

Children worrying about their body image

25th March, 2013



A survey of English schoolchildren shows boys and girls are worrying about the way they look. The study found that over half of male schoolchildren lacked confidence

because of their body shape. The figure for girls was slightly higher, at 59 per cent. Researchers questioned 693 teachers about how their students felt about their bodies. All the children had taken lessons on body image and self-esteem. Teachers said many children were very upset if others said bad things about their appearance. Around 55 per cent of teachers reported that girls were "ultra-sensitive" to comments about their looks; the figure for boys being easily hurt by taunts or teasing was 27 per cent.

Teachers gave a number of reasons why children as young as four years old are stressing out about their shape. Over 90 per cent of teachers blame the Internet and television. Children see images of "perfect" bodies every day and they feel they have to look that way too. Almost 30 per cent of teachers said their female students used sunbeds or sprays to look suntanned. Many children are on diets to make themselves attractive to the opposite sex. One elementary school teacher said: "I work with four to five-year-olds and some say things like, 'I can't eat cheese, it will make me fat'". A teachers' spokeswoman warned that children trying to look like "airbrushed celebrities in the media only leads to misery".

Sources: BBC / Sky News

Writing

There is no such thing as a perfect figure.
Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

survey / schoolchildren / confidence / body shape / self-esteem / appearance / teasing / stressing out / blame / suntanned / diets / the opposite sex / airbrushed / misery

True / False

- The article says American school kids worry about their body shape. T / F
- Just over 50 per cent of boys worry because of their bodies. T / F
- The study interviewed 693 boys and girls about their bodies. T / F
- Over half of teachers said girls were hurt by comments on their body. T / F
- Teachers said kids start worrying about their body from the age of 4. T / F
- Teachers said around 30% of girls use products to get a suntan. T / F
- Kids diet to look better in front of other kids. T / F
- A head teacher said airbrushed photos of celebrities are good for kids. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| 1. slightly | a. easily upset |
| 2. appearance | b. making fun of |
| 3. self-esteem | c. representative |
| 4. sensitive | d. point the finger at |
| 5. teasing | e. a little |
| 6. shape | f. good-looking |
| 7. blame | g. unhappiness |
| 8. attractive | h. looks |
| 9. spokeswoman | i. figure |
| 10. misery | j. self-respect |

Discussion – Student A

- Do images on TV make people think less of themselves?
- Do you look at pictures of models and feel bad about your body?
- Is there such a thing as a "perfect" body?
- What should teachers / schools do to make kids more confident?
- Is it bad for kids to use suntan sprays and sunbeds?
- Is it bad for kids to diet to look like their thin idols?
- Should advertising companies stop airbrushing photos of models?
- What questions would you like to ask a worried child?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. worrying about the way | a. the Internet |
| 2. male schoolchildren lacked | b. higher |
| 3. slightly | c. out about their shape |
| 4. children had taken lessons on body image | d. celebrities |
| 5. easily hurt by taunts | e. they look |
| 6. stressing | f. to the opposite sex |
| 7. teachers blame | g. and self-esteem |
| 8. Many children are on | h. or teasing |
| 9. make themselves attractive | i. diets |
| 10. airbrushed | j. confidence |

Discussion – Student B

- Do you worry about your body image?
- What do you think about schoolchildren worrying about their looks?
- Do you think what this study found is new?
- How would you feel if someone teased you about your body or face?
- What do you think of children having lessons about body image?
- Were you teased at school?
- What did you worry about most when you were 6, 10, 14...?
- What would tell a child who is worried about his /her body shape?

Spelling

- A evusyr of English schoolchildren
- The figure for girls was ygthlisl higher
- body image and esfl-steeme
- bad things about their eapceaanrp
- girls were ultra-niesivste to comments
- easily hurt by taunts or sanietg
- ssstrigne out about their shape
- efrpct bodies
- on diets to make themselves aaeittrvc
- the oepoitps sex
- neleatyrem school
- look like airbrushed cbilireetse

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. j	4. a	5. b
6. i	7. d	8. f	9. c	10. f

Role Play

Teacher - You are very sad that young children are worried about their body shape. You are angry at the advertising industry. Tell the others three reasons why. Ask advertisers why they always have "perfect" bodies in their ads. Ask them what they think about kids lacking confidence.

8-year-old - You hate your body. You want to look like your favourite pop star or one of the models in the ads on TV. Ask your teacher how you can be more confident. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell him/her that it is important you look good and say why.

Advertising executive - You understand the world is not full of people with "perfect" bodies, but you need attractive models in your ads to sell things. Tell the others that teachers and parents are also to blame for kids' lack of confidence. Tell the others three reasons why.

Parent - You are worried about your 10-year-old son. He has lost interest in studying. All he thinks about is expensive fashion and trying to be like the models on TV. Tell the advertising exec that (s)he is helping to make kids less confident. Tell him/her to use normal people in ads.

Speaking – Body Worries

What do you worry about most? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the biggest worries at the top. Change partners often.

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| • body shape | • stomach |
| • teeth | • bottom |
| • nose | • muscles |
| • skin | • wrinkles |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.