keep communication lines open:

Adolescents can make brief off-hand comments that are great openings for conversation. Listen and pay attention to what your child says about his or her body. Learn to be perceptive of strange self-images and talk about these issues with sensitivity and positive conversation.

● Focus on health, not appearance:

Praise your child for personal qualities, like a great sense of humor, kindness to others and thoughtful acts. Support and encourage their academic abilities, musical talents, sports skills and other areas of individual effort. Focus on non-appearance-related traits when discussing yourself and others. Promote self-esteem and self-respect.

● Teach your child how to examine destructive media messages critically:

Find out how photographers make models look the way that they do. Talk about why these images are unrealistic. Realize that these images do affect children.

Be Alert For Warning Signs:

- Children, adolescents and teens with an eating disorder have a ‘relentless pursuit of thinness.’ Be aware if your child:
- Says he or she feels too fat, even though his or her weight is normal
- Skips meals on a regular basis
- Exercises to an extreme
- Seems depressed
- Has an unexplained weight loss, especially if she stops having her menstrual periods
- Denies there is a problem—trust your feelings; if you are concerned about your child, talk to a health professional.

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Additional Resources:

- **National Eating Disorders Association**

<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>

Provides thorough information, as well as reliable links, on eating disorders, body image issues and dieting among youth in American society, as well as other ways to get involved in prevention of disordered eating, body image disturbances and eating disorders. Information on the GO GIRLS Program (Giving Our Girls Inspiration and Resources for Lasting Self-Esteem), a self-esteem building program with a focus on body image and media, is available here.

- **New Mexico Media Literacy Project**

<http://www.nmmlp.org>

This is a program with the goal of teaching all youth to be media literate and savvy. Their site offers free media literacy educational material, links to the resources they provide, products and services they produce for sale, and information regarding trainings around media literacy.

- **American Academy of Pediatrics Media Matters Program**

<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/mmcamp.htm>

Provides information on media literacy instruction as well as research conducted in the area of media literacy, media effects on youth, and advocacy and policy issues around media.

- **American Public Health Association**

www.apha.org

APHA represents a broad array of health professionals and others who work to build a collective voice for public health, working to ensure access to health care, protect funding for core public health services and eliminate health disparities, among a myriad of other issues.

The AMA Alliance, Inc. is a national health advocacy network committed to promoting better health. It strives to support the AMA Alliance objectives for building healthy communities through public programs and partnerships with other organizations with similar interests. All resources, including health-focused coloring books and bookmarks for children, are available at

www.amaalliance.org .

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