



Parent Support Booklet

Body Image & Eating Disorders

Determination

Honesty

Readiness

Respect

Spark

Eating Disorders & Body Image

What is an eating problem?

Lots of people have different eating habits. Your child might eat loads one day, but less hungry another day, or go through phases of wanting to eat more or less healthily. But that doesn't mean they have an eating problem. But if they are focussing a lot on controlling what or how much they eat, or if they have urges to eat and then make them self sick (bulimia), these are signs they could have an issue.

Eating problems are common and they affect people with any body shape or lifestyle. Singers Demi Lovato and Zayn Malik have both spoken openly about having eating disorders and what they did to get better.

All kinds of things can cause eating problems or disorders. They might develop an eating problem when things don't feel right in other parts of their life, especially if they are feeling worried, stressed, or feeling out of control. Images we see online and in the media can add to the feeling that they have to look a certain way, or be a certain weight which may not be healthy for our body.

Remember, there are so many wonderful things about them that are more than their body weight and shape.

Symptoms of eating problems

Here are some types of eating behaviour which your child might be experiencing quite often, or taking to extremes:

- ⇒ losing appetite
- ⇒ eating when not hungry
- ⇒ obsessing about your body (e.g. being too fat, or not muscly enough)
- ⇒ eating only certain types of things or following fad diets
- ⇒ being afraid of gaining weight
- ⇒ dramatic weight loss or gain
- ⇒ making yourself sick
- ⇒ no longer enjoying eating socially or leaving the table quickly (to be sick or hide food)
- ⇒ focusing on buying or cooking food for others
- ⇒ feeling secretive about eating
- ⇒ being secretive about/preoccupied with food
- ⇒ being self-conscious about eating in front of others

If any of the symptoms above are affecting your child's everyday life, it's a good idea to talk to someone about how they are feeling. You might have an idea about what an eating disorder looks like, but not everyone experiences the same difficult eating behaviours, and their weight on its own does not determine whether they have a problem.

Recovery - Reaching out for Help

The voices inside your child's head if they struggle with a possible eating disorder say that they will never be happy until they lose weight, that their worth is measured by how they look. But the truth is that happiness and self-esteem come from loving themselves for who they truly are.

The road to recovery from an eating disorder starts with your child admitting they have a problem. This can be tough, especially if they are still clinging to the belief, even just subconsciously, that weight loss is the key to their happiness, confidence, and success. But even when they finally understand this isn't true, old habits are still hard to break – this may all sound very disheartening, but it is possible, and with the right support and coping methods eating disorders can become a thing of the past. The good news is that 'bad habits' aren't permanent and they can unlearn what has become so ingrained in their mind. Just as anyone can develop an eating disorder, so too, anyone can get better. However, overcoming an eating disorder is about more than giving up unhealthy eating behaviours. It's also about learning new ways to cope with emotional pain and rediscovering who they are beyond their eating habits, weight, and body image.

True recovery from an eating disorder involves them learning to:

- ⇒ Listen to their feelings.
- ⇒ Listen to their body.
- ⇒ Accept themselves for who they are.
- ⇒ Love themselves.



If you think your child might have an eating disorder, telling someone can feel quite hard for both you as a parent and your child but it is necessary. Make sure to talk to someone you both trust if you and your child are struggling. As anyone with experience will tell you that talking about it was the first step on their road to recovery. Also speak to your family GP for advice. Sometimes learning to eat normally again can be hard work, so your doctor can help you get the support your child will need. They might suggest talking therapies that you and your family can try, to help you all figure out and deal with the issues that have triggered the eating problem. They may also want to measure your child's weight to assess their BMI (Body Mass Index) – it's ok for them to be nervous about this, but just remember they don't want to judge your child or your family, they only want to help.

Some eating problems can become serious mental health conditions that need professional help to diagnose and treat. In very serious cases and without the right kind of support and treatment, they can even cause death, which is why it is so important to speak to someone if your child is struggling with their eating so that you can get the help you need for them to recover. It might feel really difficult, but your child can get through it and they deserve to get better.

Everyone worries about how we look at times during our lives and that's completely normal. If you or your child are experiencing any of the above, know that there are people who can help you get through this. Things can get better.

Rebecca's journey: Recovering from anorexia

It began with some traumatic news. There had been an accident involving one of our classmates and she had died. The loss was one of my sisters' best friends so I put all my attention into looking after her. I never grieved myself, meaning I never dealt with the emotional toll this took on me.

I was having to deal with a whole range of displaced emotions. I turned to exercise. It was a good escape until it combined with my OCD-like behaviour patterns and became an obsession. I began obsessing over what I ate.

One day, I passed out during a blood test. This led to me staying overnight in a general hospital where my behaviours became more of a concern. I was sent to an inpatient unit for a month. When I came out, on paper I was 'better'. But I was oblivious to what everyone else saw. I was diagnosed with anorexia and it was taking over.

Eventually, I was admitted to another inpatient unit. I can honestly say, it was the best thing I could have done. With my determined mindset, and support from loved ones, I learnt how to manage. To this day, I am still not 'fixed', but I am a stronger person, better able to cope and live my life.

What is body image?

Body image is how we think and feel about ourselves physically, 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.

Your child might find that there are times when they like their body, or parts of their body, and times when they will struggle with how they look. Body image is not just about their weight, it can also be things like:

- ⇒ comparing how they look with friends or people they follow on social media
- ⇒ struggling to love and accept their body
- ⇒ feeling as though their body shape is not represented in the media
- ⇒ hiding their body because they feel ashamed by it
- ⇒ struggling to find clothes for their body, particularly if they have a physical disability
- ⇒ feeling misunderstood about their body when people make assumptions about things like, why they might need a wheelchair
- ⇒ feeling like they are not attractive enough
- ⇒ birthmarks, surgery scars or acne affecting how they feel about how they look
- ⇒ feeling as though their body does not match their gender

Things that influence body image

These thoughts about how people look are often influenced by things going on around us. It can be what they see every day on social media, what the characters they see on TV look like, or seeing adverts about 'improving how they look'. All of this can contribute to how they feel about their our body.

Other influences might be:

- ⇒ the media promoting one type of body as 'fit and healthy' with little to no representation of different bodies
- ⇒ comments from friends or family about their body
- ⇒ social media promoting what should be the 'perfect body' image
- ⇒ clothes limited to fit certain body types
- ⇒ adverts, health campaigns or lessons at school on what is a 'healthy body'

If you feel they are comparing their body with things they see every day, they are not alone. Lots of us are influenced by the things around us, which can impact our mental health.



How can body image affect my child's mental health?

If your child is having these thoughts and feelings about how they look, they might be struggling with their body image. They may find everyday tasks like eating, getting dressed or going out with friends becoming more difficult.

This can be at any point in their life or continuously throughout their life, but it is common to have these thoughts when they are going through puberty. During puberty, their body releases hormones which makes them more aware of how they look, and more aware of other people's bodies. Often forget these changes happen to everyone, so it can sometimes make them feel out of control or anxious

It can lead to feelings of:

- ⇒ low self-esteem
- ⇒ depression
- ⇒ anxiety – Body dysmorphic disorder*
- ⇒ Isolation

*Body dysmorphic disorder is when they are constantly worrying about flaws in their appearance, focus on specific areas of their body and compare themselves a lot to others.

Sometimes when they are struggling with their body image, they might change their eating habits as this can make them feel like they are in more control of how they look. This can be things like changing what they eat, how much and how often they are eating. If they are finding that their eating habits or relationship with food is taking over their life, they might be struggling with an eating problem. Find out more and how you can get support for your child on the help pages at the back of the booklet.

Self Esteem

It is completely normal for them to feel insecure about their body, and the majority of us will experience this at some point in our lives. So here are some tips about what to do if they are worried about how they look:

- ⇒ Remember that there isn't a single type of beauty - everyone sees it differently. And there simply isn't a right or a wrong way to look.
- ⇒ Remind them to be kind to themselves and try not to compare themselves to the many images they see online and in magazines, which are often digitally changed to make them look 'perfect' – they don't reflect how people look in real life.
- ⇒ Check if their social media is affecting them in anyway about how they feel about their bodies. There can be lots of pressure online to have the 'perfect' body. This can cause them to worry about how they look and compare themselves with others online. Following influencers who talk about positive body image, (For example youngminds ambassador Jada Sezer - Instagram **@jadasezer**, **@bodyposipanda** or **@kennyethanjones**) can help them to feel better about their body and have a more positive time online.
- ⇒ Focus on the things they like about themselves, and the parts of the body that they like.
- ⇒ Encourage them to spend time with people who make them feel positive about themselves. It might help them to write down the nice things people say to them, and not just about how they look. Remember, people value them for many reasons.
- ⇒ Get them to think about what advice they would give a friend if they told them they were struggling with the way they looked. Get them then to remember that advice whenever they start having negative thoughts.
- ⇒ Encourage them to talk to someone they trust. It could be you as their parent/carer or wider family members, like older cousins, aunts or uncles. Outside home, it could be a teacher, a neighbour, a close family friend or someone from a club they attend.

If you feel they are unable to cope, or particularly worried about one part of your child's body, talk to your GP about how they are feeling. They can listen, tell you both about local services and support groups for your child or they may suggest specific treatment for the way your child is feeling.

Tips from young people

"I'd recommend talking to someone you trust about what it is that makes you anxious so that they can support you in managing your intake."

"Avoid apps, accounts or websites that contribute to your negative body image and your relationship with eating."

"Looking at your body every day might be hard, but try to see and remember all the things your body does for you."

"PICK SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF AND JUST TELLING YOURSELF YOU LOVE IT, EVENTUALLY YOU WILL BELIEVE IT!"

"WEIGHT IS SIMPLY A LAW A PHYSICS, NOT SOMETHING THAT DEFINES YOU."



POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

Fill in the gaps with some positive affirmations

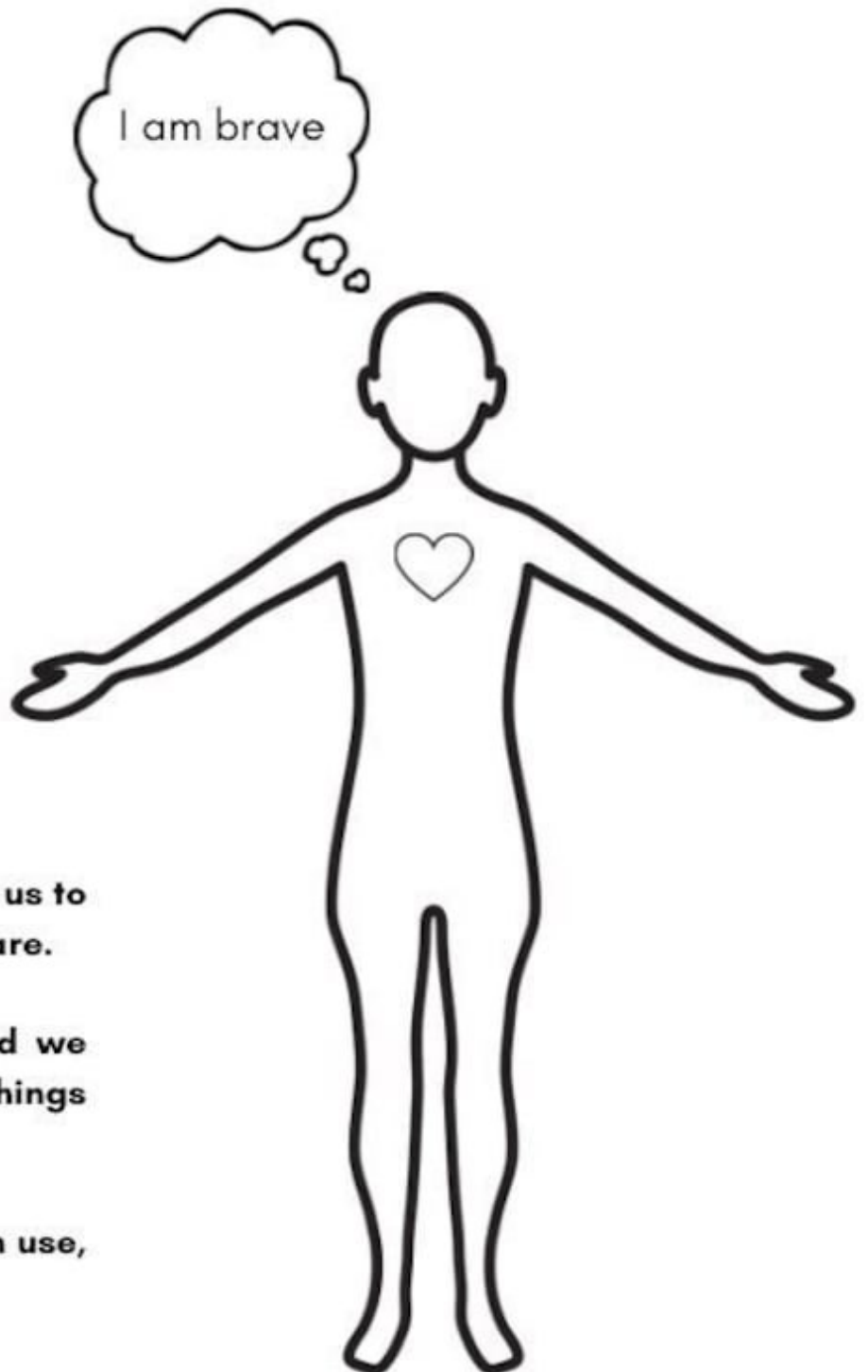
I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____



Positive affirmations can help us to remember how BRILLIANT we are.

When we feel worried or sad we sometimes forget all the things that make us SUPER.

These are some words we can use, but feel free to use your own:

Loyal Kind Amazing Caring Funny
Generous Loved Intelligent Strong
Patient Hardworking A great friend A good listener

Helplines and phone support for your
child to access

YoungMinds Crisis Messenger



Provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis

If you need urgent help text YM to **85258**

All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors

Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.

Samaritans



If you're in distress and need support, you can ring Samaritans for free at any time of the day or night.

Freephone (UK and Republic of Ireland):

116 123 (24 hours)

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Childline



If you're under 19 you can confidentially call, email, or chat online about any problem big or small

**Freephone 24h
helpline: 0800 1111**

[Sign up for a childline account](#) on the website to be able to message a counsellor anytime without using your email address

Chat 1:1 with an [online advisor](#)

The Mix



If you're under 25 you can talk to The Mix for free on the phone, by email or on their webchat. You can also use their phone counselling service, or get more information on support services you might need.

**Freephone: [0808 808 4994](tel:08088084994)
(13:00-23:00 daily)**

SupportLine



Offers confidential emotional telephone support in the UK for men, women, children and young adults.

Helpline: 01708 765200

Email: info@supportline.org.uk

SHOUT UK



Text SHOUT to 85258 for free 24/7 crisis support.

Shout is the UK's first 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help. Linked to the Heads Together Campaign.

HOPELINE UK



Run by Papyrus – the charity for prevention of young suicide

For children and young people under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide

For anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide

If you are having thoughts of suicide or are concerned for a young person who might be you can contact HOPELINEUK for confidential support and practical advice.

Call: 0800 068 4141

Text: 07860039967

Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org

Opening hours:

9am – 10pm weekdays, 2pm – 10pm weekends, 2pm

– 10pm bank holidays

MARPLE HALL SCHOOL WELLBEING SUPPORT

Check Your Battery
How are you feeling?



MENTAL
health
CHECK IN:

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| The Great | _____ |
| Good | _____ |
| OK | _____ |
| Alright-ish | _____ |
| Struggling | _____ |
| Empty | _____ |

There are lots of ways to get help for your wellbeing at school and to get involved in wellbeing activities. Our wellbeing strategy is all about building the tools to **look after ourselves, look after each other and to seek help when we need it.**

There is lots more information on the website, around the school, on the Pastoral Hub, in tutor periods and from members of staff. If you have any questions please contact your **form tutor, Pastoral Manager, Head of Year, the Wellbeing team, any member of staff** of email wellbeing@marplehall.stockport.sch.uk you can also follow our wellbeing on Instagram @mhswellbeing

Support websites— [for parent and child](https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>

UK's top eating disorder charity. They offer help guidance and support.

24 hour phone number—

0800 801 0677



KOOTH Counselling service

Your online mental wellbeing community

Free, safe and anonymous support

www.Kooth.com



Positive quotes

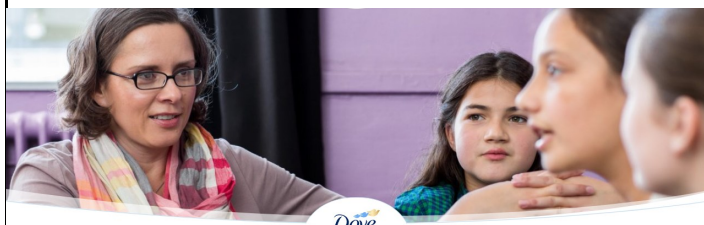
I definitely have body issues, but everybody does. When you come to the realization that everybody does – even the people that I consider flawless – then you can start to live with the way you are.

|

Taylor Swift

GH

Work that can be done at home between parent and child



Dove self esteem work is a fantastic tool for your child to work through either by them selves or with a parent/carer.

There is also lots of guidance and support about how best to help you child if they are struggling with a variety of different mental health conditions.

www.dove.com/uk/dove-self-esteem-project



Helplines and phone support for you as a parent to support

YoungMinds Crisis Messenger



Call our Parents Helpline for detailed advice, emotional support and signposting about a child or young person up to the age of 25.

You can call us for free on 0808 802 5544 from 9:30am - 4pm, Monday - Friday.

- **Our Parents Helpline is available in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.**
- **You'll get through to a trained adviser who will listen and talk through your concerns in complete confidence.**
- **Your adviser will help you to understand your child's behaviour and give you practical advice on what to do next.**

If you need further help, they'll arrange for one of our independent, experienced professionals to call you for a 50-minute telephone consultation within seven days

Turning Point



They offer a variety of different levels of support for parents/carers and the child.

Please visit the website on -

www.turning-point.co.uk

Fill in the contact form for more assistance.

Facebook



There are lots of support groups that have been set up by professionals to help assist parents/carers with their children's mental health. These are a great source of support for you as a parent/carer.

Suggested groups—

Parenting Mental Health

Parenting helping their teen daughters' mental health

CAMHS and Mental Health Services Support Group for Parents.

Charities



Parenting Mental Health is a registered charity that supports, connects and educates parents of young people with mental health issues.

www.parentingmentalhealth.org