

Tips for Parents on Raising Healthy Kids and Avoiding Eating Disorders

1. Be a good role model for healthy eating. Don't diet. It sets up a cycle of deprivation and bingeing that only creates self-hate and suffering. Eat intuitively and if that doesn't come naturally, seek professional help for your own emotional eating.
2. Help your kids choose from a variety of foods that are colorful, healthy and taste good. Avoid overcooking vegetables as many kids say they don't like the mushy consistency of broccoli or cauliflower. Sprinkle with cheese if it makes vegetables more appealing to the kids.
3. Promote size acceptance. Teach your kids that people come in different shapes and sizes, and we grow at different rates. There are people who reach their adult height in the 6th grade while others don't get there until their late teens. Every body is different and that's ok.
4. Don't allow siblings to tease each other about their bodies. Boys in particular should not be allowed to comment or criticize their sister's bodies. Adolescent girls are especially self-conscious about their bodies and receiving negative male attention only makes them feel badly about themselves.
5. Use positive language when talking about your own or other's bodies. If you are constantly talking about the weight you should lose or commenting on how heavy or thin someone else is, it sets up an environment of negative self image. By comparing ourselves to others we only create misery. There is always someone more attractive, slimmer, healthier or athletic than we are. And there is someone who is less of those things than we are. It does no good to compare.
6. Self-acceptance is the starting place to making any changes. Acknowledging where you are and setting goals for where you'd like to be is fine. How you talk to yourself about that process is important. Your kids use you as an example of how to treat themselves. Notice if your inner tapes are critical and harsh or compassionate and loving.

7. Find an exercise routine that you can enjoy and reap the benefits for. It helps to switch it up too. One day could be a walk while another is swimming a local pool. There are many gyms for adults and kids over 14 years of age avoid any weight training before adulthood and consult with a trainer first.