



How to Help Your Child Develop a Healthy Relationship with Food Exercise, & Their Body

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Q: Why are we talking about this?

A: To reduce your child's risk of developing an eating disorder



Eating Disorders Awareness Week 2023

February 27 - March 5

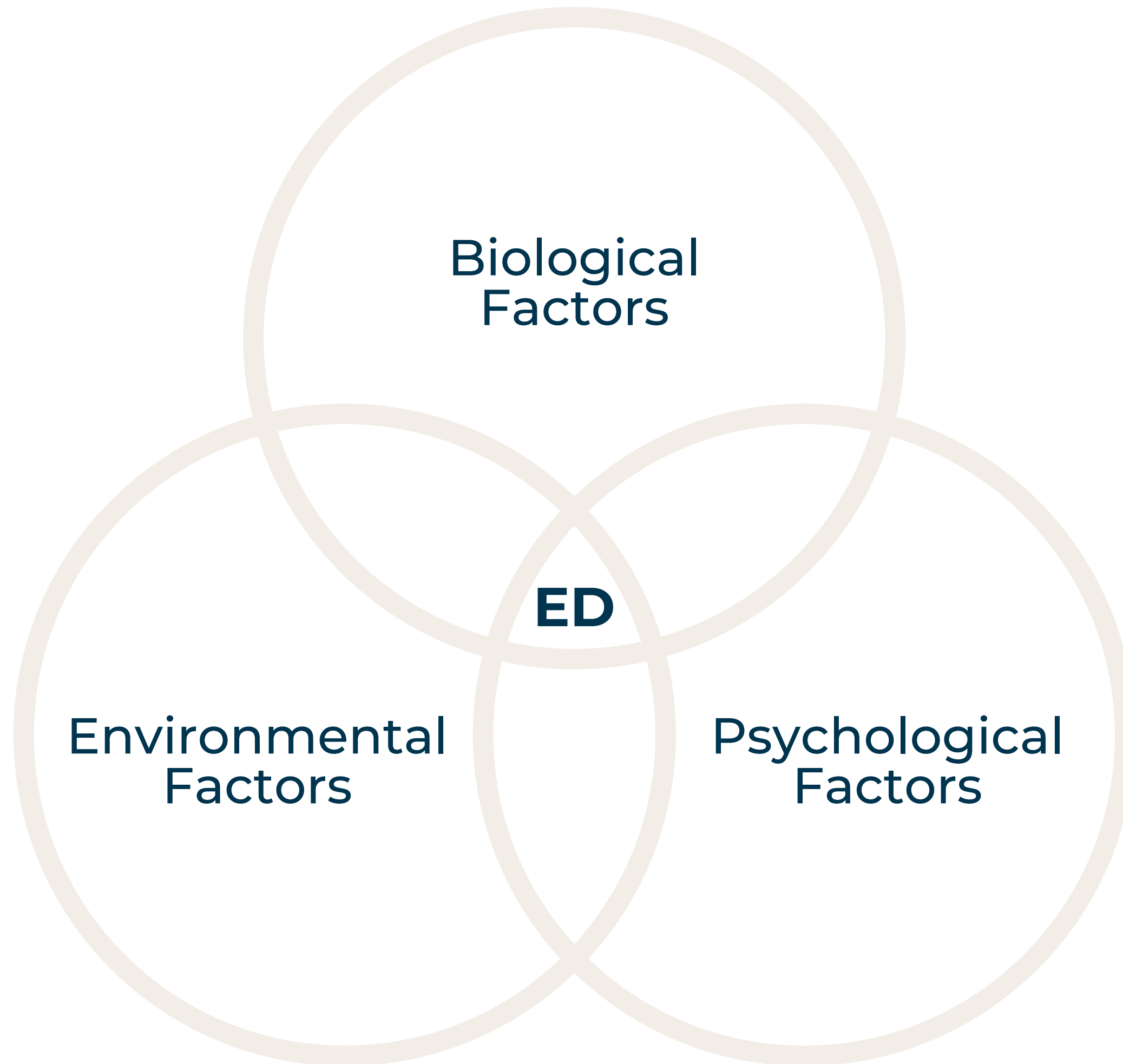
#EatingDisordersAwarenessWeek

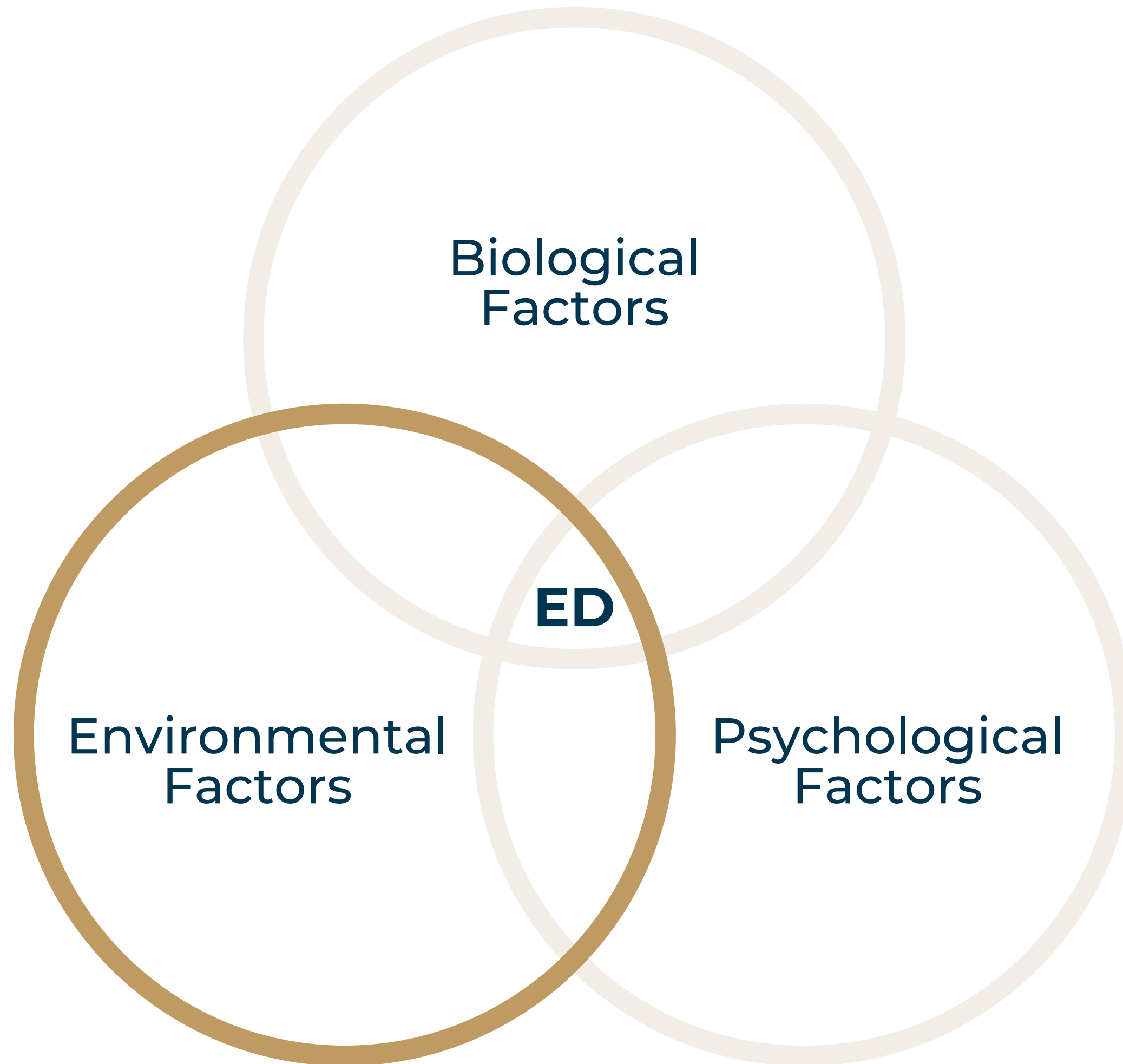
Eating disorders
have the 2nd highest
mortality rate among all
psychiatric illnesses,
with someone dying
every 52 minutes as a
direct result.

@alliancefored



People of any body size, age, race, gender identity, sexual preference, ability, culture, and socioeconomic status can develop an eating disorder





Shame has no place here

We are here to learn

Kids & Food





Neutralize the language you use around food

Set your child up to have a positive relationship with food instead of one built on guilt, fear, and shame

Resist the Urge to:

- Use words like "good," "bad," "healthy," "unhealthy," "clean," "toxic," and "junk" to describe food
- Teach your child that the nutritional value of one food is better or worse than the nutritional value of another food
- Talk about how a food does or doesn't impact weight or appearance

Why Not Teach Which Foods Are "Healthy" and Which are "Unhealthy?"

- It creates food hierarchies and can cause food-related guilt, fear, and shame
- It can impact the way your child thinks and feels about him/herself as a person
- It can create confusion and lack of trust with parents/caregivers
- It can lead to restricting and/or binge eating

Instead, Teach:

- About flavor, texture, and appearance of food
- Where different foods come from
- Where to buy and how to prepare different foods
- The food group that different foods belong to or the type of food it is (ex: meat, dairy, fruit, grain)
- The nutrients in different foods and what those nutrients can do to help the body (ex: there are carbohydrates in this bread, and carbohydrates give us energy)
- The importance of eating all sorts of different foods, eating *enough* food, and enjoying what you eat
- About listening to the body and trusting its feedback about hunger, fullness, and satisfaction



Expose your child to a variety of foods

Consistent exposure (without pressure to try anything)
is what helps kids become familiar with different foods
and begin to feel safe enough to explore them



Eat *with* your child when you can

Model eating a variety of different foods
and doing so without fear or judgement



Give permission to honor food preferences

Avoid the "forbidden fruit effect" as well as
sneaking/hiding food to eat in secret



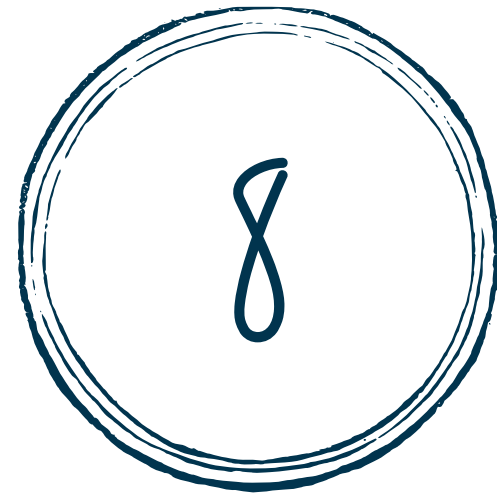
Avoid using food as a
reward or punishment



Involve your child in the
planning, purchasing, and
cooking or assembling of meals



Resist the urge to talk about
your diet or weight changes
in front of your child



Never ever put your child on a diet

There are many negative effects of dieting, both physically and mentally, and children who diet are 5 times more likely to develop an eating disorder

Kids & Exercise





Resist the urge to talk about
exercise as something we do
to change our appearance



Talk about all the *other* reasons we exercise

Talk about exercise as something we do for enjoyment,
for energy, for strength, for good sleep, for stress
management, for spiritual health, etc.



Give your child opportunities to build fundamental movement skills

Give space for him or her to practice balancing, throwing, catching, jumping, running, etc.



Give your child opportunities
to discover forms of
movement they enjoy



Explore forms of movement that
you can enjoy *with* your kids

Model joyful, life-giving movement



Normalize rest

Teach your child that listening to his or her body and acknowledging when it needs rest is an important skill



Avoid assigning physical
activity as punishment

Kids & Body Image



The Lie

- Weight and size have the biggest impact on our health
- Larger body size always equals poorer health
- Weight and size are completely dependent on an individual's behaviors and choices
- The best way to improve health is to lose weight

The Truth

- There are a lot of factors that influence health and health is not just dependent on someone's size
- There are people who live in larger bodies and are in good health, and losing weight does not necessarily mean improving health
- Size or weight isn't simply a result of an individual's behaviors or choices
- There are ways to improve health and well-being other than just losing weight or trying to change the size of the body



Neutralize and normalize the inherent diversity of body sizes

Body size diversity exists in people
of all ages and stages



Talk about the body in terms of
what it can do, not how it looks

Teach your child that his or her body is
an instrument, not an ornament



Resist the urge to comment
on other people's bodies



Model a healthy and positive relationship with your own body

Refrain from criticizing your body or appearance in front of your child, and don't weigh yourself in front of him or her



Encourage your child to
assess how what they see on
social media makes them feel

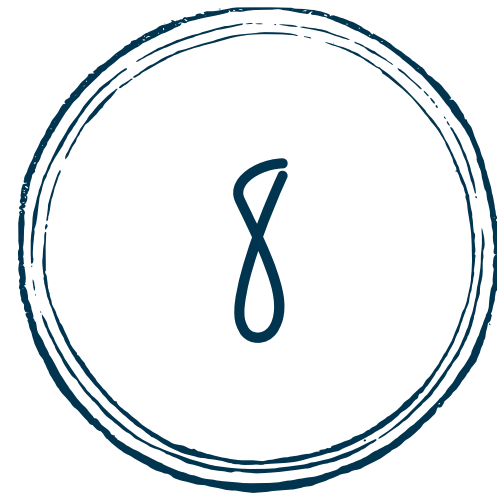


Make sure the media you
consume represents diversity
in body shapes and sizes



Affirm your child's character, personality traits, and interests

Empower him or her to see themselves
as more than their appearance



Help your child pick clothing
that he or she feels good in
and can move comfortably in

Closing Thoughts



Changing the way you communicate with your child about food, exercise, or bodies can be difficult, especially if you've wrestled with struggles in your own relationship with those things

If you're not at a place where you
can be at peace with yourself and
your body, fake it til you make it
and seek support for yourself

If people around you are speaking negatively or unhealthily about food, exercise, or their bodies, do your best to distract your child or divert the conversation, and revisit the situation later if your child heard things you think may have been unhelpful

Be alert to how your child talks
about their appearance, body shape
and size, and food or diets

To assess your child's relationship with food, exercise, or their body, you can ask things like:

- How would you describe your relationship with _____ [food/exercise/your body]?
- Many people's eating is impacted by their emotions. Is yours? How so?

*** when in doubt, defer to an eating disorder professional ***

Warning Signs to Look For

- Withdrawal from activities they used to enjoy
- Irritability or anxiety around mealtime
- Avoiding eating with the family
- Complaints about the way they look or frequent self-scrutiny
- Excessively looking at themselves in the mirror
- Sudden increase in exercise
- Checking food labels before deciding to eat something
- New desire to be “healthier” or “more fit”
- Frequent trips to the bathroom after eating
- Regularly weighing themselves
- Refusing to eat from certain food groups
- Suddenly only wanting to wear loose-fitting clothing

Resources



Books for Parents

- *How to Raise an Intuitive Eater* by Sumner Brooks and Amee Severson
- *More Than A Body* by Lindsay Kite and Lexie Kite
- *Body Happy Kids* by Molly Forbes
- *Raising Body Positive Teens* by Signe Darpinian, Wendy Sterling, and Shelley Aggarwal
- *The Eating Instinct* by Virginia Sole-Smith
- *Intuitive Eating, 4th Edition* by Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch
- *Mom in the Mirror* by Dena Cabrera and Emily Wierenga
- *The Wellness Trap* by Christy Harrison (coming April 25th)

Books for Elementary-Age Kids

- *It's My Body* by Elise Gravel
- *What's On Your Plate* by Whitney Stewart and Christiane Engel
- *Bodies Are Cool* by Tyler feder
- *Free to Be Me* by Lesley Williams-Blackwell
- *His Body Can* by Katie Crenshaw and Ady Meschke
- *Her Body Can* and Katie Crenshaw and Ady Meschke
- *Beautifully Me* by Nabela Noor
- *Kid Chef Junior Every Day* by Yaffi Lvova
- *What if Vegetables Were People* by Kate Wengier
- *What if Fruits Were Animals* by Kate Wengier

Books for Pre-Teens

- *Love Your Body* by Jessica Sanders
- *Being You: The Body Image Book for Boys* by Charlotte Markey, Daniel Hart, and Douglas Zacher
- *The Body Image Book for Girls: Love Yourself and Grow Up Fearless* by Charlotte Markey
- *Star Fish* by Lisa Fipps
- *The Heart of a Boy* by Kate Parker
- *Strong is the New Pretty* by Kate Parker
- *Fat Chance, Charlie Vega* by Crystal Maldonado

Books for Teenagers

- *The Intuitive Eating Workbook for Teens* by Elyse Resch
- *The Body Image Workbook for Teens* by Julia Taylor
- *Being You: The Body Image Book for Boys* by Charlotte Markey, Daniel Hart, and Douglas Zacher
- *The Body Image Book for Girls: Love Yourself and Grow Up Fearless* by Charlotte Markey
- *No Weigh!* by Signe Darpinian, Wendy Sterling, and Shelley Aggarwal
- *More Than A Body* by Lindsay Kite and Lexie Kite

[Get My Free Ticket](#)

Day 2: March 8, 2023



Connie Sobczak

Co-Founder of The Body Positive & Author

Building a Healthy Relationship with Your Body

March 8, 2023

Join us for this heartfelt conversation about how to build a healthy body-image. Connie shares many insights about authentic self-love, how to quiet the critical voice inside, and how to embrace our own authentic beauty. Her work helps prevent disordered eating and other body image challenges.

*This presentation is a great one to invite your teen to watch with you.



[Learn More about Connie](#)

[Grab Connie's Gift](#)

lovinlifewithlittles.com/raising-a-healthy-happy-teen-summit-registration/

Other Resources for Parents

- Parenting Without Diet Culture Facebook group
- Raising Anti-Diet Kids Facebook group
- Can I Have Another Snack? podcast
- The Messy Intersection podcast
- Sunny Side Up Nutrition podcast
- Mom Genes podcast
- @mybodypositivehome on Instagram
- allianceforeatingdisorders.com
- theprojectheal.org
- feast-ed.org

Q&A

