



Self-Help

The Body Image Survival Guide for Parents: Helping Toddlers, Tweens, and Teens Thrive

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In a societal context where body obsessions coincide with alarming rates of obesity among Western children, *The Body Image Survival Guide for Parents* is a slim but highly informative guidebook, and one that should be required reading for every parent.

It may be astounding to learn that body image issues can begin as young as in the toddler years and can continue through the teenage years and beyond. And while girls are often the focus of eating disorders, the author, a parent of sons, dispels that myth quickly, saying that the self-esteem issues underlying body image extend to boys as well.

Early chapters are broken down by age range, and then later by issues that could arise within every age range. Included is advice to parents about how to handle their own weight issues, their child's weight issues, and sections about outside influences, such as school and media.

The book is easy to read, with practical do's and don'ts, real-life anecdotes peppered throughout, and many helpful "Sticky Questions" and "Solid Answers." For example, if your child asks, "Do I need to go on a diet?" Warhaft-Nadler advises parents to respond: "Nope. Diets are not healthy. But we can all try to make better choices with the foods we eat to make sure our bodies are getting the healthy ingredients they need to help us feel our best."

Unfortunately, negative influences arise from multiple sources, including peers, the media, and even within one's own family. More than one adult interviewed still recoiled at memories of being called names by family members or teachers.

The author is quite credible, as the book was not written from an outsider's viewpoint. She acknowledges that she herself struggled with an eating disorder for many years, even after she became a mother. Currently she is a body image advocate and founder of the "Fit versus Fiction" project; she leads workshops for children to help them eradicate negative body images and boost confidence, as she evinces in her book that body image and self-esteem are

inextricably linked.

Warhaft-Nadler includes a handy reference guide linking to Internet publications and websites that promote positive body images.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of the book is the collection of “Proud to be me” comments from real children ranging in age from four to sixteen: “I’m cool because I’m strong and nice,” “I like myself because I am helpful to other people and very fun,” and “I know I’m healthy and great just the way I am and I don’t care what anybody else thinks.”

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