YOU ARE NEEDED

UNVEIL THE MASK

SEEK OUT POSITIVE MEDIA MESSAGES

VALUE HEALTH OVER APPEARANCE

MODEL RESPECT FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

“YOU CAN'T BE WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE”

FATHERS AND CAREGIVERS

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FATHERS AND CAREGIVERS
DEAR FATHERS AND CAREGIVERS,

To support all of you, we are bringing you the most effective strategies, talking tips, and resources to help you be the best caregiver possible. We want to remind you that just like mothers, you are essential to the healthy development of your children’s health and well-being. That’s why we are providing tips and resources to support you in helping your children #BuildConfidence!

Children right out of the womb are exposed to and pressured to conform to unhealthy gender stereotypes. Boys learn that they should dominate and have a “six-pack” and girls learn to please and be underweight. We are experiencing such a public health crises around healthy gender norms that experts insist fathers and male caregivers overcome their own discomfort with discussions around body image and self-esteem and address these issues head on.

To support all of you, we are bringing you the most effective strategies, talking tips, and resources to help you model healthy body image and self-esteem. Our goal is to raise awareness and provide information so that you have the resources you need to help your children #BuildConfidence!

Thank you for all you are doing to support your children and contribute to creating a healthier culture for us all.

Warmest,

Jennifer Siebel Newsom
Founder & CEO

SELF-ESTEEM:
Having confidence in yourself and your abilities.

BODY IMAGE:
how an individual feels, acts, and thinks about their body and the bodies of others. Feelings about our own bodies — and the bodies of others — are shaped not only by our thoughts and beliefs, but are also informed by our relationships to families, communities, and the larger culture.

5 to 8 year old girls judged themselves to be less physically able when their fathers expressed concern about the girl’s weight.

(source here)
THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS:
Common Sense Media (commonsensemedia.org) and Girls Leadership (girlsleadership.org), we are sharing five tips for teaching healthy self-esteem and positive body image to our children.

YOU ARE NEEDED
As fathers and caregivers, your presence is needed. You might feel discomfort discussing sensitive topics such as your children’s body image and self-esteem. You might even think that it’s not your place, but know that experts urge you to get involved. Your children are relying on you for information and assurance that they are ok. Talk to them about the pressures they feel to look or act a certain way and tell them it’s ok to be different. In fact, celebrate what makes them unique!

UNVEIL THE MASK
It is important for you to look inward and know your true self. Only then can you model authenticity for your children. Sharing your own vulnerabilities with them is not something to shy away from. Tell them about your experiences — shed light on difficulties you had when you were their age and how you overcame them. By opening up, you are modeling for your children what it’s like to be comfortable with yourself and how they can overcome adversity.

VALUE HEALTH OVER APPEARANCE
When you need to talk about food and exercise, focus on ways to be healthier (not skinner or prettier). For example, instead of saying how good your children look, tell them how great it is that they learned to ride a bicycle, how strong their soccer kick was, or how clever they were in preparing such a balanced, healthy meal.

SEEK OUT POSITIVE MEDIA MESSAGES
When every prince and princess is inhumanly beautiful, and every witch and warlock is overweight and unattractive, your children receive limiting messages about their value. Try to guide them toward positive media messages by actively seeking out movies, TV shows, video games, and music that support physical health and emotional well-being. And consume media with them. When you watch something that perpetuates negative stereotypes, have a discussion with them and give them examples to counter these messages.

MODEL RESPECT FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS
Show respect for women, especially your loved ones. Refrain from comments like “she’s so fat” (and even “she’s so hot”) that can send the message that a woman’s value lies mostly in her appearance. Tell them that character is more important than looks, and differences are what make them unique and interesting. Model this behavior and your children will follow your lead and be happier for it.
A CALL TO MEN
acalltomen.org
A Call to Men is a leading national violence prevention organization providing training and education for men, boys, and communities. The aim is to shift social norms that negatively impact our culture and promote a more healthy and respectful definition of manhood.

COMMON SENSE MEDIA
commonsensemedia.org
Common Sense Media (CSM) empowers parents, teachers, and policymakers by providing unbiased information, trusted advice, and innovative tools to help them harness the power of media and technology as a positive force in all kids’ lives.

DOVE SELF ESTEEM PROJECT
selfesteem.dove.us
Dove Self Esteem Project has created a series of informative articles and engaging activities to arm parents with the right tools to help their girls overcome beauty-related anxieties.

FATHERLY
fatherly.org
Fatherly is a resource for useful recommendations from the world of parenting.

FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE
futureswithoutviolence.org
For more than 30 years, Futures Without Violence has been providing groundbreaking programs, policies, and campaigns that empower individuals and organizations working to end violence against women and children around the world.

GIRLS LEADERSHIP
girlsleadership.org
Girls leadership teaches girls to know who they are, what they believe, and how to express it, empowering them to create change in the world.

#LEANINTOGETHER
Leanin.org/together
#LeanInTogether involves men in showing the world their support for gender equality.

THE MANKIND PROJECT USA
mankindproject.org
The Mankind Project conducts challenging and highly rewarding programs for men at every stage of life.

NATIONAL EATING DISORDERS ASSOCIATION (NEDA)
nationaleatingdisorders.org
The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) is a leading U.S. non-profit organization advocating on behalf of and supporting individuals and families affected by eating disorders.

PBS RAISING BOYS
pbs.org/parents/parenting/raisingboys
PBS Raising Boys is a parent’s guide on understanding and raising boys.

PBS RAISING GIRLS
pbs.org/parents/parenting/raising-girls/
PBS Raising Girls is a parent’s guide on raising powerful girls.

TRUE DUDE
TrueDude.Co
True Dude is out to shape the conversation about 21st century men by recognizing and honoring those who make positive impacts on their families and communities.

WANT TO DO MORE?
Talk to your loved ones about how society’s limiting stereotypes influence children’s self-concepts. Download our conversation starters or place the Miss Representation and The Mask You Live In curricula in your local school.
Many kids are dissatisfied with their bodies, and society’s body appearance ideals are highly unrealistic.

Body image is really important for self-esteem, which is crucial to a young person’s development, and disorders linked to poor body image can result in serious mental and physical health issues.

Get involved
- Tune into kids’ lives (ask about friends, school, and feelings).
- Nurture a positive self-image.
- Step in when kids need support.

Body image concerns start earlier than you think; even preschoolers learn that society judges people by how they look.

You are your child’s first teacher.
You have a lot of power to shape their attitudes, values, and behavior.

Ban "fat talk"
- Say why you appreciate your own body.
- Watch your comments about other people’s bodies and appearance.
- Be active and eat well for health, not size.

Unrealistic, sexualized, and stereotypical images and messages about bodies and gender are rampant on the media your kid consumes.

Boys have issues with body image too.
Boys’ own body concerns and risky behaviors can go unnoticed, and their role in supporting healthy attitudes among girls is vital.

Pay attention to your son, too
- Listen for negative body talk.
- Look for dramatic weight loss or gain.
- Check the messages from coaches, peers, and online forums about weight, exercise, and muscle-building.

Ideas and habits formed young last a lifetime.

Start early
- Emphasize health not weight.
- Teach appreciation for all types of people.
- Focus on talents and strengths.

More than half of girls and 1/3 of boys as young as 6 to 8 feel their ideal body is thinner than their current body size.

Common Sense is committed to helping kids, families, and educators thrive in a world of media and technology. Join us on Facebook or Twitter, and get our free Kids Media App.

Methodology: For this report, we conducted a review of the published research literature on body image in relation to various types of media, among children and teens. We also included relevant research among young adults, and related topics such as gender roles and sexualization. We also scanned popular culture for exemplars and trends on this topic and developed case studies or examples as pointers for intervention. For more details on methods, studies reviewed, and key findings, see the full report at www.commonsensemedia.org/research/children-teens-media-and-body-image.