

Dealing with the Stuff That Makes Life Tough: The 10 Things That Stress Girls Out and How to Cope with Them

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Chapter 1 Excerpt

If Everyone Says I Look Fine, Why Do I Feel So Fat?
Making Peace With Body Image

Body Image. Does any other issue create more turmoil inside the hearts and minds of women and girls? When we were babies, we loved our bodies. We kicked our legs and patted our tummies. We were so pleased with our bodies. So many of us have lost the little girl who loved her body. Instead, we make long lists of our bodies' downfalls. How many of us wish our butts were smaller, our stomachs were flatter, or that we could be taller or shorter?...Some people define body image as how we think and feel about our bodies, but that's only part of it. Body image is also created by what we think and feel about ourselves, how we behave, who we choose for friends, and the culture we live in...Feeling bad about our bodies interferes with our lives...

Teri is 14, short, talkative, and smart. By anyone's standards, she looks like a healthy, normal, attractive girl. By anyone's standards--except hers, that is...Teri's poor body image was partly due to the pressure she felt from friends and family to ignore her natural appetite. To please her parents and to fit in socially, she set up a pattern of starving during the day, which led to binge eating at night...This behavior only made Teri feel worse about her body--and bad about herself as a person...Here's (some ways) Teri learned how to get her eating--and body image--back to healthy...

Pictures of perfect models and perfect actresses drive Teri crazy. She always compares herself to them and feels ugly. So she had the idea to make a good body image scrapbook...When she feels fat, Teri looks through her scrapbook. It gives her a different, more positive perspective on what's considered "attractive..."

Jenny is 13 and already 5 feet 8 inches tall. Ever since kindergarten she's been the tallest person in her class, which has made her self-conscious about her body for years. But after her eighth grade check-up, she felt like she was the fattest one in the class too...When Jenny looks at her baby pictures, she appreciates that she wasn't born into this world with a poor body image. And that she can get back to liking her body again, like she did when she was little...

Amy is 15. She's the middle child, in between two sisters...Amy is a lot heavier than her sisters. She takes after her father--she has a short, stocky build...Amy joined an extramural swim club at school--and much to her own amazement, she likes it! Amy also thinks this helps her feel better about her body...Amy finds that using affirmations helps her stay on the better body image track. Affirmations are positive things you say to yourself to boost your self-esteem and body image. Instead of giving yourself negative messages, like "I'm so fat and ugly," you affirm the good things about yourself...When she wakes up in the morning, Amy thinks up an affirmation for the day. She says the affirmation to herself when she's brushing her teeth, and again, just before she goes to sleep at night. During the day, if she finds herself feeling fat, she repeats the affirmation to herself. Here are some of Amy's Affirmations:...