
Early Support for Healthy Body Images

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, “Body image issues are affecting kids as young as 3—here’s how to prevent them” from Today’s Parent. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand the importance of helping children develop healthy habits at a young age.
- ◆ Identify strategies to intentionally observe children in your current practice to promote healthy habits.
- ◆ Create an action plan to develop and sustain healthy habits for preschoolers.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ Use the questions below to guide your reflection and action plan to support children’s healthy habits.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support preschoolers’ healthy habits.

If we do not teach children resilience or how to navigate body image issues, they will be more susceptible to future mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and eating disorders.

Emily Lauren Dick

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ This article is written for families but reflects on the importance of the role all adults including educators play in developing healthy habits for children. The article shares that preschoolers are aware of body shape and size at a young age. It is important to model positive body image for preschoolers.
 - Reflect on your own behavior while you are present with the children. Do the children hear you make any observations about your own body? Do the children hear the comments you make about food and a healthy lifestyle for yourself?
 - Assess the materials in the classroom. Are there images and materials of people of various sizes? Are there images of balanced food choices? Do the images in the classroom reflect people being active using their bodies. How do you normalize all bodies in your materials?
 - Are the children making any comments about their own and/or each other's body?

- ◆ The article emphasizes the importance of encouraging the positive relationship between food and fitness.
 - How are you promoting this relationship in the classroom? Consider the conversations you are having during mealtimes. Do you eat with the children when they are having their meals?
 - Reflect on your classroom activities, do you have time built in to promote movement?

- ◆ The article also addresses that children's greatest influence are the adult(s) that they are primarily with. This influence is greater than social media and peer influences at a young age.
 - Is the relationship between food and fitness positive at home or is this a barrier for any of the children in your care?
 - What resources do you need to have these discussions with the children and family?
 - Monitor the children and their progress in this journey to develop a positive body image.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting healthy habits for children:

- ◆ **Source:** Sesame Workshop
 - ◆ **PDF:** Food and Drink to Grow on Food and Drink to Grow On (Spanish)
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/FoodAndDrinkToGrowOn.pdf>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article provides ideas and activities to help children learn about fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods.
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- ◆ **Source:** PBS Southern California
 - ◆ **Podcast:** Support Body Positivity with a Self-Portrait Inspired by Frida Kahlo
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.pbssocal.org/education/support-body-positivity-with-a-self-portrait-inspired-by-frida-kahlo>
 - ◆ **Description:** This short article provides a self-portrait activity for children to encourage them to identify their unique attributes and qualities.