

Mental Health Awareness Series

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Body Image in the 21st Century

According to the Social Studies Research Centre (UK), a compendium of findings on body image suggests that more than half of people surveyed may see a distorted image of themselves. Dissatisfaction with physical appearance can be found across age, sex, ethnicity and culture.

It is a popular idea (or stereotype) that attractive people have distinct advantages. This 'bias for beauty' perception may drive some people to go at great length to correct perceived flaw in order to make themselves more desirable, sometimes unfortunately with disastrous consequences. Unhappiness over looks, weight or size is known to lead people to develop maladaptive behaviour such as eating issues. Thus, fostering a healthy self-image is crucial to counteracting over-concern about one's appearance.

Healthy body image is not something that you're going to learn from fashion magazines.

Erin Heatherton

Tips on managing body image issues more effectively:

- ❖ Studies indicate that over-exposure to media's portrayal of idealised attractiveness could result in preoccupation with appearance. Similarly, over-sensitivity to feedback about one's appearance could potentially heighten self-criticism. Consequently, it is important for one to recognise that standards of beauty is subjective, and attractiveness does not necessarily equate better self-esteem. Developing positive self-evaluation that is based on one's intrinsic worth and identity has greater benefits.
- ❖ If you find yourself struggling with body image issues, it will be a good time to share your private thoughts and feelings with someone you trust and respect, or with a professional. While concern about one's appearance is normal and understandable, but if it leads to troubled thought and behaviour, learning how to better develop a healthier self-esteem will be key to promoting healthy mind, healthy body.

SUTD Wellbeing Services offers professional counselling services for students in a private and confidential setting.

If you would like to see a Counsellor to discuss any issue or challenge, please email us at wellbeing@sutd.edu.sg.

LOVE
YOUR
BODY