

**Do you worry about whether you are too fat or too thin? Are there aspects of your appearance that you're unhappy with?**

Many students, both women and men, struggle with feeling good about their appearance and bodies. How you view your body can affect many aspects of your life including; your health, enjoyment, sense of well-being, and even your academic performance. Negative body image can also lead to eating disorders. As many as 20% of college students suffer from an eating disorder of some type.



**In a recent study of college students:**

- 74% of normal-weight females reported being unhappy with their weight or appearance
- 46% of normal-weight males reported being unhappy with their weight or appearance

**Developmental and social changes that may impact body image include:**

- Physical and emotional separation from family
- Requirements for high academic performance; often papers and exams are prioritized above physical and emotional health
- Transitions such as moving from home to a house/apartment, beginning or ending a significant relationship, and graduation

**There are several strategies that can help improve your overall body image:**

- Wear clothes that are comfortable and that make you feel good about your body. Work with your body, not against it.
- Keep a top-ten list of things you like about yourself—things that aren't related to how much you weigh or what you look like. Read your list often. Add to it as you become aware of more things to like about yourself.
- Challenge critical comments about your body. Whether they are coming from you, someone you know, or the latest beauty or fashion advertisement, question the messages that cause you to think negatively about yourself.
- Appreciate all that your body can do. Every day your body carries you closer to your dreams. Celebrate all of the amazing things your body does for you—running, dancing, breathing, laughing, dreaming, etc.
- Don't let your weight or shape keep you from activities you enjoy. Participate in physical activity because it's something you enjoy, not because you feel obligated to. Try an activity that you thought you'd never do, like hiking in the Black Hills or taking a relaxing yoga class.
- Surround yourself with positive people. It is easier to feel good about yourself and your body when you are around others who are supportive and who recognize the importance of liking yourself just as you naturally are.
- Decide how you wish to spend your energy: pursuing the "perfect body" or enjoying family, friends, school, and most importantly, life. Use the time and energy that you might have spent worrying about food, calories, and your weight and do something fun instead.
- Remind yourself that perfection isn't real. No one's body is perfect--even the celebrities you see on magazines and television.
- Remind yourself that "true beauty" is not simply skin deep. When you feel good about yourself and who you are, you carry yourself with a sense of confidence, self-acceptance, and openness that makes you beautiful regardless of whether you physically look like a supermodel. Beauty is a state of mind, not a state of your body.

For more information or resources on dealing with body image issues, contact Kristina Thibeault at 605-882-5284, ext.216 or [kristina.thibeault@lakeareatech.edu](mailto:kristina.thibeault@lakeareatech.edu)

