

Be a Positive Role Model

Eat Well, Be Active, Feel Good about Yourself

Looking after Yourself with *Eating*

Eating should be easy and natural – but many people have issues that get in the way.

Do any of these issues prevent you from being the role model you would like to be?

- Lack of experience with cooking, shopping, and preparing meals.
- Eating in response to stress and uncomfortable feelings.
- Placing eating low on your priority list: eating “on the run”, in the car, at your desk, or while reading or watching TV.
- Restrained eating (concerns about your weight make you look for ways to control your appetite and the types of food you eat).
- Frequent dieting – always looking for that magic weight loss plan.
- Eating disorders.

You can take better care of yourself with eating, and be a better role model by:

- Slowing down
- Responding to your inner signals for hunger and fullness
- Choosing foods that are both nutritious and delicious

MAKE HEALTHY EATING A PRIORITY.

Check out these questions to see how you are doing:

- Is eating an important and enjoyable part of my life?
- Do I make time for regular meals and snacks throughout the day?
- Do I try to relax and take a break when I eat?
- Do I usually eat when I feel hungry – but not wait so long that I feel famished?
- Do I usually stop eating when I feel comfortably full and satisfied?
- Do I choose food that is not only nutritious, but also satisfying and tastes good?
- Do I like a variety of foods? Can I try new foods and learn to like many of them?
Do I try to eat a variety of food over the day or week?
- Are family meals important to me? Have I found ways to make them more relaxed and enjoyable for everyone in the family?

Looking after Yourself with *Activity*

Physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle.

Do any of these issues prevent you from being the role model you'd like to be?

- A hectic, stressful life that leaves you too tired to get moving.
- Feeling awkward or intimidated about getting active - or embarrassed to be seen in workout clothes or a bathing suit.
- Feeling like physical activity is a punishment or chore – you've been reminded too often that you "should" or "must" exercise.
- You view working out primarily for weight loss and give up when you don't lose weight quickly.
- You overdo at the start of a program or try to be a "weekend warrior", becoming sore, injured and discouraged along the way.
- You think you have to be active for a long time, really sweat and "feel the burn" to get any effect – but don't have the time or energy.
- You get caught up in a pattern of excessive exercise. You feel you must work out - even if you're sick or injured; or to burn off the calories from that piece of cake you just ate.

The good news is that activity can be fun, help you have more energy and cope better with stress. It doesn't have to be competitive or require high levels of skill, and can be done in shorter time frames that fit into your life.

MAKE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY A PRIORITY.

Check out these questions to see how you are doing:

- Do I have some activities that I truly enjoy doing? Have I found ways to fit them into my day? Do my kids see me being active?
- Have I noticed the benefits of being active – like handling stress better, being in a better mood, having more energy, sleeping better at night?
- Do I use active forms of transportation whenever possible - like walking or biking to do a local errand?
- Do I get involved in community activities – like using local trails or participating in a charity walk?
- Do I use everyday chores as an opportunity for activity – for myself and my family?
- Am I trying to make activity a source of fun for my family?

Looking after *Body Image Issues*

Today's weight conscious society makes it difficult to have a positive body image.

Body image dissatisfaction among children and teens has become a serious problem. It increases the risk of not only developing an eating disorder, but also of becoming overweight or obese.

Might you be passing on your own body image concerns without meaning to? Check out these questions:

- Am I dissatisfied with my shape or size? Do I talk about this? Who do I talk to? Who can overhear?
 - Am I always on a diet or going on a diet? Who knows this?
 - Do I express guilt when I eat certain food?
 - Do I make negative comments about others' appearance?
 - Am I prejudiced against overweight children or adults? Do I think that they have made bad choices about what or how much they eat?
 - How many times have I said "Oh, you look great - have you lost weight?"
 - How many times have I associated the word "fat" with other words such as "stupid", "lazy", "dumb"?
 - How many times have I made the opposite association - "nice and skinny"?
- Children's Health Services Halton

PREVENT BODY IMAGE ISSUES BY:

- Focusing on your abilities, not just your appearance.
- Giving up the fantasy that weight loss will magically transform your life.
- Getting rid of the bathroom scales. Don't let a number control how you feel about yourself.
- Comparing your body to real people, such as your family, your neighbours and friends – not to media celebrities.
- Not allowing others to make critical remarks about your body – and replacing your own criticisms with self-affirmations.
- Making home a safe place from weight and shape teasing. Love your kids unconditionally no matter what their weight, shape or size.

Your efforts will help prevent body image issues in the next generation!

For more information about healthy eating, being active, and improving self esteem and body image for children, check out www.peel-obesity.ca.