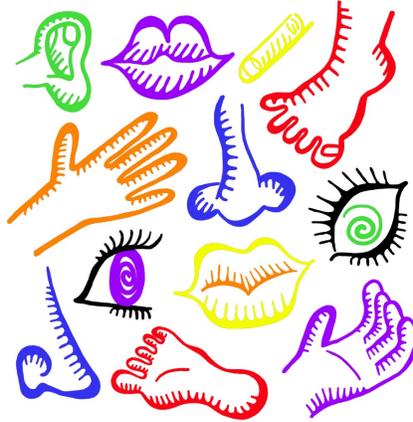


Every Body Is A Good Body

Imagine a set of identical twins: Twin A worries about gaining weight, so to avoid this, eats lots of vegetables, shuns highly refined foods, and makes sure to burn off “excess” calories every day through plenty of exercise. Twin B comes at things from a different perspective and eats lots of vegetables because vegetables are delicious, avoids highly refined foods because too much leads to feeling lousy, and is physically active because it’s fun, it makes them feel strong and helps them to relax and sleep well. While their behaviors may look the same to an observer, their experiences and outcomes will be different, even if their weights end up equal.



were consumed (or will be in the future), they must be paid for. Activities are chosen by the number of calories consumed that can be burned off or as a down-payment on permission to eat in the future. Time, intensity, repetitions, and distance are badges of honor. Pain, fatigue, and even illness are weaknesses to be powered through. If exercise isn’t an option, then anxiety, irritability, guilt, or distress ensue.

Twin B is also active and puts just as much effort into workouts as Twin A does. However, high-intensity workouts are choices, not obligations or imperatives. Activities are chosen based on safety and enjoyment. Rest and recovery are valid needs that are met, not flaws to be overcome.

Food

Twin A runs of the risk of having food become a fixation and eating turn into an activity that’s filled with anxiety. Everything eaten is analyzed and reduced to its component parts: How many calories does it have? What nutrients does it contain? Is it “clean” enough? Is it allowed on whatever diet is being followed at the time? Physical hunger is distrusted and ignored for as long as possible. At the same time though, food is used as a distraction or to numb emotional pain. This is often followed with a large helping of guilt and shame for dessert.

For Twin B, food provides fuel, is to be enjoyed and shared, and is chosen because it nourishes physically and/or emotionally. No single item or category is demonized or deified, but neither is diet’s impact on health ignored. Physical hunger is acknowledged and filled by eating food, while emotional needs are filled in ways that are kind and healing.

Fitness

At times, Twin A enjoys being physically active, but there are almost always overlays of punishment and penance. If too many calories

Form

For Twin A, the shape, size, and weight of their body determine their worth as a person. Body parts exist to be sculpted into social-media approved contours. Keenly attuned to messages about what bodies and beliefs are acceptable, Twin A bounces between disgust at the reality of their body and embarrassment at the fact that they feel that disgust.

Twin B understands that there is no single size or shape that signifies health or value and that bodies change with circumstance and time. They may not always feel confident about or love every aspect of their body, but they do have respect and appreciation for it and do their best to take good care of it.

Like Twin A, most Americans automatically equate being thin with being healthier and more attractive. But...when you think about it, it’s easy to see that’s not necessarily true. If you’re struggling with your relationship to food, fitness, or your form, visit [The National Eating Disorders Association](http://TheNationalEatingDisordersAssociation.org), and call SMC to set up an appointment with a member of our Behavioral Health team.

Taking care of ourselves can take a lot of support. We’re here to help!
Ask a nurse or provider if you’d like to talk. 218-387-2330



Sound Familiar?

If Twin A's outlook hits a little too close to home, you're not alone. Most American adults want to look different than we do, and that desire starts when we're young. In 2016 a study of more than 1500 kids ages 9—14 found that over half the girls wanted to be thinner and that the boys were split: 36% wanted to be thinner, while 21% wanted to be bigger.

Eating disorders and issues of body image used to be thought of as a "girl thing." In reality, about 1/3 of people struggling with an eating disorder are male. "Subclinical eating disordered behaviors" (such as binge eating, purging, laxative abuse, and fasting for weight loss) are almost as [common among men](#) as they are among women.

Just like the image of what the "ideal" female body looks like has changed over time, so has the ideal for male bodies. Historically, women were expected to be very curvy, then exceptionally thin and willowy was the ideal, then athletic was desirable, then... [Expectations for men](#) have generally moved in one direction: less and less body fat with larger and larger muscles.

Regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, race, or culture, having [high levels of body dissatisfaction](#) makes a person more likely to experience depression, isolation, low self-esteem, and eating disorders.

So how do we prevent unrealistic societal expectations from negatively impacting the way we feel about and care for our amazing bodies? How do we [teach healthier beliefs](#) to our children?

- Tell our kids and remind ourselves that "every body is a good body." Demonstrate compassion and respect towards people of every size, shape, and ability.
- Teach and practice media literacy. Learn how images of bodies in the media are altered and why that's done. Point this out and use it as discussion starters.
- Become "body literate." Use trustworthy resources to learn about how bodies actually work and how to best care for them.
- Connect with loved ones at mealtime. Don't use it as a time to criticize food choices, amount eaten, or weight.
- Celebrate individuality instead repeating limiting societal ideas. When we, and our children, can look at our unique bodies and feel appreciation, we're protected from cultural messages that tell us we're defective.



Intuitive Eating

IE is a non-diet approach to food and eating that emphasizes internal cues (hunger, fullness, cravings, how specific foods make you feel...) over external diet rules. Many of us were brought up with food rules that forced us to cut ourselves off from our internal signals: "Clean your plate." "You've had enough." "Be good and eat your veggies." Most of us were also taught that just like some foods are inherently good or bad, the bodies that different foods build are more or less valuable, depending on their size, shape, and appearance. Put these two perspectives together, and it's a recipe for potentially harmful behaviors such as binging, constant dieting, restrictive and emotional eating, and obsessing over food.

Intuitive Eating Principles

1. **Reject Diet Mentality** - Question the belief that your weaknesses are the reason that past diets have failed. Perhaps it's the diets and the expectations that they fuel that are rubbish.
2. **Honor Your Hunger** - Your body deserves to be fed. Pay attention and relearn the cues that signal it's time to eat.

3. **Make Peace With Food** - To escape cravings, let go of the idea of "forbidden foods." When foods aren't special, they lose their allure.
4. **Challenge the Food Police** - These are the thoughts that tell you you're good and worthy when you eat certain foods but bad and worthless when you eat others.
5. **Respect Your Fullness** - Relearn what it feels like to eat until you're satisfied and to stop before you're stuffed.
6. **Discover the Satisfaction Factor** - Everyone has the right to enjoy the food they eat. Mindfully eating tasty food helps you to be aware of when it's time to start and stop.
7. **Cope With Your Emotions With Kindness** - Plan and prepare options for dealing with emotional hurts besides trying to cover them with food.
8. **Respect Your Body**—Everyone's body is unique in genetics and in its response to foods and environment. Focus on your behaviors, not the numbers on your scale.
9. **Movement**—Separate physical activity from weight loss. Choose to move your body simply for fun and self-care.
10. **Honor Your Health With Gentle Nutrition**—It's your overall diet that matters, not any single snack or meal. Remember: The goal is progress, not perfection.

To learn more, check out ["What Does Intuitive Eating Mean?"](#)