

Dissatisfied Body Images among Youth

Written to the youth and their parents -

Roni Rabin (2010) wrote in an article for the New York Times that one of every three American children is overweight or obese. Growing up is never easy. A person's body goes through many changes in life and most of them they may not like. Surprisingly, this statistic is not very shocking. With today's technology exercise is a thing of the past and fast food chains now dominate the vast landscape of modern society. The purpose of this article is to explore the epidemic of obesity and how it can effect youths viewing their body, as well as other marketing of certain products

Growing up many people remember hearing stories of their grandpa moaning of how rough they had it. How, even if the temperature was 37 degrees Fahrenheit in the dead winter, they made the 5-mile walk to and from school. A good time was when a rudimentary baseball diamond was set up in the closest field and ball was played.

The above thoughts show the first point of the now growing epidemic of obesity. Although the baby boomer's generation grew up with more physical activity it seems that today's generation appears to lack this aspect. It is just as easy for kids to drive three blocks as it is for them to walk those three blocks. It seems that we are looking for shortcuts as a whole. How can I do this task while doing the least amount of work possible? It seems that the true epidemic is laziness.

While the changes in transportation have made it a little more difficult to get exercise, most would argue that transportation is not a leading cause of the problem and that there could be other factors that are influencing the growing obesity problem. Becky Oskin (2012) writes

in an article that on average today's teen spends about 50 hours a week in front of some type of screen. The article goes on to further put this into perspective, comparing the time spent in front of screens to having a full time job with 10 hours of overtime. It seems that more and more physical exercise and activities that use to be fun, are being replaced with PS3's and Xbox's. Relating to the earlier example of grandpa telling about the good ole days, it appears that youth today have gone to a more laissez fair attitude based on Becky Oskin's article.

Diet has followed the same laissez fair attitude being that it is much easier pick up food then to make it. The abundance of fast food chains makes it easy and simple to slip in and out, and get that kids meal. In fact marketing has made it even easier for children to become obese; the satisfaction of finishing the Happy Meal so that you can play with the awesome toy that was wedged between the fries, apples, and nuggets. Even the way that businesses design the buildings can play a role. They lure a family into their restaurant by using a giant play-house that the kids can play in while they wait for their food. Children should be able to get a healthier alternative to fast food.

Body image can be one of the hardest things to grow up with. Our self-esteem's are constantly under attack because others find it funny to exploit the way we may appear. It could be the smallest of things that create the most attention, simply being overweight or having a unique feature that no one else has. This creates a lot of stress and makes them feel trapped in their own bodies, even uncomfortable at times.

The media does not help as it portrays women with flawless bodies and men with six pack abs. Teen magazines portray the most recent hip stars in skimpy clothing. This is not just limited to teen magazines either. If young adolescents pick up any beauty or fashion magazine they would most likely see skinny and curvy models. It sets standards that most people cannot

live up to. This could be creating all sorts of problems. Young people today need to be able to wake up and go to the mirror and think that there is nothing wrong with them instead of focusing on their imperfections.

What can be done to solve these problems to help children feel adequate in their own bodies? There are many programs to keep youth healthy and fit, including the first lady getting her hands dirty trying to better the youth of this great nation. Parents could set stricter standards on personal media and other electronics, forcing our kids to get out and play other activities. Most importantly, simply supporting youth today, empowering them to know that no one is perfect.

To truly help those that are desperate there are many programs that help youth gain appreciation of themselves. One of the main programs is “Express Yourself”. This is a program that is offered through the Roberts Crown Center, which is specific to young females. Through this program young females learn key roles to help maintain a good body image and self-esteem. According to (Robert Crown Center), some of the main goals are to teach them respect not only to others but to themselves. To help them learn better habits for dieting and exercise, also in this program they are surrounded with others that are just like them. Young females see that they are not that different and can share a common problem facing young females today.

The above program is only one of many and the next one found helps young adolescents that are experiencing overweight and obesity problems. As most know dieting habits are building blocks for the future. At Boston’s Children Hospital, they have created an excellent program called Optimal Weight for Life or (OWL) program. An article written by Tripp Underwood (2011) discusses that the main goal for this program is to overcome the obesity problem in young adolescence today. It also goes on to explain how they treat their patients.

They use the combination of nutritional counseling and behavioral treatment. The behavioral treatment is a lot like that of the Express Yourself program I discussed earlier. It uses family and private session counseling to help motivate youth and to create better habits.

In both programs support and motivation are key factors when helping young adolescence deal with their body image. Parents need to send positive messages to their children: encourage them to try new activities, better yet join them in their choice of an activity. Be a listener to a child as they are going through life trying to figure things out.

Growing up is extremely tough. What makes it even tougher is for someone to wake up and be completely uncomfortable in their skin. Personal body image is important when trying to live your life. If a youth is happy with the way they look then it is just one less thing to be worried about. Although there is a good start on programs to help young people today it would not hurt to have more resources. Young people today need to know that they are unique in their own way and they need to be proud of that. If someone is having a hard time with their weight or body features, people need to be there to support and not to terrorize them.

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