



THE FOUNDATION OF HEALTHY BODY IMAGE: IT'S A' PARENT Fat and Thin

Many people have strong personal feelings surrounding the issues of "fat" and "thin." In order to help their children with these complex issues, parents need to:

- Examine the messages that may be passed along to your child about weight.
- Reinforce the importance of accepting people of all sizes through your words and actions.
- NOT complain about body shape or size (your own or others).
- NOT allow weight-related nicknames (e.g. "Bean-pole" or "Chunky").
- Express appreciation for the ways that your body (and your child's body) is special and unique. Emphasize the positive functions of every body part!
- Dispel the myth that physical appearance is more important than internal qualities.

If your child is larger than average and you are concerned, keep your anxieties in check in front of your child and discuss your concerns with your pediatrician. Putting children on diets is ineffective as it leads to inevitable power struggles, sneaking food and binge eating. Help the entire family by having healthy food options available, and engaging in fun family activities.

If your child is small, de-emphasize size. Many children receive so much attention for their size that they fear the normal weight gain that accompanies puberty. Help your child develop a self-worth based on inner qualities rather than size or outer appearance.