



Student Wellbeing Resource

Body Image & Self-Esteem

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Overview

Body image describes our beliefs on how our body looks and how we think it is perceived by others. This includes our thoughts and feelings about our height, weight, shape, skin, colour, and our general appearance or attractiveness. Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves and the belief and value we place on ourselves; it is our self-worth. The effects of body image on self-esteem are especially prevalent during the teenage years and both are areas of increasing concern for children, young people, parents and teachers.

Our culture is infused with messages linking individual worth with physical appearance and the advent of social media has carried these messages into young people's bedrooms. Young people report feeling increasingly overwhelmed by sexualised and unrealistic images of beauty. For those who exaggerate perceived flaws and use excessive negative self-talk, body image becomes a source of depression, anxiety and a loss of self-esteem. In addition to this, low self-esteem and body image are intrinsically connected to the development and persistence of eating disorders, other mental health problems and risk taking behaviours.

The number of children and young people with an eating disorder is on the rise. However, it is clinically proven that those suffering can recover faster when they are treated locally and as soon as possible. By prioritising our focus on doing this we can take a crucial role in reducing the amount of young people who end up needing more specialised in-patient care.

Key Facts

- 2/3 of adults suffer from negative body image.
- Over ½ of girls and ¼ of boys think their peers have body image problems.
- 42% of girls and young women feel that the most negative part about being a female is the pressure to look attractive.
- 1/3 of men would sacrifice a year of their life to achieve their ideal body.
- Girls as young as five years old are worried about the way they look and their size.

In their 2004 article, Mann et al investigated the relationship between self-esteem and mental health promotion, arguing that “high self-esteem can lead to a better health and social behaviour, and that poor self-esteem is associated with a broad range of mental disorders and social problems both internalising problems, for example depression, suicidal tendencies, eating disorders and anxiety” (2004, p357). Other academics have drawn similar conclusions “the significant influence of self-esteem on body image has led to programmes in which the promotion of self-esteem is used as a main preventive tool in eating disorders” (St Jeor, 1993, Vickers, Scarano et al, 1994) (Mann et al, 2004, 362).

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✓ Best Practice

- All staff to be aware of the signs and symptoms of poor body image, self-esteem and eating disorders and feel confident about what to do if they are concerned about a young person.
- Students with low body image and self-esteem or disordered eating can spot the signs in themselves or their friends and will present themselves to a member of staff with whom they feel comfortable.
- All staff should be aware of the school's process of sharing information about their concerns in order to ensure proper confidentiality and privacy, and to prevent the young person having to explain themselves several times.
- The school to consider developing an eating disorder policy to formally undertake preventative and early intervention strategies for Eating Disorders.
- Staff to set a good example of body positivity and healthy eating behaviours in their own practice.

📖 References

Michal (Michelle) Mann, Clemens M. H. Hosman, Herman P. Schaalma, Nanne K. de Vries; Self-esteem in a broad-spectrum approach for mental health promotion. *Health Educ Res* 2004; 19 (4): 357-372. doi: 10.1093/her/cyg041

St Jeor, S. T. (1993), The role of weight management in the health of women. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 93.9:1007-1012

Vickers, M. J. (1993), Understanding Obesity in Women. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing*, 22: 17-23. doi:10.1111/j.1552-6909.1993.tb01778.x

Scarano, G. M. and Kalodner-Martin, C. R. (1994), A Description of the Continuum of Eating Disorders: Implications for Intervention and Research. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 72: 356-361. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.1994.tb00949.x

📖 Resources

South Yorkshire Eating Disorders Association is a charity that is based in Sheffield. Their website contains details of services, recovery stories and information on how to self-refer at www.syeda.org.uk.

Men Get Eating Disorders Too is a charitable organisation which aims to raise awareness of eating disorders in men <http://mengetedstoo.co.uk/>.

Beat is a national eating disorder charity with a helpline and youthline www.b-eat.co.uk.

Epic Friends is a site managed by CAMHS to help young people to support their friends through a variety of mental health problems <https://epicfriends.co.uk/>

The PHSE Association website contains lots of resources for addressing the topics of body image and self-esteem www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/.

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Local Offers and Providers

Provider	What they offer	Cost	Contact details
South Yorkshire Eating Disorders Association (SYEDA).	<p>We offer a range of talking therapies, occupational therapy, complimentary therapy and support groups to anyone 14 and over who is suffering with an eating disorder or whose relationship with body image and food dominates their life.</p> <p>We also offer one-to-one therapy, support groups and courses to friends and family members of those directly affected.</p> <p>We also deliver a bespoke education and training offer to young people and the professionals who work with them, from GPs and nurses to teachers and third sector organisations.</p>	<p>Our Education and Training is a free service.</p> <p>We are currently funded until March 2018 and will seek to secure further funding to continue our service after this.</p> <p>Minimal charges may apply for our services.</p>	<p>Please contact our Education and Training Manager Christie Rossiter.</p> <p>christier@syeda.org.uk</p> <p>(0114) 272 8822</p>
Golddigger Trust	<p>Golddigger Trust is a Sheffield based Charity, offering a variety of wellbeing projects, both within the school environment, and extra-curricular activities within the community, for young people aged 11-19.</p> <p>Services include:</p> <p>'I'm The Girl I Want To Be' and 'Made Of More' Self-esteem and healthy relationships courses (single gender groups of 8-12 students). Creative course exploring issues of esteem, identity, healthy sex and relationships and aspirations for the future, over 8 weeks (1.45-2hr session per week).</p> <p>1:1 Mentoring – Bespoke, flexible programmes of mentoring for students addressing specific needs identified. Minimum 6 sessions (usual course approx. 8-14 sessions).</p> <p>'SISU' Controlling Emotions Course – 5 week course for up to 6 students, creatively exploring issues around self-harming behaviours, anxiety and/or depression. Sisu takes an innovative, CBT based approach, and can also be delivered 1:1.</p> <p>Students accessing Golddigger Trust services via school can also access additional free services outside of school hours, including drop in youth clubs, sexual health clinic, sports and music sessions and online support.</p>	<p>Cost varies based on service and available charitable funding, contact for most up to date costings.</p> <p>Community based services are free, accessed by community referral (MAST, CAMHS, Self-referral etc). There is no charge to young people.</p>	<p>0114 327 1191</p> <p>Golddigger Trust Centre For Young People, 10 Psalter Lane, Sheffield, S11 8YN</p> <p>info@golddiggertrust.co.uk</p> <p>www.golddiggertrust.co.uk</p>