

If you're worried about how you look....



- 1. Try to be kind to yourself.** Try not to compare yourself to the images you see online – many of which have been digitally changed to look 'perfect'. They do not reflect how people look in real life.
- 2. Pay attention to how social media is making you feel about you body and yourself.** Unfollow accounts that make you feel bad and follow ones that make you feel good
- 3. Focus on good things.** Think about the parts of yourself that you like and focus on those.
- 4. Spend time with people who make you feel positive about yourself.** Think about writing down the nice things people say about you. And remember you are valued and important to lots of people for lots of reasons.
- 5. Talk to someone you trust.** This could be a friend/ family member/ teacher or youth worker. Tell them how you're feeling.
- 6. Think carefully about making hasty decisions that may last the rest of your life.** (Extreme piercings or tattoos, steroid use, cosmetic surgery.)
- 7. Be cautious of 'quick fixes/ hacks' on social media. Research the content, talk to someone you trust, and look at trusted information and advice:**

Useful websites

- www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/body-image/#Whatisbodyimage
- www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/body-dysmorphia/
- www.edne.org.uk/about-eating-distress/

For More Information:



If you would like more information, please visit our website.

If you have been affected by any of the issues described in this leaflet you can talk to a Counsellor or a Youth Worker at a Streetwise drop-in.

Advice is FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.

Produced by: Streetwise Young People's Project:

Young People's Information, Advice, Counselling, Sexual Health and Support Service for 11-25 year olds.

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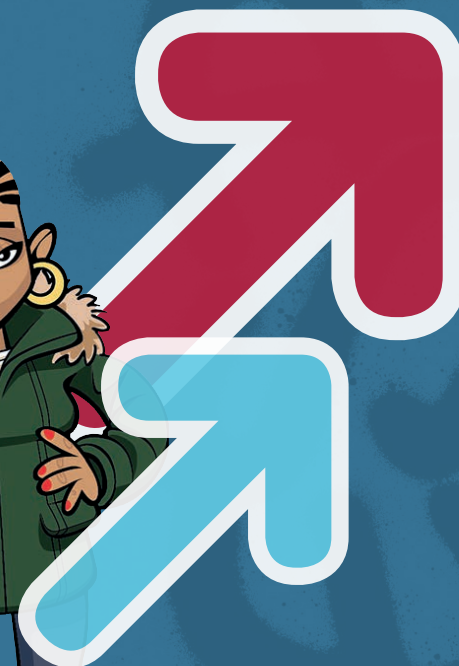
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The Streetwise guide to Self- Image



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What exactly is self image?

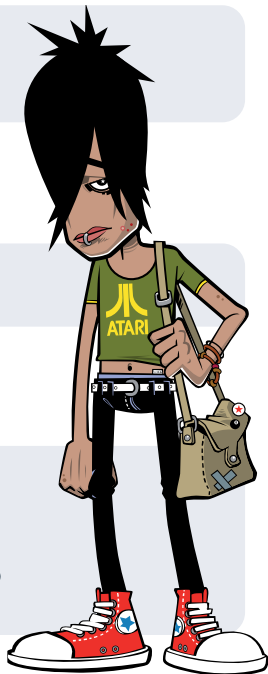


Self-image is how we think and feel about ourselves often physically (body image) and how we believe others see us.

When we talk about body image, there are lots of ways we can think about our body and the way we look. Sometimes you might like your body, or parts of your body, and other times you might struggle with how you look.

Body image is not just about our weight, it can also be things like:

- Comparing how you look with friends or people you follow on social media.
- Struggling to love and accept your body.
- Feeling as though how you look is not represented in the media.
- Hiding your body because you feel ashamed by it.
- Struggling to find clothes for your body, particularly if you have a physical disability.
- Feeling misunderstood about your body when people make assumptions about you.
- Feeling like you are not attractive enough.
- Birthmarks, surgery scars or acne affecting how you feel about how you look.
- Feeling as though your body does not match your gender. For information on this, have a look at *The Streetwise Guide to Gender*.



Thoughts about how we look are often influenced by stuff around us. For example, people on TV, things we see on social media or adverts about 'improving how you look'. All of this can impact how we feel about ourselves.

Other things that might influence how we feel include:

- Media promoting a particular type of body as 'fit and healthy' or strong – with little representation of different body shapes.
- Comments from friends or family about your body.
- Social media promoting what should be the 'perfect body' shape.
- Clothes limited to fit certain body types.
- Adverts/ health campaigns or school lessons about healthy bodies.

If you feel that you are comparing your body with things around you, you are not alone. Lots of us are influenced by the things around us which can sometimes impact our mental health and/ or self-esteem.



If you are having these thoughts and feelings about how you look, you might be struggling with your body image. You might notice changes in your behaviour, and find things like eating, getting dressed or going out with friends becomes more difficult.

It's particularly common to feel this way whilst going through puberty. During puberty, your body releases hormones which makes you more aware of how you and other people look. These changes **happen to everyone!** But can sometimes leave you feeling out of control or anxious. It's really important that if you are feeling this way, you talk to a trusted adult, friend or youth worker as these feelings can lead to:

- Low self esteem.
- Depression.
- Anxiety.
- Isolation and loneliness.
- Eating problems.
- Obsessing about how you look.

