

How to Win the Battle of Body Image

At Rosario Counseling & Associates, we address the needs of each person as a whole-- body, mind and spirit. Body image is defined as *"the subjective concept of one's physical appearance based on self-observation and the reactions of others"*. Our society highly values what a body looks like, rather than how well our bodies work, play, and move. Advertisers predict what our insecurities are and use them to sell their products. It is difficult to avoid comparing our bodies with those we see in print or on screen. Too often, self-doubt dominates our thoughts as our inner voice says, "I'm not _____ (thin, pretty, fit, etc.) enough." Negative thoughts about ourselves can lead to depression, unhealthy behaviors, or an eating disorder.

Recent (2010) statistics are quite sobering:

- 8 million people in the U.S. suffer from an eating disorder
- 8 out of 10 women are not happy with their reflection
- 80% of children are afraid of being fat
- The current media ideal of thinness is achieved by less than 5% of the population

<http://weighingthefacts.blogspot.com/2010/02/body-image-statistics.html>

Negative Impacts

Negative body image is a serious issue and it can color how we interact with family, friends, and our children. Parents may unintentionally model inappropriate eating behaviors or verbalize body dissatisfaction in front of their children which could lead to low self-esteem or fears of being less than perfect.

Contact Us

Please feel free to call our office if you have any concerns about you or someone in your family. As a friendly reminder: The last few months of 2011 are upon us already! Some of you may carry flexible spending plans through your employer's health benefits, which can be applied to your behavioral health/counseling services.

By: Beth Boldt

Changing the way individuals view their body image must begin with exploring the origins of belief about themselves. What negative messages were internalized by family, friends, or social media? Next, it is important to recognize how the negative beliefs impact our emotional and physical health. For example, the more you **think** poorly of your body, the less likely you are to feed it healthy food or engage in **behaviors** such as exercise. As a result, you **feel** unwell and therefore, are less likely to have a positive attitude in general.

Because emotions, behaviors and thoughts are all connected, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy is one of the most effective treatment approaches for various negative body image disorders. Individuals learn more about themselves as they: Learn skills in challenging distorted thinking and beliefs; manage emotional responses and impulses more effectively; stop rituals such as checking or excessive grooming; refocus attention away from self.

Five Quick Tips

1. Recognize yourself as created in a unique, original, and special way
2. Record positive attributes in a journal, focusing on internal qualities
3. View all media with skepticism and discernment-- guard your thoughts
4. Find an activity which you enjoy-- emphasize strength and stamina, not appearance
5. Eat for physical hunger alone, not for the purpose of feeling better, emotionally

May you have a healthy, happy Fall Season!

Rosario Counseling & Associates
809 Spring Forest Rd., Suite 1000
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609
(919) 649-5882
manager@rosariocounseling.com
rosariocounseling.com