

# YOURHEALTH

**Mental Health Awareness Week**  
**Monday 13th - Sunday 19th May 2019**



**Duradiamond**  
Building Healthy Business



**Special Edition**

**Body Image : How We Think and Feel About Our Bodies**

# IT'S SUBJECT THAT AFFECTS US ALL: BODY IMAGE.

The theme for this year's Mental Health Awareness Week, which takes place from Monday 13th to Sunday 19th May 2019 is body image: how we think and feel about our bodies.

Body image issues can affect any one of us at any age. It can impact not only on our physical health but also on how we feel. This can then affect our relationships, sleep, our stress levels and the way we deal with problems – our mental health.

All of us live with our bodies as they evolve and change over the years, just as all of us have a role in shaping an inclusive culture, where we help others (and ourselves) feel comfortable in their own skin.

Read the new MHF's new report on the

## THE STATISTICS.....

**BECAUSE MOST PEOPLE HIDE EATING DISORDERS, IT IS HARD TO ACCURATELY QUANTIFY THE LEVELS; HOWEVER**

- Between 725,000 and 1.6 million people in the UK are directly affected by eating disorders, with the true number possibly as high as four million
- 8% of women are thought to have suffered from bulimia at some stage of their lives
- Up to 25% of Britons struggling with eating disorders may be male
- The number of people diagnosed with eating disorders has increased by 15% since 2000 with the numbers of men diagnosed increasing.



matter. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/body-image-report>

The Mental Health Foundation found that 30% of all adults felt so stressed by body image and appearance that they felt overwhelmed or unable to cope. That's almost one in every three people.

Body image issues can lead to problems with food or eating disorders.

If you are concerned that you may have an eating disorder, there is a quick eating attitudes test. <https://psychcentral.com/quizzes/eating-attitudes-test/>

**You  
are  
ENOUGH**

We can all have a positive body image. To have this we need to have a realistic perception of our bodies when we enjoy, accept and celebrate how we are and let go of negative societal or media perpetuated conditioning.

# BODY IMAGE IS CLOSELY LINKED WITH MENTAL HEALTH



The more comfortable you are with your body, the greater your overall wellbeing, and the less likely you are to engage in destructive behaviours. Sadly, eating disorders have the highest mortality rates among psychiatric disorders.

Cultural and social pressures do not directly cause eating disorders, however they can make those particularly vulnerable to developing an eating disorder feel under more pressure to look a certain way and they can trigger an eating disorder.

So let's be kinder to our bodies. Let's guard against the individual, family and cultural influences that can lead to an overwhelming sense of dissatisfaction with our bodies.

We need to change our cultural values, parenting styles, schooling approaches, use of technology, advertising standards and the hurtful discrimination.

## SO WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Follow the Mental Health Foundation's website over the next few weeks to see the new information and sources of advice. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week>
- If you think you may have an eating disorder, you can speak to your GP, OH provider or initially look at websites like <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/> or <http://www.anorexiabulimiare.org.uk/>
- Speak out about your dissatisfaction with the focus on appearance and lack of size acceptance
- De-emphasise numbers. Pounds on a scale don't tell us anything meaningful about the body as a whole or our health
- Stop comparing yourself to others. You are unique and you cannot get a sense of your own body's needs and abilities by comparing it to someone else
- Question the degree to which your self-esteem depends on your appearance. If we base our happiness on how we look, it is likely to lead to failure and frustration and may prevent us from finding true happiness
- Broaden your perspective about health and beauty by reading about body image, cultural variances, or media influence. Recognise that size prejudice is a form of discrimination similar to other forms of discrimination. Being a healthy weight is important for health, but shape and size are not indicators of character, morality, intelligence, or success.



Sources: NHS Choices, BEAT, NHS Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, Micali, N. et al "The incidence of eating disorders in the UK in 2000-2009: findings from the General Practice Research Database" BMJ Open doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2013-002646, Department for Health, Anorexia & Bulimia Care, "Eating Disorders: Core Interventions In The Treatment And Management Of Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa And Other Eating Disorders, National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, London: The British Psychological Society/ Royal College Of Psychiatrists p23- 24, (2004); PWC (2015). The Costs of Eating Disorders: Social, Health and Economic Impacts, <https://thespinoff.co.nz/partner/womens-health-action/23-04-2019/what-our-unhealthy-obsession-with-body-image-is-doing-to-us/>, Mental Health Foundation