

Body shaming

Over the past couple of weeks, Gai has presented to Year 5 and 6 classes, in separate sessions, the ideas and concepts around being 'the best version of ourselves'. The students explained that to succeed in being kind, compassionate, resilient, respectful, caring, courageous, calm, peaceful, adaptable, flexible, brave, imaginative, humble and honest (to just name a few), they would need to always be thinking of how their actions and words affect others.

We considered the possibility that sometimes people are shamed because of their physical looks and concluded that this could occur because someone is trying to tear down another person to momentarily feel better about themselves. This led us to the conclusion that a person doing this is in need of our support, as they are likely to be feeling negatively about themselves.

We looked at the definition of 'body shaming' as the criticism of someone based on the shape, size, or appearance of their body. Body shaming is criticising yourself or others because of some aspect of physical appearance. We considered too that the shaming could happen face to face, behind someone's back or online (cyberbullying).

Have you, as parents and carers, considered having a conversation with your child about the impact that body shaming might have on another person? Perhaps you might like to discuss what it sounds and feels like to be shamed by someone about something that is not within their control (unlike demonstrating the positive traits outlined above).

Eight tips to better your child's body image

1. Don't criticise your child's appearance. Instead, focus on their positive traits, such as the ones listed in the first paragraph above).
2. Be a healthy role model. Obsession about your appearance and weight will demonstrate your feelings and opinions about yourself which tells your child that worth is based on appearance. That is simply not true.
3. Remind your child that every person has a body part they feel sensitive about, model empathy and instil that celebrities don't really look like the way they appear.
4. Be a good listener. [The Dove Study on Self Esteem](#) revealed that most of all teenage girls want their parents to listen and communicate better with them. Listen and emotion coach them at every opportunity Learn more about emotion coaching [here](#).
5. Help your child appreciate what their body does every day. Focus on what a healthy body can do by encouraging a healthy lifestyle.
6. Monitor your child's social media usage and accounts. Step in when bullying and body shaming is taking place.
7. Don't allow your own child to be the bully.
8. Encourage your child to look up to realistic and inspiring everyday heroes.
9. Be aware of your words when referring to others and their presentation and consider whether it's necessary to be commenting on someone else appearance.

When in doubt, THINK—Is it True, is it Helpful, is it Inspiring, is it Necessary, is it Kind?

Here are some recommended links to research this topic and to help you start a conversation with your child/ren about body image and body shaming:

[Body image: pre-teens and teenagers](#)

[Body shaming in an age of social media](#)

[Social media: cyber bullying, body shaming and trauma](#)

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