



Body image is a way of describing how a person feels about their own body and appearance. It describes how you see yourself, how you think and feel about the way you look and how you think others see you.

When you have a **positive** body image you can see your body's natural size and shape and are comfortable with it. Having a positive body image also means knowing that body image is only one part of who you are. It means knowing that your appearance is not linked to other values like intelligence, popularity or success.

If you have a **negative** body image you may feel unhappy with the way you look. Sometimes this means people may not be able to see their body as it really is. Feeling negative about your appearance can also make you feel bad about yourself and can cause low self esteem.

What is Body image?

Your body image can be influenced by those around you like family members and friends. Media messages from TV, magazines and billboards can also have a significant impact on how you feel about yourself.

These images of so-called 'perfect' looking people are everywhere. You've probably noticed that they don't look the same as the people you see in everyday life. In real life, people come in all shapes and sizes but in the media they seem to be all the same size. Seeing these 'ideal' images everywhere can damage self esteem and body image by making you feel like you have to live up to these unrealistic ideals.

Did you know?

- The images in magazines are **not real**. They have been airbrushed which means all imperfections have been removed.
- The shape and size of the models has also been altered.
- Twenty years ago, models weighed 8% less than the average woman. Today, **they weigh 23% less.**
- Male models today are also a **different shape and weight** to the average man.

What/who influences Body image?



You could stop reading magazines, or if you do read them, be aware that the images in them are **not real**.

- **Stop comparing yourself to others.** Make a list of all the good and special things about you without mentioning your appearance. Remind yourself of these when you're feeling low.
- Focus on your **positive qualities** and talents. If someone pays you a compliment, make a note of it.
- Hang out with people that make you feel good. Try and stay away from people who put you down or make fun of you.
- Spend time on **activities you enjoy** and that make you feel good about yourself.
- **Remember that body image is only one part of who you are.** It is not a reflection of the type of person you are or what people really see in you. If you think about your friends, you think about how they make you feel and what you have in common, not what they look like. Try and think about yourself in the same way – focussing on qualities other than your appearance.

Ways to feel better about yourself:

An eating disorder like anorexia, bulimia or binge eating disorder is a serious mental health condition that can have a lasting impact on your health.

is there a link between eating disorders and body images?

People with low self-esteem or a negative body image do tend to be more likely to develop an eating disorder, however there is no single reason why a person develops an eating disorder. It is usually a combination of factors. It may be that someone has a difficult situation or problem that they are finding difficult to deal with, but sometimes it is not obvious what the trigger is.

Eating disorders are not about food. An eating disorder develops as a way for the person to cope with or avoid difficult feelings. **People do not choose to have an eating disorder and it is NOT a way of attention seeking.**

An eating disorder can make the person feel **very alone and out of control**. It can make it difficult to talk to or spend time with, and it can make it difficult for them to let anyone know what's happening.

What are eating disorders?



www.eatingdisordersni.co.uk

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Recovery from an eating disorder

The first thing to remember is that recovery is possible. Many people fully recover from eating disorders and go on to live healthy and happy lives. The first step towards recovery is to talk to someone you feel you can trust.

What can you do if a friend has an eating disorder?

- Find out more about eating disorders and services so you can understand more and be ready to help.
- Talk to them and let them know you're concerned and why.
- Don't be surprised if they deny a problem.
- Encourage them to talk to an adult they trust.
- If they won't tell someone, even if it seems like a bad thing to do, it would be a good idea if you could. Although your friend may be angry with you at first, it may be the first step towards getting them the help they need.
- Don't change your own eating habits.
- Let them know you're there for them.

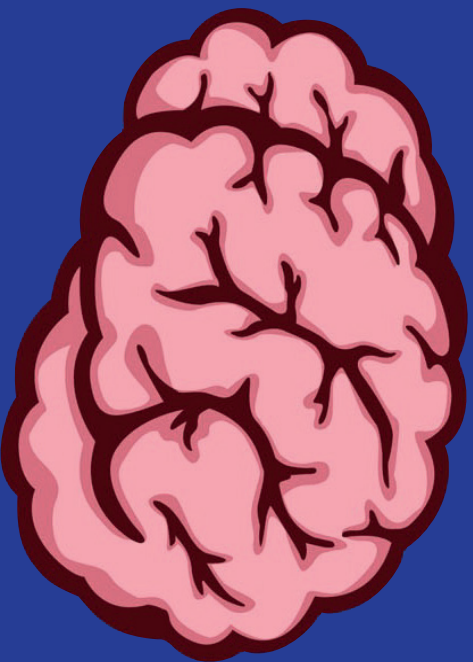


What can Eating Disorders Association (N.I.) do for you?

Eating Disorders Association is the national voluntary organisation providing support and information to people affected by eating disorders. EDA (N.I.) provide a range of support services:

- Email Support Service
- 24 Hour Helpline Support
- Drop-in Service
- 1-1 Support
- Monthly Support Groups
- Early Intervention/Prevention Programmes for Schools and Youth Groups
- Workshops for Professionals

How do you think
about yourself?



Five people I feel good spending
time with...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

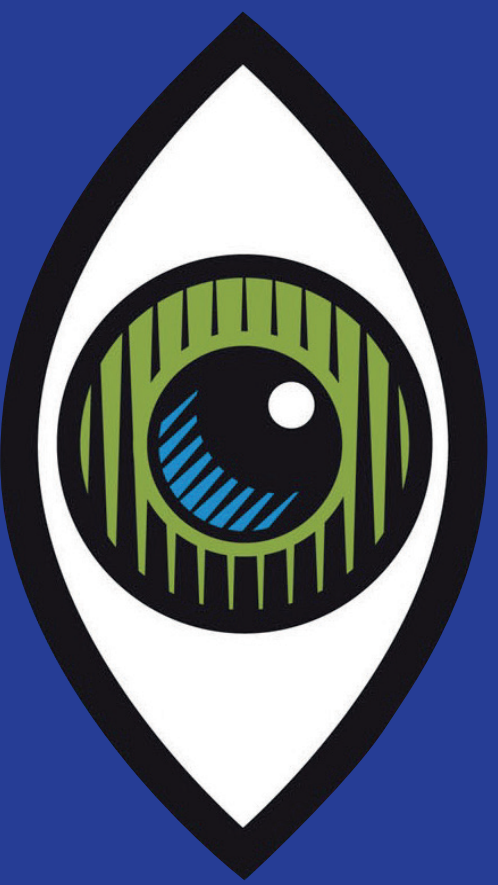
How do you talk about yourself?



Five things I like about myself

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How do you see yourself?



Five activities that make me
feel good...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Helpline
028 90 235959

Support Email
info@eatingdisordersni.co.uk

www.eatingdisordersni.co.uk

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feeling good about
yourself, or if
you're feeling low,
it's ok to let
someone know

