

In the accompanying worksheet for students, your child has been thinking about:

- ⇒ How we see ourselves; has our perception changed as a result of lockdown and spending more time online?
- ⇒ The visual nature of social media and its frequent depiction of so-called “perfect bodies”, how this may make some people feel worse about themselves at this time, when we are being unable to balance that out and put it in perspective by seeing “real” people
- ⇒ Validation on social media via “likes”, and a reminder that faces and bodies depicted are highly filtered, Photo-shopped, lots of makeup, lighting etc.
- ⇒ The limited diversity of body images shown online, in terms of ethnicity, gender expression, body shape, facial features and more
- ⇒ Suggestion to unfollow social media influencers or others who perpetuate these beauty “norms”, particularly if they’re prompting negative thoughts
- ⇒ Recognition that stress caused by pandemic may be traumatic for young people, and natural instinct may be to focus on things that are within our control; however this may not be the right time to be trying to transform our bodies
- ⇒ Advice that if what and how you eat is being affected by your body image, or you are hurting yourself, we recommend you get support immediately from GP or one of the sources below
- ⇒ Suggestion to try and switch thoughts about “how my body should look” to the more positive “what my body can do”
- ⇒ Advice to be mindful about time spent online and our wellbeing, and to seek support if needed

If you would like to discuss any of these issues with your child, you might find the following conversation-starters useful:

- ◆ Who are the people you follow on social media, what do you like about them? (are these responses related to their appearance, or their skills, beliefs, attitudes, what kind of work they do or other factors...?). What kind of feelings you have when you look at their posts?
- ◆ Do you think the people you see in the media look good? (maybe draw on one or two specific examples of people your child follows). What is it about them that makes them look good—compared to others? Which features do you admire, or would you wish to be like?
- ◆ Maybe google some “celebrities without makeup” or “celebrities before and after Photoshop” with your child to help them develop a critical eye toward images they see on social media, adverts etc.
- ◆ Do you think that the ideal body type changes over time? What do you think is the ideal body type right now in 2020? What do people have to do to achieve / maintain that? What might be some of the benefits / risks or drawbacks of doing those things?

You may also find the following websites useful for more info or ideas:

Diverse: <https://www.dhiverse.org.uk/>

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

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

Family Lives: <https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/health-wellbeing/body-image/>

Parenting NI: <https://www.parentingni.org/blog/how-to-help-your-child-with-their-body-image/>

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

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

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