



Self-esteem

Negative Body Image

Self-harm

FACT SHEET

FOR HELP or SUPPORT

call the organisations we have listed below

Self-esteem

- Self-esteem influences how someone feels about themselves and this can infiltrate every aspect of their life.
- Low self-esteem can be a learned behaviour, or can stem from some personal experience that has made a person low in self-esteem.
- Poor self-esteem can easily develop from everyday difficulties, whether at school, at work, or in relationships.
- Higher self-esteem makes it easier to stay on top of daily life, and leads to higher levels of happiness and wellbeing.

Negative Body image

- Body image is the perception that a person has of their physical self, but more importantly the thoughts and feelings you experience depending on what you think about your body. These feelings can be positive, negative or both.
- We can change some things about the way we look, but not everything: your height, bone structure and muscle composition are determined by your genes - this is the way you were born. Unless you are twins, two people are not born to look the same way.
- Trying to change your actual appearance can be really hard and exhausting and can leave a person frustrated, distressed and even in serious mental and emotional distress.
- When a person has negative thoughts and feelings about his or her body, body dissatisfaction can develop and sometimes lead to an eating disorder.
- Eating disorders are a **complex mental illness**, involving serious physical, mental and social impairment - they are not a lifestyle choice or a diet gone 'too far'.
- People with negative body image can become fixated on trying to change their actual body shape. This can lead to people engaging in unhealthy practices with food and exercise with the hope that the change in body shape will alleviate negative feelings. These practices do not usually achieve the desired outcome (physically or

emotionally) and can result in more intense negative feelings of disappointment, shame and guilt, as well as place a person at greater risk of developing an eating disorder.

- This mental and emotional distress can lead people to contemplate harming themselves.

Self-harm

- Self-harm is a way someone physically expresses a deep emotional pain, **it is not a mental illness.**
- Self-harm is mainly used as a way of trying to cope with strong feelings and emotions, including body image issues – it is not just ‘attention seeking’. Some people use self-harm to try and communicate or manage their negative body image.
- Not everyone who self-harms is suicidal, but sometimes people die as a result of their self-harm behaviour.

Getting support and help



Butterfly
Foundation for Eating Disorders

Free national support line **1800 334 673**

Webchat support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au



eheadspace

www.eheadspace.org.au

headspace Centres

1800 650 890



ReachOut.com



Kids Help Line

1800 551 800