



Having body image issues

Do you wish you could lose weight, get taller, or develop faster? It's pretty common to worry a little about how your body looks, especially when it's changing. You can learn about body image and ways to take control of yours.

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What is body image? » [top](#)

Body image is how you think and feel about your body. It includes whether you think you look good to other people.

Body image is affected by a lot of things, including messages you get from your friends, family, and the world around you. Images we see in the media definitely affect our body image even though a lot of media images are changed or aren't realistic.

Why does body image matter? Your body image can affect how you feel about yourself overall. For example, if you are unhappy with your looks, your [self-esteem](#) may start to go down. Sometimes, having body image issues or low self-esteem may lead to [depression](#), [eating disorders](#), or obesity.

How can I deal with body image issues? » [top](#)

Everyone has something they would like to change about their bodies. But you'll be happier if you focus on the things you like about your body — and your whole self. Need some help? Check out some tips:

- **List your great traits.** If you start to criticize your body, tell yourself to stop. Instead, think about what you like about yourself, both inside and out. The "[What's unique about me?](#)" [log](#) can get you started.
- **Know your power.** Hey, your body is not just a place to hang your clothes! It can do some truly amazing things. Focus on how strong and healthy your body can be.
- **Treat your body well.** Eat right, sleep tight, and get moving. You'll look and feel your best — and you'll be pretty proud of yourself too.
- **Give your body a treat.** Take a nice bubble bath, do some stretching, or just curl up on a comfy couch. Do something soothing.
- **Mind your media.** Try not to let models and actresses affect how you think you should look. They get lots of help from makeup artists, personal trainers, and photo fixers. And advertisers often use a focus on thinness to get people to buy stuff. Don't let them mess with your mind!
- **Let yourself shine.** A lot of how we look comes from how we carry ourselves. Feeling proud, walking tall, and smiling big can boost your beauty — and your mood.
- **Find fab friends.** Your best bet is to hang out with people who accept you for you! And work with your friends to support each other.

If you can't seem to accept how you look, talk to an adult you trust. You can get help feeling better about your body.

Stressing about body changes » [top](#)

During puberty and your teen years, your body changes a lot. All those changes can be hard to handle. They might make you worry about what other people think of how you look and about whether your body is normal. If you have these kinds of concerns, you are not alone.

Here are some common thoughts about changing bodies.

- Why am I taller than most of the boys my age?
- Why haven't I grown?
- Am I too skinny?
- Am I too fat?
- Will others like me now that I am changing?
- Are my breasts too small?
- Are my breasts too large?
- Why do I have acne?
- Do my clothes look right on my body?
- Are my hips getting bigger?

If you are stressed about your body, you may feel better if you understand why you are changing so fast — or not changing as fast as your friends.

During puberty, you get taller and see other changes in your body, such as wider hips and thighs. Your body will also start to have more fat compared to muscle than before. Each young woman changes at her own pace, and all of these changes are normal.

Want to know more about how your body and mind may be changing? You can read all about [puberty](#). You also can work on feeling good about your body while it's changing.

What are serious body image problems? » [top](#)

If how your body looks bothers you a lot and you can't stop thinking about it, you could have body dysmorphic disorder (say: dis-MOR-fik dis-OR-duhr), or BDD.

People with BDD think they look ugly even if they have a small flaw or none at all. They may spend many hours a day looking at flaws and trying to hide them. They also may ask friends to reassure them about their looks or want to have a lot of cosmetic surgery. If you or a friend may have BDD, talk to an adult you trust, such as a parent or guardian, school counselor, teacher, doctor, or nurse. BDD is an illness, and you can get help.

What do you see?

A lot of our body image comes from pics we see in the media or on social media sites. But those images can be unhealthy, fixed up, or faked. Focusing on inner beauty makes more sense. As one teen says, "**My brilliance shines from the inside**, from my heart. I reflect a life full of experience, full of love and anger. **My beauty overpowers a room**, not just the magazine page." Check out [some videos](#) for more teens' thoughts on body image.



Young women's thoughts on body image

We think every body is beautiful! Hear what some young women have to say about how their bodies look and what they see in the world around them. You also can read their wise words.

One Standard of Beauty (text-only)



It's ridiculous to ask everyone to live up to this one standard of beauty, because [laughs] it's so rare, you know.

Advertising and African American Women (text)



"Sometimes, with African American women, a lot in society are given a very double standard. Because we're taught from day one, you know, "Be proud. Be a beautiful black sister....," you know. But then again, if you look in the ads, you see these models with the very light green eyes and the blonde hair which is, you know, kind of long, and you know it's a weave, and it's long, and they're tiny, you know."

Real beauty comes from the heart (text-only)



Opening the magazine page, I don't see a reflection of myself. I see portions of women with flat stomachs and PERFECT figures. After all my life wondering why I can't be a model, and becoming filled with self-hatred, anger, and DOUBT, it HAD to stop. When I look in the mirror, I don't see Tyra Banks or Niki Taylor. I see me, a beautiful, intelligent, wonderful young woman. My brilliance shines from the inside, from my heart. Although I don't see shiny magazine pages printed with thin MADE-UP COMPUTER-EDITED WOMEN, the reality of my face and body is more beautiful than that any day. I reflect a life full of experience, full of love and anger, and my beauty overpowers a room, not just the magazine page.

Pre-occupation with food (text-only)



When I was dieting, I was SO preoccupied with food. I was constantly thinking about what I was going to have to eat next, what I had eaten before that I shouldn't have eaten, or what I had eaten before that it was great that I ate. Friends would call me and ask if I wanted to go see a movie, and I didn't want to go, because it would mess up my exercise schedule, or something weird like that. Now that I look back on it, it was the most unhappy time of my life.

What makes me unique?

Thinking positively about yourself — who you are and the things you can do — can help boost your self-esteem. You can print this page and use it to write great info just about you. Try keeping it in your locker, your notebook, or your bedroom to remind you of what makes you unique.

If you want to write whenever and wherever the mood hits, you also can use a cloud-based tool, like Google Docs.

Write and enjoy!

I like to...



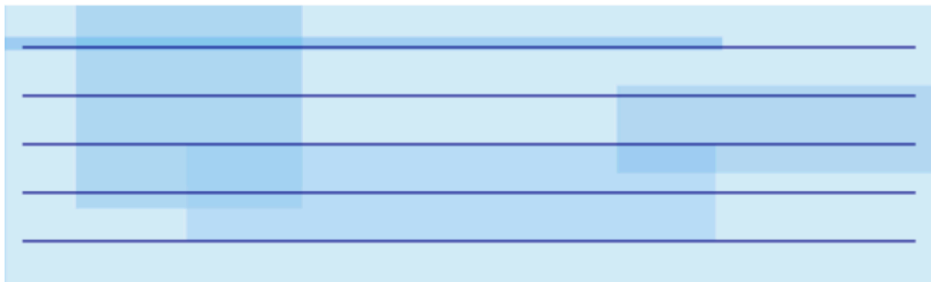
A writing area with five horizontal lines. The background is light blue with faint, abstract circular patterns in a slightly darker shade of blue.

I am good at...



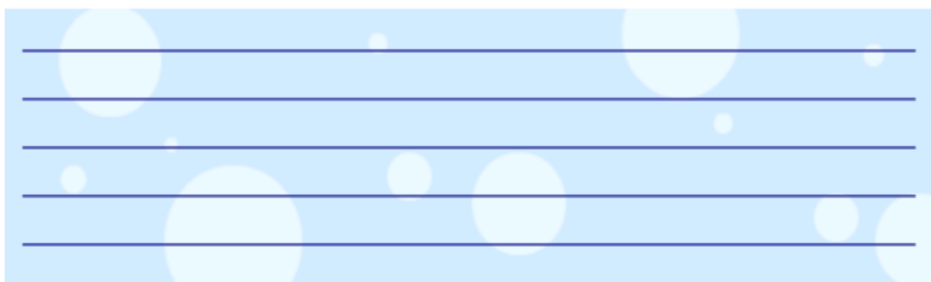
A writing area with five horizontal lines. The background is light purple with faint, abstract circular patterns in a slightly darker shade of purple.

I am proud of myself because...



A writing area with five horizontal lines. The background is light blue with faint, abstract rectangular patterns in a slightly darker shade of blue.

I would like to learn how to...



A writing area with five horizontal lines. The background is light blue with faint, abstract circular patterns in a slightly darker shade of blue.