

“Mom, I Hate How I Look”

Too fat. Too ugly. Not buff enough. Heard it all before?

These are common complaints from kids today. The reality is, most kids are all of the above – if they compare themselves to the young men and women they see on television, in magazines, and on the fashion runways. That’s not reality or at least not a healthy reality. But how do you explain that to your child?



Don’t ignore your child’s feelings.

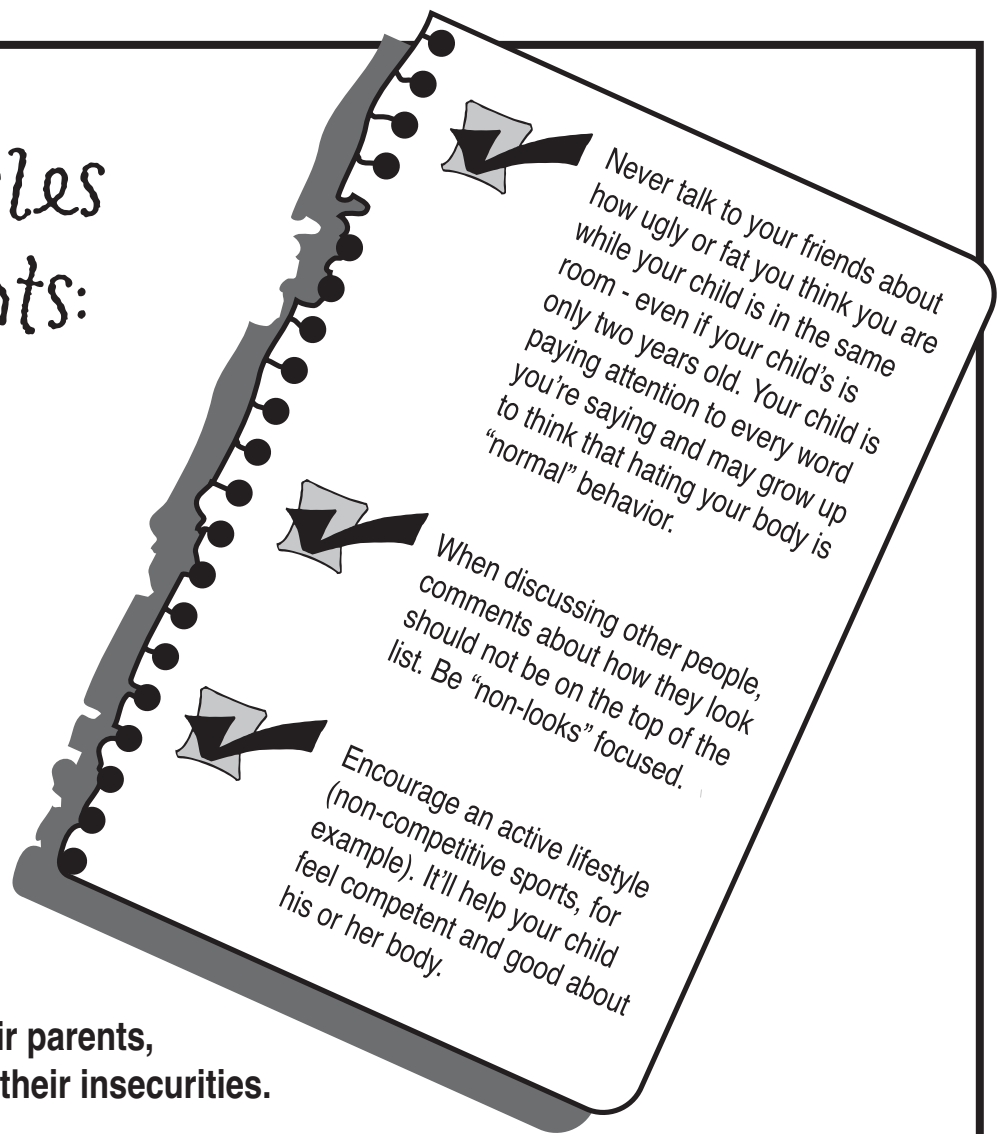
Responding by saying “Honey, you look fine” or “You are beautiful” is not going to help. You don’t have to come up with a solution, either. Let your child get it off their chest, listen to them, talk it out, and try to let your child come up with a possible solution.

And don’t forget to hug your child. Children interpret the lessening of affection as disapproval of how they look.

Sit down with them and look at the images in the magazines they read and the shows they watch on television.

Talk about what you’ve just seen. Encourage your child to challenge what you’ve seen – Who really looks like that? Is being that thin healthy? Do you really need to look like that to wear that brand? How much make-up, air-brushing and personal training contributed to this unreal image?

Three rules for parents:



With the support of their parents, most kids will outgrow their insecurities.



There are times, however, when parental support is not enough. If your child is depressed or obsessed about an issue, your family doctor or paediatrician can help. Signs of depression include feeling down for more than a week (and your usual way of cheering them up isn't working): difficulty sleeping; not eating; crying a lot; or hurting oneself. If your child's concerns about body image consumes their life, if they wear 10 layers of clothing to school to cover up their body, or don't leave the house, it's a good idea to get them to a doctor.

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