

Life at the minute feels pretty weird and stressful to many of us. We're all spending more time at home and online, and while that's necessary right now to help slow the spread of Covid-19, there may be an impact on us in terms of how we see ourselves.

Are you spending more time on social media at the minute? Social media is incredibly visual and we're constantly receiving visual messages; perhaps looking at posts depicting so-called "perfect" bodies and lifestyles. We may also be spending more time looking at ourselves too, maybe using Zoom or Facetime when talking to friends or teachers. It's easy to see how the pressure to look good might be making some people feel worse about themselves at this time.

It's also easy to get into the habit of feeling like your post or picture isn't worth as much if it gets fewer likes than those of other people you follow, but don't forget how much filtering, face tuning and even surgery goes is used by most celebrities or influencers in their photos. These are not realistic images, and the bodies shown are usually incredibly difficult or even impossible to attain for most people. There tends to be less variation in the bodies we see online compared to real life too, so that images tend to keep to a narrow set of "norms" in terms of ethnicity, gender expression, body shape, facial features and more; they're not typical of real life.



Photo credit: Warren Wong

And don't forget too, that we're not seeing a balanced picture at the minute: we're seeing lots of so-called "perfect bodies" online, but lockdown and social distancing means that we aren't able to balance that out and put it in perspective by seeing lots of "real people" —complete with spots, wobbly bits and body hair! It might help to **unfollow social media influencers** or others that maintain the idea of a beauty "norm"; particularly if you find yourself having negative thoughts when reading their content. Instead, make sure you follow **people who look like you**, have your particular body type or celebrate the features that you feel insecure about.

The impact of the pandemic can be so big that we might not recognise or be aware of what we're feeling, and stressing about our appearance may become an emotional outlet. The sense of things being out of our control can be traumatic, and our instinct might be to focus on the things we feel are in our control. This feeling is natural, but try to be kind to yourself; now is not the time to be obsessing about glowing up or getting ripped! **If what and how you eat** is being affected by your body image, or you are hurting yourself, we recommend you get support immediately. Speak to your GP or one of the support lines below. It can be helpful to switch thoughts about "how my body should look" to the more positive "what my body can do", and to focus on all the **wonderful things** your body can do for you! Try also to be mindful about how you spend your time online and how it affects your wellbeing. And if you feel like you need some support, don't wait for it to get worse; speak to someone you trust now

### Over to you....

- 1. Think about: have you had more thoughts about your appearance as a result of lockdown? Are those thoughts fair, rational and kind: what if one of your friends voiced those thoughts about themselves, what would you say? Try and list five things you like about your appearance.**
- 2. Watch these short videos on:**
  - **Ideal Body Types Throughout History**
  - **Photoshop Body—Model Before and After**
- 3. What steps can YOU take to surround yourself with body-positive content, to build your self-esteem, and that of others?**

### Support and Information:

**Centre 33:** <http://centre33.org.uk/>

**Dhiverse:** <https://www.dhiverse.org.uk/>

**Be Real Campaign:** <https://www.berealcampaign.co.uk/>

**The Mix:** <https://www.themix.org.uk/>

**MIND:** <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

**Beat Eating Disorders:** <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>

**Young Minds:** <https://youngminds.org.uk/>