



# Grandparents Corner

March 2014

## *“Body Image and Self-Esteem”*

**Self-Esteem** - How much you feel you are worth - how much you feel other people value you.

**Body Image** - How you view your physical self including whether you feel you are attractive and whether others like your looks.

Self-Esteem is important because feeling good about yourself can affect your mental health and how you behave. For many people, especially those in their early teens, body image can be closely linked to self-esteem.

“I’m too tall.” “I’m too short.” “I’m too skinny.” “If only I was shorter/taller, had curly hair/straight hair, a smaller nose/longer legs, I’d be happy.” Does any of this sound familiar from the teens/preteens in your home? Are they putting themselves down? If so, they are not alone. As a teen, they are going through many changes in their body. As their body changes, so does their self-image. When they are stuck on the negatives, it can really bring down their self-esteem.

Why are self-esteem and body image important? People with high self-esteem know themselves well. They are realistic and find friends that like and appreciate them for who they are. They feel more in control of their lives and know their own strengths and weaknesses. So, what exactly influences a person’s self-esteem?

- **Puberty and Development** - Some people struggle with their self-esteem and body image when they begin puberty because it’s a time when the body goes through many changes. These changes, combined with wanting to feel accepted by our friends, means that it can be tempting to compare with others. The trouble is that not everyone grows or develops at the same time or in the same way.
- **Media Images and Other Outside Influences** - Tweens and teens are at a time when they become more aware of celebrities and media images, as well as how other kids look and how they fit in. They may start to compare themselves with other people or media images.
- **Families and School** - Family life can sometimes influence body image. Some parents/guardians might be too focused on looking a certain way or “making weight” for a sports team. Family members might struggle with their own body image or criticize their kids’ looks. (Why do you wear your hair so long?” or “Why can’t you wear pants that fit you?”) This can influence a person’s self-esteem, especially if they are sensitive to other peoples’ comments.

Sometimes, low self-esteem and body image problems are too much to handle alone. A few teens may become depressed and lose interest in activities or friends. Some may develop eating or body image disorders and/or use alcohol or drugs to escape the feelings of low worth.

Encourage your teen to talk to you, a coach, religious leader, guidance counselor or therapist - someone who supports them and doesn’t bring them down. This can help place their body image in perspective and give them positive feedback about their body, skills and abilities.

The most important thing is to seek help if their self-esteem and body image is affecting their life.

Source: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

## QUICK QUIZ

Caregiver Assistance Newsletter - March 2014

*Eating right and being physically active are healthful habits to reduce the risk of many chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain cancers, and increase chances for a longer life. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.*

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1. According to the USDA, seniors should eat 2–2½ cups of vegetables every day and 1½–2 cups of fruit a day for a total 3½–4½ cups.    T    F
2. In a meal, vegetables and grains, not meat, should be the main course.    T    F
3. You can cut food costs by cooking at home.    T    F
4. Shopping from a grocery list will help to stay on a budget.    T    F
5. A variety of food is not only best for dietary needs, but also makes eating more appealing.    T    F
6. Brown rice, oats, yogurt and eggs are some foods that provide good nutrition on a budget.    T    F
7. Calcium is important in preventing fractures and it is also beneficial in helping fractures heal faster if they do occur.    T    F
8. It is important to do a nutrition assessment every six months or when you notice big weight changes or changes in eating habits.    T    F
9. Medications do not have an effect on appetite.    T    F
10. If the person in your care is coughing a lot or having trouble swallowing, he or she should have their swallowing evaluated.    T    F

**KEY:** 1. T 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. T 6. T 7. T 8. T 9. F 10. T