PENNSYLVANIA
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

Tips to Improve Body Image
Briana Steele, MA., LPC, NCC & Whitney Robenolt, Psy.D.

Body image is defined as the perceptions we hold regarding our physical appearance. It typically develops through a combination of historical and societal influences, as well as personal experiences. Body image contributes to an individual's sense of confidence, self-esteem, and mental health. It can impact our daily actions and choices regarding personal and social habits, as well as involvement in activities. Due to the integral nature of body image to overall well-being, it is important to consider ways to improve and maintain a positive body image. Some suggestions have been provided below:

- **Engage in critical media consumption:** Messages from the media regarding physical appearance are often skewed toward an unrealistic image of gender norms and expectations which are unachievable for most individuals. Marketing industries cultivate insecurity to promote the consumption of their products. Consider the messages you are receiving when viewing advertisements, television, and social media. Are the images realistic? What are the messages being put across and why are they being presented? How do these images make you feel?

- **Reduce social comparisons:** Recognize that bodies come in all shapes and sizes. Self-comparison often results in self-criticism, rather than a celebration of unique and individual qualities. Comparing your appearance to others is likely to increase feelings of negativity. Forgive and challenge yourself to increase personal body acceptance.

- **Participate in positive physical activities:**   Appreciate what your body can do for you as it carries you throughout your day. Use it to engage in sports, relaxation, spending time in nature, or any other physical activity you enjoy doing.

- **Practice self-compassion and self-care:** Recognize your needs and allow yourself to make mistakes. Focus on taking care of your body – eat nutritious foods, engage in movement, and prioritize sleep. Find time for activities you enjoy.

- **Build a body-positive support network:** Surround yourself with body-positive individuals who accept and appreciate all bodies. Reduce engaging in negative body talk with others. Focus on relationships which support your body-image goals.

The above suggestions are not intended to substitute for professional help. Many professionals are offering psychotherapy via secure internet video connection currently. If you feel you would benefit from talking with a professional and would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our [Psychologist Locator.](#) You can also ask your health care professional or a trusted friend to recommend a psychologist or other mental health professional.