

# Exploring Body Image with MOST



a guide for young people using  
MOST digital mental health support

On **MOST**  
you can find  
**activities**  
and strategies  
to help you  
explore your  
relationship  
with your body.

Try these MOST activities to understand more about your body image and learn new ways to feel comfortable in yourself.

### Introduction to Body Image

Learn

---

### Body Image Myths, Busted

Learn

---

### Exploring Your Body Image

Reflect

---

### The Costs of Negative Body Image

Reflect

---

### What is Body Neutrality?

Learn

---

### Challenging Fat Talk

Talking Point

---

### Embodiment: Despatches From the Hippie Festival

Comic

---

### Body Image: Wrap-Up

Learn



# Introduction to Body Image

## Learn

You might have heard the term body image before.

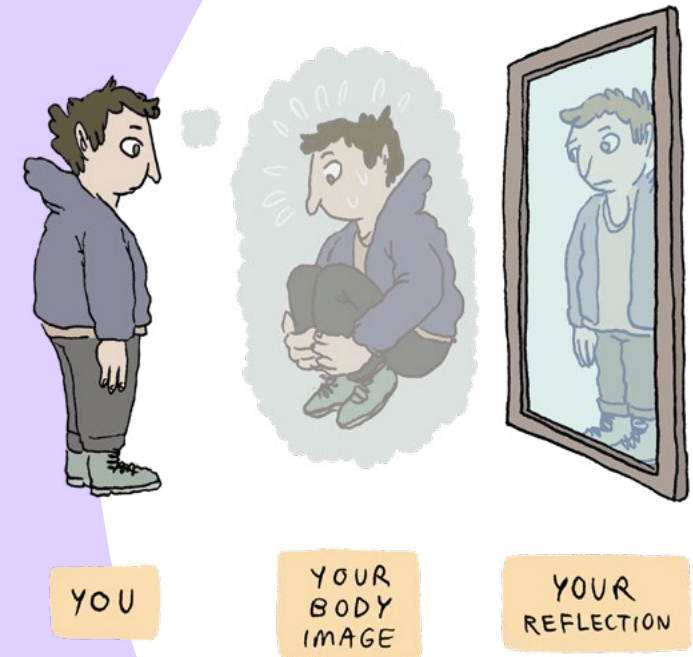
It refers to the thoughts and feelings someone has about their body.

Body image isn't always about how we look. This is where the image part comes in: it's about the picture we have of ourselves in our head.

People who struggle with negative body image might think a lot about that picture.

But this isn't anyone's fault. There are lots of things that affect how we see ourselves, and how we engage with the world, like the media and our friends.

Thoughts and feelings about our bodies can be distracting, and distressing, but if we want to feel happier in our bodies, there are ways we can.



## Introduction to Body Image

If you've found your way here, maybe you're feeling uncomfortable in your skin or you're spending more time in front of a mirror that you'd like to be.

Or maybe you've removed mirrors altogether.



This Track doesn't pretend that your relationship with your body should be simple, and our goal isn't to wave a wand so that you suddenly **LOVE** everything about yourself.

That would be kinda nice, though.



This Track can help you explore your relationship with your body.

It's incredibly brave you've decided to explore this.



Struggling with body image can be hard and lonely.

If things feel tough right now, or they become tough as you work through these activities, just know things can feel different.

# Body Image

## Myths, Busted

Learn

Sometimes we have an idea in our heads of who struggles with body image.

We might also have an idea of what the **perfect** body looks like, and assume people with **perfect** bodies are perfectly comfortable.

We don't do this intentionally, but sometimes humans make assumptions.

**Let's explore some common assumptions about bodies, and get to the facts.**



# Body Image Myths, Busted



**Myth**

Poor body image only affects young people.

**Busted**

Puberty and adolescence can be a tricky time, but body image issues affect people of all ages.

Only girls struggle with body image.

People of all genders can experience hard thoughts and feelings about their bodies. Resources aimed only at women can make it harder for others to get help.

People who worry about how they look are shallow.

**Nobody is vain or shallow for struggling with body image.**  
We live in a world that's obsessed with appearance, and sometimes people who aren't happy in themselves aren't happy with their body. A person's relationship to their body is complex, and personal.

You can tell if someone has body image issues by looking at them.

**No, you can't.**  
Body image issues can impact anyone, regardless of their size.

If someone struggles with their body image, it only affects them.

**There's a lot about body image that's personal, and private.**  
But the way someone thinks about themselves also affects how they interact with others. Like a lot of issues with mental health, it can filter how someone sees themselves and the world.


Body image is a new phenomenon because of social media.

**Body feelings existed long before TikTok.**  
And while some people find themselves scrolling and feeling worse afterwards, it's difficult to say that social media is 100% to blame. A lot of factors influence how we feel about our bodies, like family and cultural norms, gender expectations, and Western ideals of beauty. While social media doesn't help, body image is rarely one thing.

# Exploring Your Body Image

## Reflect

Most people experience negative thoughts and feelings about their body at some stage. But for some people, these feelings last a long time and can be overwhelming.



For example, someone might focus a lot on things they don't like about their body. If they're self-conscious of their pimples, being short or having a certain hair type, that might be all they see when they look in the mirror.



## Exploring Your Body Image



Do you relate to this? Do you find yourself thinking a lot about the way you look, your flaws, and worrying that people are judging you for them?

At times, it can feel like body thoughts and feelings have taken control. If you relate to this, know that you can get that control back. **It sounds simple, but the first step to taking back control is awareness.**

We need to explore our thoughts and feelings before we can challenge them.



If you relate to this, let's try it.





# Exploring Your Body Image

Can you write down what's most challenging for you about your relationship with your body?  
What feelings come up when you write this stuff down, and how strong are they?

Now that I'm more aware, I notice how often I check my stomach in the mirror.

I was on the train looking at Instagram and saw someone tagged me in a photo. I couldn't believe how huge my nose looked. I got stressed and distracted and missed my station.

It feels like I'm obsessed with what I don't like about myself.

The goal here is exploration and awareness of body thoughts and feelings, nothing more. You might find that by becoming more aware of these things, they start to lose some of their power.

Add your note



# The Costs of Negative Body Image

Reflect



For example, we might:

- \* avoid social events
- \* wear baggy clothing to hide our body
- \* not get a cool haircut, or wear that fun lipstick even when we want to
- \* say no to a friend's birthday cake even though we want some

How people feel about their bodies is complex.

It might seem like what we feel about our bodies is out of our control, but if we slow down, we might see that we're doing things that keep negative thinking going.

# The Costs of Negative Body Image

Do you notice anything similar about these examples?



They all involve avoidance.



Sometimes, our mind tricks us. It makes us think that our thoughts are true.

It can feel like we have to give in to these urges and **avoid** certain situations.

For example, if we cancel a social event because we're worried about how we look, we might feel a temporary sense of relief.

Or we might avoid eating a favourite food so that we don't feel guilty.

But the problem is this: avoidance only makes that false belief stronger. Just like a muscle. The more we use it, the stronger it gets.

In the short term, avoidance might feel good because we get a sense of relief.

But in the long term, we miss out on so much—including fun times with friends, expressing ourselves through personal style, and feeling connected.

Avoidance keeps us stuck in negative thinking about our bodies because we never get to see that the things we fear might not be that bad, or true.

# The Costs of Negative Body Image

Can you think of times when you've avoided something or someone because of your body image?

What does this cost you in the long run?

Write your thoughts in the box below.

The aim here isn't to change anything, but to become aware of how your thinking and your behaviour work together to maintain a negative body image.

Add your note



# What is Body Neutrality?

Learn

When we're feeling bad about our bodies it might feel hard to find some positivity.

Affirmations like "I am beautiful" might be helpful for some people, but they might also feel hard, or fake.

Traditional body positivity is a movement that aims to celebrate all bodies.

Which is great!



But feeling neutral about our bodies might be a more realistic, and helpful goal.



Body positivity says, "all bodies are beautiful."



Body neutrality says, "bodies don't have to be beautiful."



# What is Body Neutrality?

We are worthy of love, acceptance, and joy no matter what we look like. **And what we look like is not the most interesting thing about us.** There's nothing wrong or bad about bodies.

External pressure and influences might say there is, but there really isn't. It's only when we apply judgement or morals to our bodies that these things become true.



A body neutral approach would say:

I don't fit into these jeans anymore. I'm disgusting and ugly. I can't leave the house today.



I don't fit into these jeans anymore. I'll wear something else.



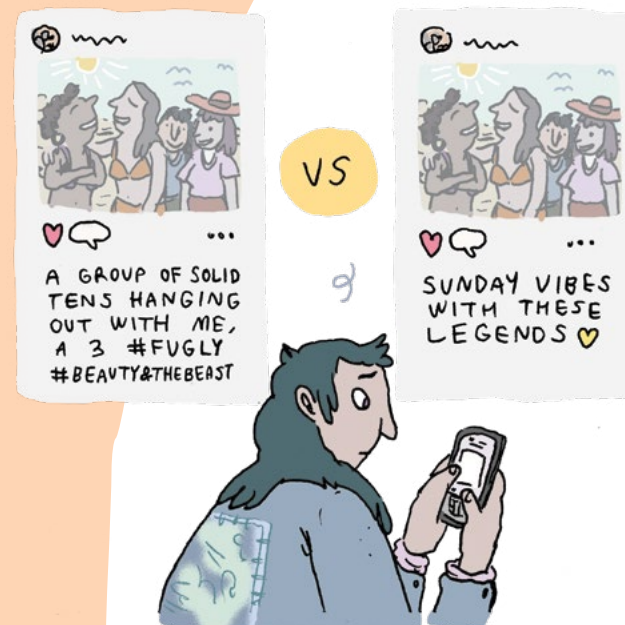
# Challenging Fat Talk

## Talking Point

Have you ever been in a conversation about bodies that felt toxic?

Maybe a group of friends were highlighting the things they don't like about their bodies—like the mirror scene in *Mean Girls*—or critiquing a celebrity's appearance.

Lots of us can be mean, at times—poking fun at our big nose or our tiny feet.



This stuff can be harmless, but not if it's constant and you believe the jokes are true.



## Challenging Fat Talk

Using humour can be a defence mechanism, and it protects us. If we make fun of the thing we're self-conscious about, then nobody else can, right?

But here's the thing: whether we caption a selfie "fuggo" as a joke, or receive a harsh insult from someone else, our brains hear the same message.

And that message is: There's something wrong with me.

This can affect our relationship with ourselves, and make us miserable to be around.

The more we catch ourselves engaging in appearance-based chat, or "fat talk" the faster we can stop it.



Okay, now it's your turn:  
what's your experience  
of fat talk?

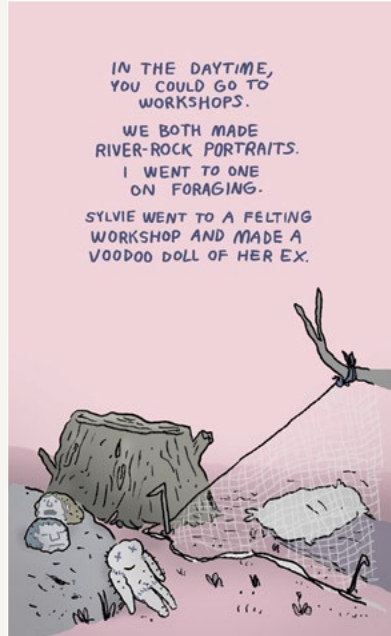
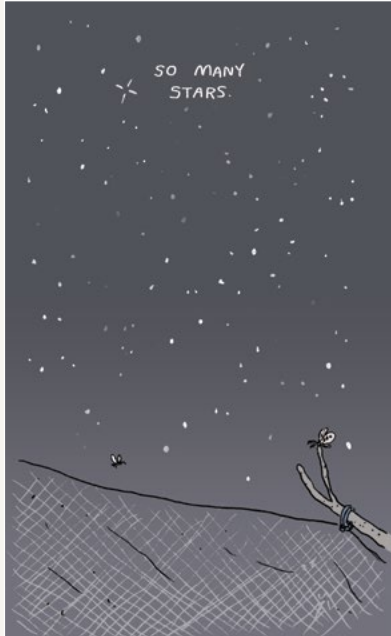
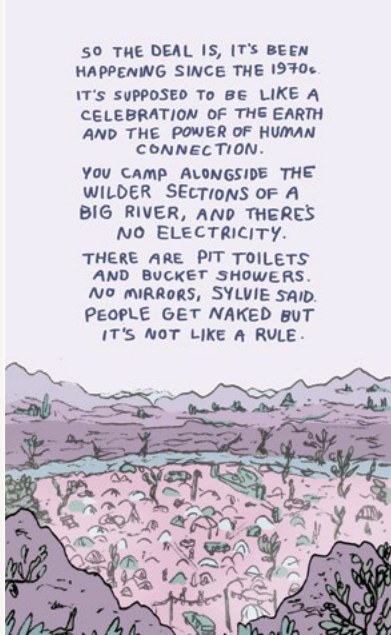
Add your note



Comic

# Embodiment: Despatches From the Hippie Festival

\*Written by Simone Howell  
Illustrated by Marc Pearson



BUT IN THE END, SHE DIDN'T FEEL RIGHT ABOUT STICKING THE PINS IN. SO SHE JUST SAT HIM UP AT CAMP SO HE COULD SEE HOW MUCH FUN WE WERE HAVING.

AT NIGHT, THERE WAS MUSIC AND CAMPFIRES, AND EVERYONE WAS FRIENDLY. AND THE NO MIRROR THING... WELL, WE WERE ALL STARTING TO LOOK A LITTLE WILD.



I WAS SELF CONSCIOUS ABOUT THE SHOWERS; I SWAM IN THE RIVER INSTEAD.

ONE DAY SYLVIE AND I SWAM TO THIS MUDDY FLAT. WE COVERED OUR BODIES IN MUD AND THEN WAITED FOR IT TO DRY.



LYING ON THE BANK, AWAY FROM EVERYONE, EYES CLOSED, THE SOUNDS OF BIRDS AND TREES RUSTLING, THE SOUND OF THE RIVER WATER LAPPING AT THE SHORE, I ALMOST FELT LIKE I HAD NO BODY AT ALL.

LIKE I WAS PART OF THE LAND, OR PART OF TIME.



WE ARE SWAMP THINGS! SYLVIE CRIED.

AND THEN, BACK IN THE RIVER, WASHING THE MUD OFF, I FELT HYPER-AWARE.

I COULD FEEL EVEN THE FAINTEST RIPPLE OF WIND ON MY SKIN.



AFTER THE FESTIVAL OFFICIALLY ENDED A GROUP OF US STAYED ON FOR A FEW DAYS. NONE OF US WANTED TO GO BACK.

IN HER REAL LIFE, SYLVIE IS NEVER NOT LOOKING PERFECT, WITH FULL MAKE-UP AND LASHES.



WHEN I CAME OUT AS NON-BINARY, I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE I OWED ANYONE AN EXPLANATION.

STILL, IT WAS COOL HOW SYLVIE NEVER JUDGED ME FOR IT.

ON THE LAST NIGHT, SHE ASKED ME ABOUT MY EATING, THE WAY I'M ALWAYS MANAGING IT, ALL THE RULES I HAVE FOR MYSELF.

SHE ASKED IF IT WAS BECAUSE I WAS TRYING TO CHANGE MY SHAPE, OR TRYING TO DISAPPEAR.



I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER HER.

SORT OF? THE THING WAS I HADN'T FELT IT BY THE RIVER, THE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS THAT I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I'M CARRYING AROUND, FOR A LITTLE WHILE I HAD A VACATION FROM IT.



IT MADE ME WONDER HOW MUCH OF THAT IS ABOUT ME.

AND HOW MUCH OF IT IS ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE.



THE RIVER. THE STARS. THE QUIET.

NO REASON TO RUSH. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

NO ONE LOOKING AT ANYONE, EXPECTING ANYTHING. I DON'T WANT TO FORGET THAT FEELING OF BEING COMFORTABLE IN MY BODY.





# Body Image: Wrap-Up

Learn



## In Body Image, we've explored:

- Body image affects lots of people across all ages, cultures and genders.
- Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours around our bodies are connected, and these affect our relationship with ourselves and others.
- We can improve our relationship with our bodies by practicing self-compassion and trying activities that make us feel embodied, or connected to our fleshy bodies.
- If loving our bodies feels too hard or weird, we can aim to feel neutral about our bodies.
- You deserve the same love and kindness you give to others.

Exploring and better understanding our relationships with our bodies happens over time.

## Body Image: Wrap-Up

There are also lots of services outside MOST if you want to talk to someone about your relationship with your body:

- The [Butterfly Foundation](http://butterfly.org.au) (butterfly.org.au) have a phone line and chat service
- [Eating Disorders Victoria](http://eatingdisorders.org.au) (eatingdisorders.org.au) have lots of resources
- If you have a good relationship with your GP or another health worker, you can chat to them about this stuff
- You can find information about eating disorders at [headspace](http://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/for-young-people/eating-disorders) (headspace.org.au/explore-topics/for-young-people/eating-disorders)
- [InsideOut](http://insideoutinstitute.org.au/for-myself) (insideoutinstitute.org.au/for-myself) have some cool resources

# Get mental health support when you need it on MOST

It's 24/7 digital therapy for young people aged 12 to 25

Now available as an app!



Download on the  
App Store



GET IT ON  
Google Play

[most.org.au](https://most.org.au)



**MOST** / *ory*gen Digital