

nutrition and body positivity

summary handout content

what is body positivity?

It can be defined in many ways including:

- The belief that all people deserve to have a positive body image, regardless of how society and popular culture view ideal shape, size and appearance
- A focus on viewing the body positively for what it can do and the idea that all bodies are worthy of a positive image
- Body positive content aims to disrupt the monopoly of idealized appearance-focused media and encourage individuals to adopt a positive stance towards their body by increasing diversity and inclusiveness and rejecting harmful appearance ideals
- A social movement focused on the acceptance of all bodies, regardless of size, shape, skin tone, gender and physical abilities, while challenging present-day beauty standards as an undesirable social construct

There's a rich history of body positivity, having started in early fat activism and the 1960s, with the term coined in 1996 and evolving on social media in the 2010s.

the benefits of body positivity include:

- Better body image and higher self-esteem
- Decreased rates of disordered eating and increased satisfaction with life
- Improved cholesterol levels and metabolism

While there are many pros, there are also some areas of critique for body positivity including:

- Not always presented as intersectional
- Does not center the most marginalized
- Often a stepping stone in a person's evolution toward weight neutrality, body liberation and fat liberation

Remember: there are different ways to experience a positive body image that aren't "body positivity." When working with clients, it's important to understand how they choose to relate to their bodies. To reduce harm, don't assume that a client is body positive or that it's a goal of theirs.

what the research says:

- Positive body image was associated with healthier eating patterns and other health-promoting behaviors in adolescent girls
- Positive body image was associated with less dieting and drive for muscularity, among other health-promoting behaviors
- Attending to the signs of hunger and satiety is associated with great body satisfaction in people with type 2 diabetes

The relationship between body image and nutrition-related behaviors is reciprocal. Not only does positive body image increase health-promoting behaviors like increased fruit and vegetable consumption but also behaviors such as honoring hunger improve body satisfaction.



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