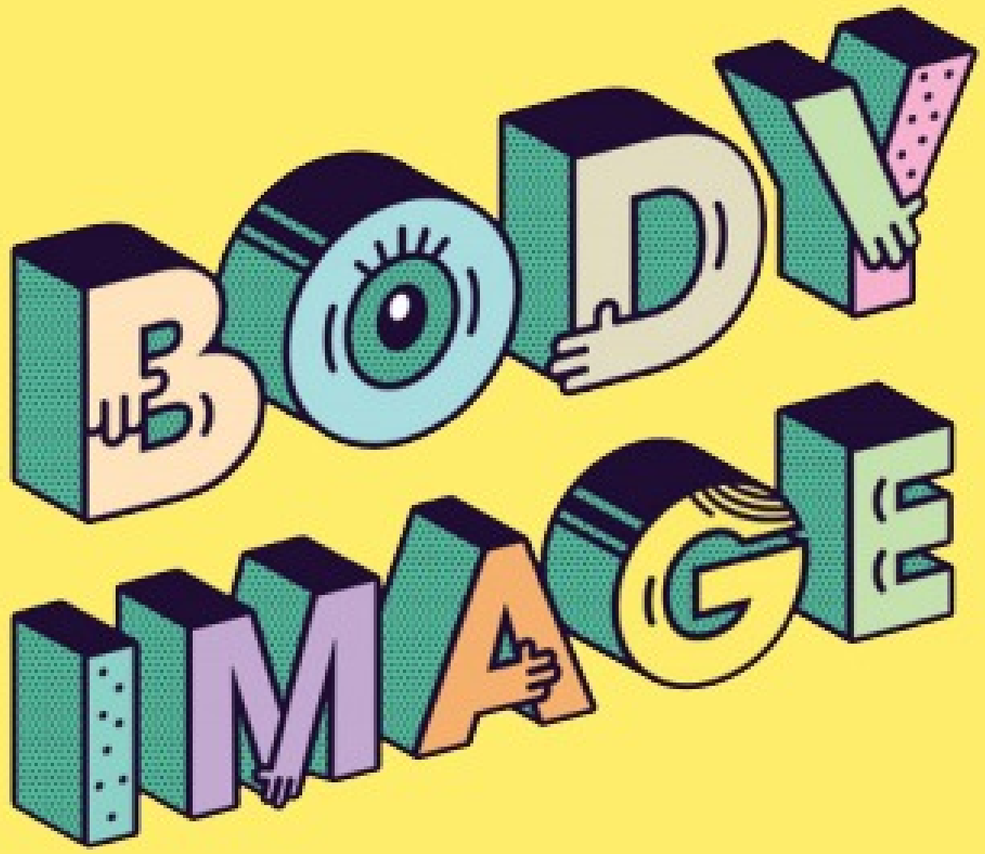
Mental Health Awareness Week 2019



Articles of body positivity by North East Lincolnshire's Young Reporters

YOUNG REPORTERS

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NHS North East Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group

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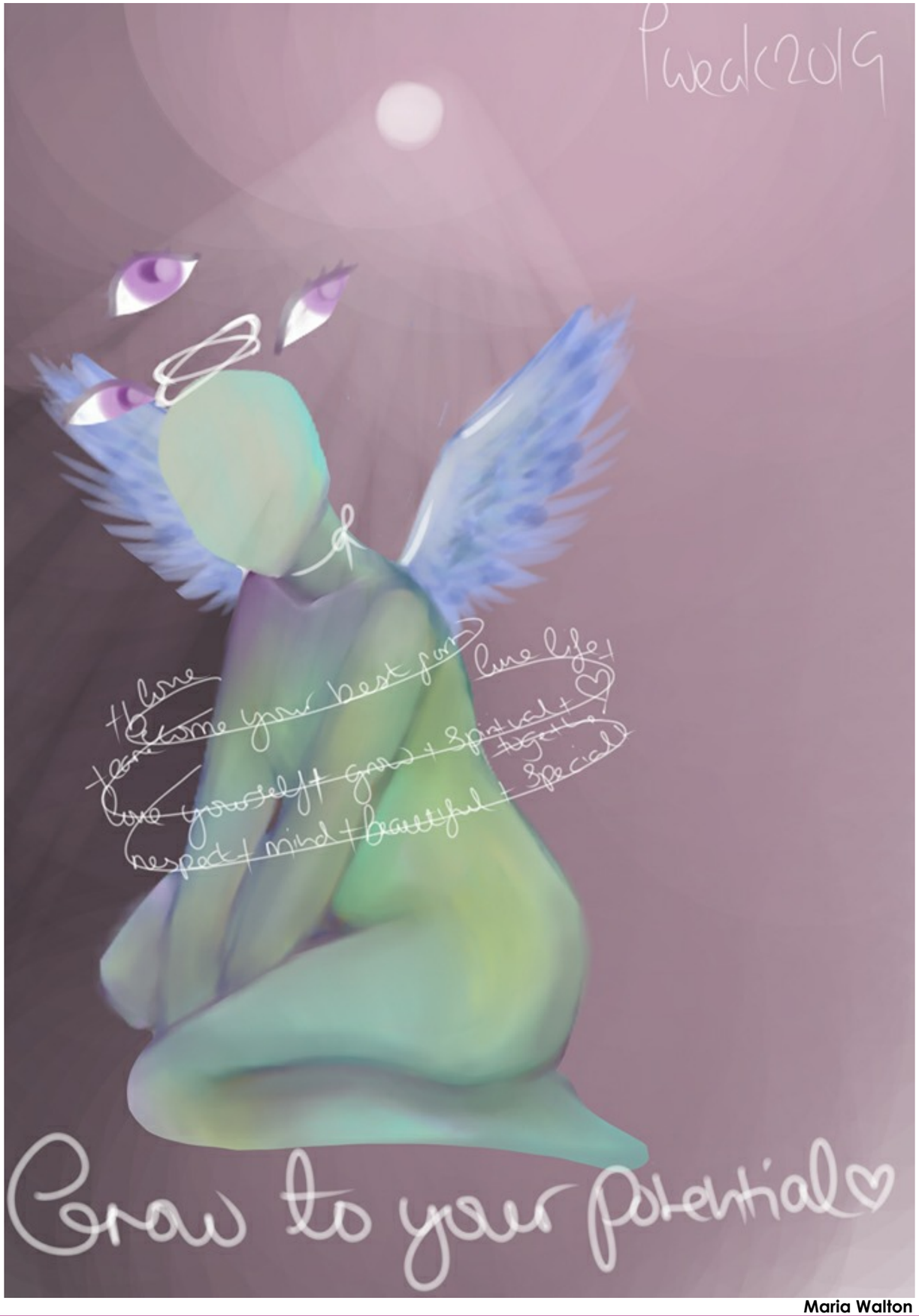


Maria Walton

Are you OK? keep your MIND well...

YOUNG REPORTERS

Mental Health Awareness Week takes place every year, and each year there is a theme to highlight specific issues. The theme for 2019 is body image, so to help raise awareness of this we have put together this booklet of body positive articles for children and young people. All articles included have been written by the Young Reporters group and young people from North East Lincolnshire and aim to highlight the challenges around body image and confidence which young people face growing up. Hopefully they will encourage you to love the skin you're in and remind you to #BeBodyPositive next time you look in the mirror!

Also included in the booklet are top tips for mental and emotional wellbeing, how to ask for help when you need it, and some sources of support.

Finally, Thank You to North East Lincolnshire's Young Reporters and the young people who submitted such great articles and pieces of art to help raise awareness of an important topic.

Definition of: *Beauty*

Sophie Read

Upon meeting someone new the first thing you notice is their attire: their clothes, their hair, their makeup, their shoes. All things that make up one's appearance. Statistics show that 64% of people said that the first thing they notice about someone is their attractiveness. Appearance is one of those things you can't just hide, unlike a messy room. It's out there in the open for everyone to see. It makes you vulnerable. As human beings we cannot help but feel weaknesses, it's part of our existence. However, stepping out into the world, when you're surrounded by anthropocentric views can't help but make you feel inadequate.

Beauty is defined as 'a combination of qualities, such as shape, colour, or form, that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight.' Beauty is such a complex concept. 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder' is an essential proverb, yet why do we pressure ourselves to look like others? This 'ideal' human being we have in our heads is based on our own insecurities. Why change something you like about yourself? Instead we feel the need to change our 'worst' features. The features that we see as 'ugly'. Society makes us believe that we have to be perfect. But these ideologies are unobtainable; how can we change our DNA. Plastic surgery is one thing, but how can the 90% of teenagers today who suffer with body insecurities do that? The fact is they can't.

This causes the thousands of teenagers who think this way to live unhealthily. 64% of children under the age of 13 have experienced dieting, even though they are not overweight. The perceptions of perfect bodies are spread all over the world and we are almost forced to believe that we should look and be a certain way. We shouldn't.

While researching beauty for this piece, I discovered that the main use of the word 'beauty' is referring to women. There is a common misconception in the media that only women experience body issues, however, in recent years it has been proved that men, also, suffer the hardships of conforming to one 'normal' perception of beautiful. Breaking the stigma that only women experience these issues is the start of the evolution of our perception of body image, which will inevitably help both men and women on their journey to body positivity.

Beauty is an abstract concept that drives our lives, whether we want it to or not. But because beauty is this conceptual ideal, my beautiful could be, and probably is, different to yours. So why does society want to put us in a box, to take away our individuality? Each scar, spot, mark, freckle, mole: each imperfection makes you, you. To be beautiful you have to be unique and, despite popular belief, being different is what makes you who you are, and no one can take your individuality away from you. Not society, no one.

It was once said that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' and that is totally true. We can't carry the old fashion views that we all have to look a certain way because, frankly, nobody should care what others think. Of course, we should regard our appearance, thus look and feel our best at all times because, at the end of the day, it is all about confidence and how we see ourselves.

However, for too long we have let the thoughts of others rule our lives and create the clouded perception of beauty we know today. But enough is enough. Together, our generation can change the stereotype of beauty.

Beauty isn't just skin deep. It is running through our veins this very moment. Personality, intelligence and sense of humour are just a few internal factors that make each and every of the 7,699,027,512 people on this earth beautiful in their own way. The things that make us different make us beautiful. So, what is beauty? Individuality.

We Are All Beautiful

"Oh they're just a moody teenager." That is a quote that I'm sure that you have heard, or even made yourself at some point. This might be true at times, but there is a reason for this negative demeanour, perceived or otherwise. The answer to this is hormones. Hormones are substances that exist as chemical messengers and carry out a variety of roles from regulating blood sugar to manage or energy level to affecting the emotions that you are feeling. While carrying out essential activities to allow us to function, they can also affect how we look and how we feel about just that.

Hormones affecting emotions towards our image is an idea that is currently being studied extensively and early conclusions suggests there is a larger impact on young people. A study at the University of Melbourne has seen a clear link over a study of over 1000 young people that, even from children from as young as eight years old, a heightened level of hormones can give a more negative perception of their body image from the individual themselves. Obviously at this time, you will be undergoing changes that causes this increase in hormone level and stress which can make our opinions of our own body image biased towards unfavourable.

So how do we obtain a positive body image if our own biology is actively working against it? The answer is once again hormones. As our emotions are partly controlled by hormones, having more positive emotions can considerably boost our self esteem and self confidence. Oxytocin, Dopamine and Serotonin look like three complicated science-y words but these are molecules that are moving around your body and make you feel better about yourself. Each has a slightly different role: Oxytocin helps us in social situations; Dopamine boosts our motivation, self confidence and satisfaction levels; and Serotonin helps our decision making. The combination of the optimal levels of these hormones can help us to have a positive opinion of ourselves. The best thing about these hormones: our activities can influence the levels of them. Food that are high in vitamins or even the scent of these foods can trigger an increase in these vital hormones level.

We can see that biological activities can affect our emotions towards ourselves (it's probably best I leave out the scientific details as words such as neurotransmitters are boring) but it cannot be denied that society plays a role in this, not always helpfully. We will often see news articles highlighting a celebrity's figure or another suggesting the latest "Mega huge weight loss in 5 minutes," (that may be a slight exaggeration but you see the point). These articles are designed to play on our own negative emotions into buying whatever they are selling. The former types of article are designed to present an unrealistic goal, and the second is to often use twisted scientific evidence that this fitness regime/diet/combination of the two will cure all your bad opinions of yourself.

So how do we gain a positive body image if both our own body and society are working against it? The answer is once again the same as the problem - society. For every negative article, there will be a positive counterpart which allows urges us to see the beauty in ourselves or an activist that is fighting for the societal narrative to follow loving and having confidence within ourselves with the aim we should all have a belief that we are beautiful. A leading figure in this area is Jameela Jamil, a British actress and presenter, who has her own movement titled "I Weigh" which focuses on recognising everything that we have in our life, physically, mentally, and socially, and the positive message that we can gain from them.

Body image, and gaining a positive body image, is undoubtedly a complex issue, as well as being a struggle at times. It can seem that there are factors that are pulling for the negative perception of yourself to become what you think about yourself. The truth is that this isn't the case and we need to use the positive influences we have as we all deserve to believe that we are beautiful.

Andrew Hill

LGBTQ+ & Eating Disorders

Ellie Cox

Harvey Fierstein once addressed the LGBTQ+ community with the advice to "accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself." and this clearly works to demonstrate how no matter who you are your life should only be dictated by you and that your identity is valid no matter the level of hate directed at you from the dark parts of other people's hearts - you are the writer of your own story. Members of the LGBTQ+ community face unique challenges that may put them at a higher risk of developing an eating disorder which in turn, affects the way they view their bodies. There are many potential factors that could lead to the development of an eating disorder and some factors are a lot closer to home for many sufferers.

Why does the teen boy in year 11 think that gay people are disgusting even though he's had a crush on his male best friend for the past few years? Well, it's because of the way his Dad reacts when he sees two women holding hands on the street. Although we cannot blame the family for the development of an eating disorder, we need to consider the impact of the morals of the family on our children's image of themselves. Gay males are thought to only represent 5% of the total male population but among males who have eating disorders, 42% identify as gay, these figures clearly present the idea that if you tell your children something they are is disgusting, it manifests into something a lot worse. If children grow up being told that hate is the only way forward and that there is something wrong with gay people, then they will live their lives believing it. Internalised negative messages and beliefs about oneself due to sexual orientation created by the conversations homophobic parents have around the dinner table or the comments your grandma makes when she sees two men kissing on the street, leads to the eating disorders we need to try so desperately to prevent because those comments and conversations are making these children believe that they are wrong, that the feelings their body creates so naturally of love towards someone of the same sex is shameful - you are telling them they are shameful . The gay kids that grow up in these families will be raised swallowing their shame at every family dinner, sitting in silence believing their very existence is immoral. These children will feel hate towards themselves and this internalised shame and guilt is what leads to the figures that show that LGBTQ+ individuals have some of the highest rates of mental illness and eating disorders compared to their heterosexual peers. Gay children who grow up in these families constantly live with the fear of rejection manifesting in their head and hearts, this fear and for many reality of rejection has been identified as a potential trigger for the development of an eating disorder. If someone tells you that you are 'wrong' or 'disgusting' or 'hated', remember that this will never be a reflection of you, it is always a reflection of the person who actively hates for their own gain - you are not defined by them.

Now, if you are a member of the LGBTQ+ community I bet that the supposed compliment "You don't look gay" has been thrown at you pretty frequently, even though to us, it is really not a compliment. Some people feel like they are "not gay enough" due to the images portrayed by the media of what 'gay' looks like. Well, I'm here to tell you that gay does not have a look, your identity is valid, no matter if you believe you look it or not. The feeling of inability to meet body image ideals within some aspects of the LGBTQ+ community has been found to raise the risk of a person developing an eating disorder, something we obviously aim to avoid. Research shows that a sense of connectedness to the gay community was related to fewer cases of eating disorders, which suggests that feeling connected to the gay community may have a protective effect against eating disorders. If you feel alone in this community, like no one understands you or gets how you feel or you just to want to share the soppy details about the girl you have a crush on, reach out. I promise you there is always someone somewhere willing to talk, speak out to someone, whether that be someone you trust in person or someone you know on social media - people accept you, because you are just as valid as anyone else. Some fall in love at 60, some say they knew they were gay at the age of five, but that does not matter. What I know for sure is: it is not a choice. Who you love, who you are attracted to, who you tell your deepest thoughts to, who you share your last chocolate biscuit with.

Love is the answer.

Learn to love. Teach to love. Share the love.

KEEP CALM AND LOVE YOUR GROWING BODY!

From the second you are born to your final minutes on Earth, your body is constantly changing. Whether you are a boy or a girl or however you see yourself, you will be affected. Do not think of adolescence as a fierce dragon, breathing fire at you. You must take into account that growing up is just helping you flourish into a mature, beautiful person. For others, they will gain extra weight, their hair will darken and they might receive a negative attitude towards school. For others, they might lose a significant amount of weight, get really sweaty when participating in sport and grow hair in all sorts of places. Everybody has their own different challenge to face, but we must help each other to overcome our fears.

In Valerie Hannah's 2012 article for The Guardian, she stated: "Girls as young as five routinely worry about their weight and appearance; while half of girls and a third of boys aged 14 have been on a diet to change their body shape, according to a recent report." Isn't this outrageous? At five, you should be having fun with Lego, princess castles, action figures, learning how to read, write and count. Not worrying about what you look like! Nobody at any age should be feeling these things in a perfect world. Future generations shouldn't look up to the unimpeachable couple on the yacht in bikinis or the judge on a TV show who has had plastic surgery to give himself a ten-pack!! They should be looking up to their favourite football player, who has incredible skills. Or they could look up to their favourite singer, who can hit the high notes like nobody else. Or a baker who bakes the best cakes in the whole world! Who are you and what do you want your children to see in the world?

I would like to introduce some of my problems involving the dreaded puberty. Recently, I have become more and more sweaty; therefore, I have to wear shorts (or leggings) every day or else I will feel horrible and clammy! In addition, I struggle with my curly hair and my body image in general. Wouldn't it be nice if we could just embrace our transforming bodies? The result of our lack of confidence can lead to photo shopped billboards, magazine pages and other unrealistic images everywhere.

On YouTube, you can find the Dove series of Body Evolution videos, showing models before and after photoshopping. It is a shocking transformation from an ordinary person to an impossible version of a human, which in some cases, ends up resembling an alien! Think carefully about the influence on you of these fake images in the media of perfection. Do you realise that nobody will have teeth as white as that lady on the dentist advert or that nobody will have skin as shiny as that lady on the jewellery advert or that nobody will ever have a six-pack like the man in the aftershave advert? Do you realise that you are normal and yet unique in your own way? Cherish your body and don't let those stupid images of alien-like '*perfection*' get to you.

During this tough time, just remember to have fun! Whether you are watching a movie, skydiving, building sand castles or whatever. Enjoy your youth and appreciate the time you have left of it, making every moment count. Stressing over periods, impressing your loved ones, going on a diet, trying so hard to get a six-pack or showing off are just a small number of things that are not worth it. Sometimes, your body will give you a kick and demand you to relax. There are many ways to do this. Some people listen to meditation music in comfortable positions. Others find a good book to dive into with some chocolate and a cuppa. It is your decision.

For support and advice on a variety of subjects, such as anger, building confidence/self-esteem, asking an adult for help etc. visit www.childline.co.uk. There are games linking with these topics and much more! Plus, you can read letters or write your own to *Sam*, who will read yours and hopefully reply back to you. This can be accessed on the Childline website (see link above) and I myself have read some of the previous articles that young people have written. Writing or drawing your negative feelings can help you overcome them. Remember, keep calm and love your growing body!

Poppy Porter-Mascull

You Can't See Me But I'm Still Here

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall who's the baddest of them all'. A quote from the famous Disney film 'The decedents but sounds to me like one of those insecure days looking in the mirror; being unhappy with your body, right? In Grimsby you may call this a face for in and a face for out for example, in the house you might whip your bra off, put some sloppy shorts on and reveal your spots; when you leave the house the bra goes back on, high wasted jeans suck in that belly fat and 'No 7 full coverage foundation' hits every lump, bump and crack in sight.

Instagram doesn't cater for the in between its being slim or stereo-typically you aren't the perfect man or woman. Building pressure on the young to change their bodies even though their doctors have told them they have a healthy weight.

They say social media is the 2nd main platform of education after school. Previously I have scrolled through Instagram reading comments of young men and woman being praised for their slim figure causing people who haven't got the so called 'skinny figure' to hide it due to feeling frightened at what sort of response they would receive showing their body on social media. It's things like this that's led to 40 to 70% of girls being dissatisfied with two or more parts of their body by middle school. Nobody considered 'the in-betweens'. One woman felt so unhappy with her body that to reach the desired size 8 she had to live on raw vegetables and black coffee for 6 months. What sort of education is this teaching our youngsters?

It's almost become a necessity to wear high wasted jeans and although sometimes it's genuinely for fashion some wouldn't dare let their belly show due to fear of being judged. How can this small amount of the population judge parts of other people's bodies for not being slim and trim when you don't know what's going on in their life? What happened to personality over preference?

It's become a reoccurring part of 21st century Britain to judge men and women if they have a bald head. It's widely assumed that having a bald head is a sign of ageing. You may think they have no glamour, you would tell your 19-year-old to stay away from a bald guy she's interested in and tell her he's too old for her, You'd tell your 16 year old to stay away from a bald headed man because, he may be a 'perv'.

That person could have Alopecia: The general loss of hair in all places where it should grow. This person could be going through chemotherapy (a cancer treatment causing you to lose hair) 'pressure, pushing down on you pressing down on me'. Oh yes pressure is indeed pushing people to wear wigs, pressing down on them to change their natural look that they may have through no fault of their own.

Thank you to the woman who has grown her monobrow and is publicly proud of it because, I think you're beautiful. However, it's yet again another triumph rather than a trend and monobrows are supposedly inappropriate and mean you're scruffy. 11-year-old me can relate who was extremely disorganised and laid back. Why would I ask somebody if they liked my eyebrows to receive the response 'ewww you have a monobrow'?

Yes, sometimes our minds cannot help but have opinions and notice people's differences, but we can respect them. Respect those who have the courage to let their bodies be free. Never cover up your scars hunny, let them breathe as it's the only way to let your true self breathe.

"Everybody has down days hunny its part of growing up". " Think of the poorly children in Africa I'm sure they wouldn't moan about feeling a little bit sad". In 2010 the equality act was passed making it illegal to socially discriminate against people with mental health issues, but does this stop opinions that mental illness isn't serious compared to physical illness? Picture staring at a tinny, faded, nonresponding figure sat in bed unable to work, who doesn't socialise with friends, who doesn't do things as simple as their own shopping (things they used to do). That's Depression. Assuming there's nothing wrong is simple because, you can't visually see the pain they're in like you could with Arthritis or somebody paralyzed. Isn't your head attached to your body too?

Often enough mental illness is linked to how we view our bodies particularly, depression has been triggered by problems such as obesity, Alopecia, chronic illnesses e.g. HIV, Acne and generally being dissatisfied with your body. It's factual that if you're obese there's increased risks of you becoming depressed similarly if you're depressed there's increased risks of you becoming obese. Unfortunately for people suffering with depression they may have elevated levels of cortisol which is the hormone associated with stress which can lead to increased weight gain. In severest cases obesity could prevent people working as they may barely be able to carry their own body weight. It could prevent them from being 'socially active and doing physical activities such as playing sport with their children. They may just genuinely be ashamed to go out in public with their body. Now can't you see why people can't just get on with it? Is that physical enough for you?

You may think people suffering with severe mental health issues should still be able to work. "well it's not as if you're in constant pain you can still work". Think of severe levels of social anxiety/ severe levels of stress disorder. How would you like to go to your normal job on 1 hours sleep due to lying awake panicking about going to work, fearing interacting with customers, fearing interacting with other staff and fearing offending somebody? Somebody you know may feel like this: on edge, trapped and weary of everything. In my eyes they're mentally paralyzed. Trapped between their pain and fear of people judging them thinking their pain is nothing compared to a physical illness? People must understand we have to be inside our heads all our life whereas broken legs can heal. Sometimes you don't always have to see things to know they're there. Remember inside someone's head is still part of their body so it's still physical.

Charlotte Freeman

Friendship

As mental health awareness week comes around, I think it's a key time to raise the importance of friendships and the sort of positive impact they can have. Being there for somebody, offering a shoulder to cry on, to just listen, support etc. The list goes on. Checking in on somebody, letting them know you're there can do a whole world of difference. Sometimes we're just bursting to tell somebody something that's eating us up inside, and all we need is somebody to say they'll talk or listen. And suddenly that weight can be lifted off our shoulders. Remind yourself of the good talking about things can do, having a good rant or cry or chat to someone, as difficult as it may originally seem, releases so much built up stress and emotion. Having the option to discuss things with someone, get advice, receive comfort and just have somebody listen and show they care; helps us get through things. Don't feel the need to keep everything to yourself, letting that pressure build up, let it keep bothering you and constantly be in the back of your mind. Talking about things is a perfectly normal, respectable and often quite brave thing to do! But it's usually worthwhile, as well as being a way of comfort, it helps make a friendship stronger; building up trust and understand each other better.

So I'm asking you to reach out to your friends, look out for one another and let them know that you're there. Even just knowing that can be reassuring to somebody. Make sure to catch on to things they might hint at or mention, for all you know it could be their subtly cry for help whether it of been intentional or not. If you're worried about a friend, try talk to them and help in any way you can and how they might want you too.

Words are powerful things, they can go a long way. Be the friend you would want, look out for each other, listen to each other, be there through the good and the bad.

Rachel Coo

Living With Depression

Alex Greenwood

I feel so numb, pillows muffle my cries as night fades to day.
Tears are left to dry and the stinging in my arms goes away.
I thought I was getting better, the voices were quieter and life was brighter.
I speak to the sky, hope that someone is there listening
I whisper to the wind, let secrets seep from my mouth as guilt floods my senses.
I'm carrying a sadness nestled in my soul, an anger in my throat, a weight of a world I did not want to carry.
I don't want to live yet I don't want to die.
Life is so grey as I watch days go by.
I don't think I have anymore tears left to cry.

Acne Is Normal

Charlotte Low

Around 80% of 11-30 year olds in the U.K have acne. That is a huge statistic, considering the unawareness that people (especially teens) have, and the bullying that comes along with it. Acne is most common in teenagers (due to the increase in testosterne levels), and while their hormones are rampaging, their bodies are dramatically changing, and adding to the mix is the uncomfortableness and consciousness that comes with bad skin. There is no denying that puberty is an extremely difficult time, and there is a huge negative stigma around acne and those with skin problems. As I said, there is such an enormous lack of understanding within our society. A misunderstanding, and also an intolerable approach to 'imperfectionism'.

According to the NHS website:

"Acne is a common skin condition that affects most people at some point. It causes spots, oily skin and sometimes skin that's hot or painful to touch."

It also says that the most common places to develop acne are the face, the back and the chest.

Having something on your face, permanently, and being unable to do anything about it is a horrible concept. Adding to that, the pain and insecurity that acne can enforce, there's no wonder why so many young people are conscious about the way they look. Young people are constantly being bombarded with unrealistic, photo shopped images by the media, and it is a rarity that celebrities and media stars are ever seen without makeup, or with any blemishes on show. Films with teenage characters are hardly ever played by real teenagers - once again reinforcing the unrealistic beauty standards that are so engrained into our minds. Making us think that our natural skin is wrong, ugly, disfigured, broken. And it isn't just with skin either. Every second of every minute the media is producing more toxic ideals which force us to believe that we are abnormal and imperfect. It is inescapable, and it is extremely crucial that we are aware of it and the damage that it can cause to the perceptions of our and also other peoples' bodies.

It is important to realise that acne can be controlled with different types of medication. Although not always the case, doctors can refer you to dermatologists if you (and they) feel your skin is unbearably bad. There are plenty of topical solutions you can buy over the counter and also that doctors can prescribe, and lots of online advice. It is important however, to remember not to bombard your skin with endless amounts of products. Keeping your skin natural is important, and trying to avoid wearing makeup (non-comedogenic when you are) will also help too. You must remember that clear skin will not be immediate. Treating your acne will take time and potentially lots of different medications, along with lots of different side effects.

It is important to talk about acne and other skin conditions, because it normalizes it. We can only blame the media for so much, because some of the stigma we have to blame on ourselves. Let's start to normalise our spots and our blemishes - normalize OURSELVES. We must love ourselves, for the sake of not only our own mental health, but others too.

Love yourself.

Changing The Idea Of Perfect

Beth Downes

The adjective perfect is defined as 'attaining all the required or desirable qualities' but think carefully about this, desirable could mean completely different things for everyone. Some people prefer blue eyes, some brown, others favour tall partners or short. We don't share the same desires so why do we share the same definition of perfect?

Ever since humans evolved, we adapted our looks to suit the desires of others. Humans were ruled by - Fixed or Fake. The social idea that if something isn't 'perfect' it should be changed to fit into the cruel expectations of what is perceived to be beautiful. Similarly, if something defies the expectations of normal standards of beauty, it is deemed as fake. The ruling of fixed or fake still exists today, with a surge of people wanting plastic surgery. Personally I believe the media has a key role in changing society's views about body image. I was recently hooked last summer by the reality TV show Love Island where young people aim to find their future partner through a series of challenges. But after watching the show several times, I began to realize what was wrong with it. The contestants were predominantly muscular, tattooed men paired up with bronzed, bikini-clad women. It couldn't be more far from reality. Similarly, Victoria's Secret hit the headlines for featuring their first plus-sized model but what was the problem? Barbara Palvin was a size 8, despite the average female being size 14.

I was too affected by body image, due to the unrealistic standards set by the media, but in a different way than you would have thought. Make-up.

My love for make-up started from an early age when I found enjoyment in brushing my cheekbones with blush and smearing my mother's red lipstick on. Still today I relish the feel of purchasing new cosmetics that have just stocked the shelves.

Growing older, I noticed that the media and people around me, saw make-up as an embellishment, it became a personal battle with the contrasting ideas held by society. I constantly woke up, debating whether to put make-up on knowing that I would either feel better because of it or fear getting judged by people who walked past me down the street. Many people call girls/boys who wear too much makeup 'insecure' or a 'push-over' and say that you look better without it too. I for one disagree.

Moreover, people who decide not to wear makeup are told to wear it in order to comply with society's beauty standards. If people wear it in front of the cameras on TV, why do others receive looks down the street on a daily basis? Women and men who choose to wear makeup are the same as everyone else, we all have faces. Why does it make the news when we dare to bare it? Make-up is not just an embellishment, it's our persona, an expression of art. The flick of black eyeliner or smudge of gold eyeshadow give us strength, allowing us confidence that we may not have had or felt before.

The ancient saying ' when we look better - we feel better' isn't always true - so change it around. Society is consequently changing it's views more frequent than ever that's why I decided to change my idea of perfect. Your vision of perfect should not be contorted by society's or the media's close-minded ideas. Your idea of perfect is simply YOU. Whether you believe it or not - perfect is that blemish on your cheek, that annoying acne that seems to never leave, the way the dimples in your cheeks display when a smile illuminates the glint in your eyes. We're all human, we all have flaws, insecurities but you don't need to change them. Perfect needs to be changed. Your looks should not be influenced by the belittling opinions from others, just because they have nothing better to do. After all, the most important relationship we're ever going to have is the one we have with ourselves.

Act Confident and no one will question you!

In a world where we're constantly being made to feel like we should look a certain way, it's time we started feeling confident in our own skin. We spend so many precious years chasing after what we believe to be the 'perfect body' when really we need to take a step back and learn to love the bodies we have right now. The mentality that, "If I lose X amount of pounds then I'll be happy" can cause so much harm to your self-esteem. Instead of learning to love your body you're constantly making yourself feel like you're not good enough the way you are. I know that personally, there are many photos of myself where at the time I would have thought I looked fat, however looking back now I realise how far from the truth that was. For most of us, even when we get to our goal weight, we still seem to find flaws in ourselves.

This is a topic which is so relevant at the minute with summer just around the corner and many of us are starting to panic about our bodies being not so bikini ready. Even more so than ever, our TVs are dominated by shows about crash diets and Love Island has returned with its slender girls and muscular boys. With so much appearance focused media constantly in our faces, it is inevitable that we will start to compare ourselves to other people and lose confidence in our own bodies.

As the age old saying goes, 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. This means that beauty cannot be measured, especially not through the 'fitspo' pictures you see on Instragram or the bodies you see plastered over the cover of magazines. How you see yourself is rarely how others see you. Everybody has a different view of what beauty really is, some people see beauty in curves, some see it in slender figures and some see it in muscles. Beauty is unique to everyone and if we learn to accept that everybody's body shape is different and that sometimes, no matter how hard you workout or how 'clean' you eat, the body you are aiming for is unrealistic as it is a completely different body shape to your own. We should learn to love the body shape we've been given, instead of obsessing over a different one.

It is so important to remember that to have a healthy mind you must stop viewing food as the 'enemy'. Food is fuel. Food is the basis of many social interactions. Food brings us comfort. Food isn't good or bad. Food is what keeps our bodies running, walking, sleeping, talking. All of these different ways that food affects our lives makes it so important that we enjoy food and relish in its sweetness, saltiness and spice. Because the reality is that food brings us together as humans. From India, to Australia, to Britain, we are all bonded together through our need and passion for food. Ultimately, having a healthy relationship with food is the very basis of a healthy relationship with your body and you should not put yourself down for enjoying the food you love. However, it is important to remember to balance your diet and of course to indulge at times, but to also try to eat food that your body thrives from.

There is a huge amount of stigma about your body type and your body weight linking to how confident you are. When we see pictures of people who are slim we often think that they must be so confident and happy with their bodies and when we see people who are overweight we often assume that they lack confidence, however, the two do not correlate. We need to stop judging people based on what we see but we also need to try to be confident in the bodies we have. If you embrace the body which you have and try to feel more confident in who you are as a person then you will start to feel a lot more comfortable in your own skin. Act confident and no-one will question you!

Elise Milner

Taking care of yourself

There are little things you can do every day to help help you look after yourself. Evidence shows that the 5 ways to wellbeing featured on this page can help us all to improve our mental wellbeing. Why not try something different today to help you fulfil the 5 ways to wellbeing.

Social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing. As humans we have the need to feel close to and valued by others. Connect with those around you. Try speaking to someone rather than sending a text, speak to someone new, or ask someone how their day was and really listen to what they tell you.

Taking notice of what's going on around you can broaden awareness and positively change the way you feel. Some may know this as 'mindfulness'. Take time to enjoy the moment and your environment. Why not have a 'clear the clutter' day, take a different route home or get a plant for your room.

Physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety and is essential for promoting wellbeing. You don't need to do an intense workout to feel the benefits, you may just go for a walk, get off the bus a stop or two early, or take the stairs instead of the lift.

Learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a confidence boost. Why not find out how to cook a new meal, learn how to play an instrument, or even learn how to fix your bike.

A study found that people who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a kind word, or a thank you. Give someone your time and presence.

Asking for help

We all need a bit of help sometimes, but it can be hard to know how, or even who to ask. We've put together some helpful tips you might want to consider if you're struggling with asking someone for help with your mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Who

Decide who is the best person to talk to. Who would you feel most comfortable talking to? This might be a family member, a friend, your doctor, or a helpline. Pick your time and place. Choose a good time and somewhere you feel comfortable, so you can talk uninterrupted in a relaxed environment.

Planning

Before you talk to someone about your feelings, it can help if you plan what you want to say. You might want to make some notes of the things you want to say so you remember to include them in your conversation.

Expectations

What outcome do you want? Do you simply want to be listened to? Would you like more practical or emotional support? It's ok if you don't know, but it can help to think about what you would like to achieve.

Be prepared for different reactions, a doctor or other expert will ask you lots of questions. Someone who's close to you may not quite know how to react at first, so give them a moment; they might not be expecting what you're telling them.

Looking for help?

Look no further! These are useful websites and helplines run by experts who are here to help you and provide confidential support to help you.

Kooth - www.kooth.com
Online counselling available 12pm-10pm Mon-Fri, 6pm-10pm Sat-Sun. Peer forums and articles also available online.

School Nurse Text Service
11-19 years old can text the school nurse, who offers confidential advice and support on many topics, including self harm.
Text: 07507 331620

Young Minds - www.youngminds.org.uk
Mental health support and info. Crisis Text Messenger: 85258
Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544 Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm

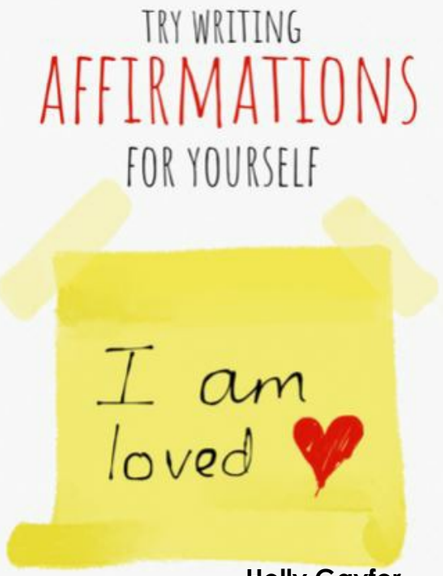
Child Line - www.childline.org.uk
Get support online or on the phone any time. Helpline: 0800 1111

Beat Eating Disorders - www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk
Support available via online support groups, 1 to 1 webchat or youth helpline.
Helpline: 0808 801 0711

Samaritans - www.samaritans.org
Confidential support for anyone in crisis. Helpline: 116 123
Email: jo@samaritans.org

Mind - www.mind.org.uk
Provides mental help support and information. Infoline: 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri 9am-6pm) Text: 86463 Email: info@mind.org.uk

Alumina - www.selfharm.co.uk/alumina
Free and confidential online self harm support for yo



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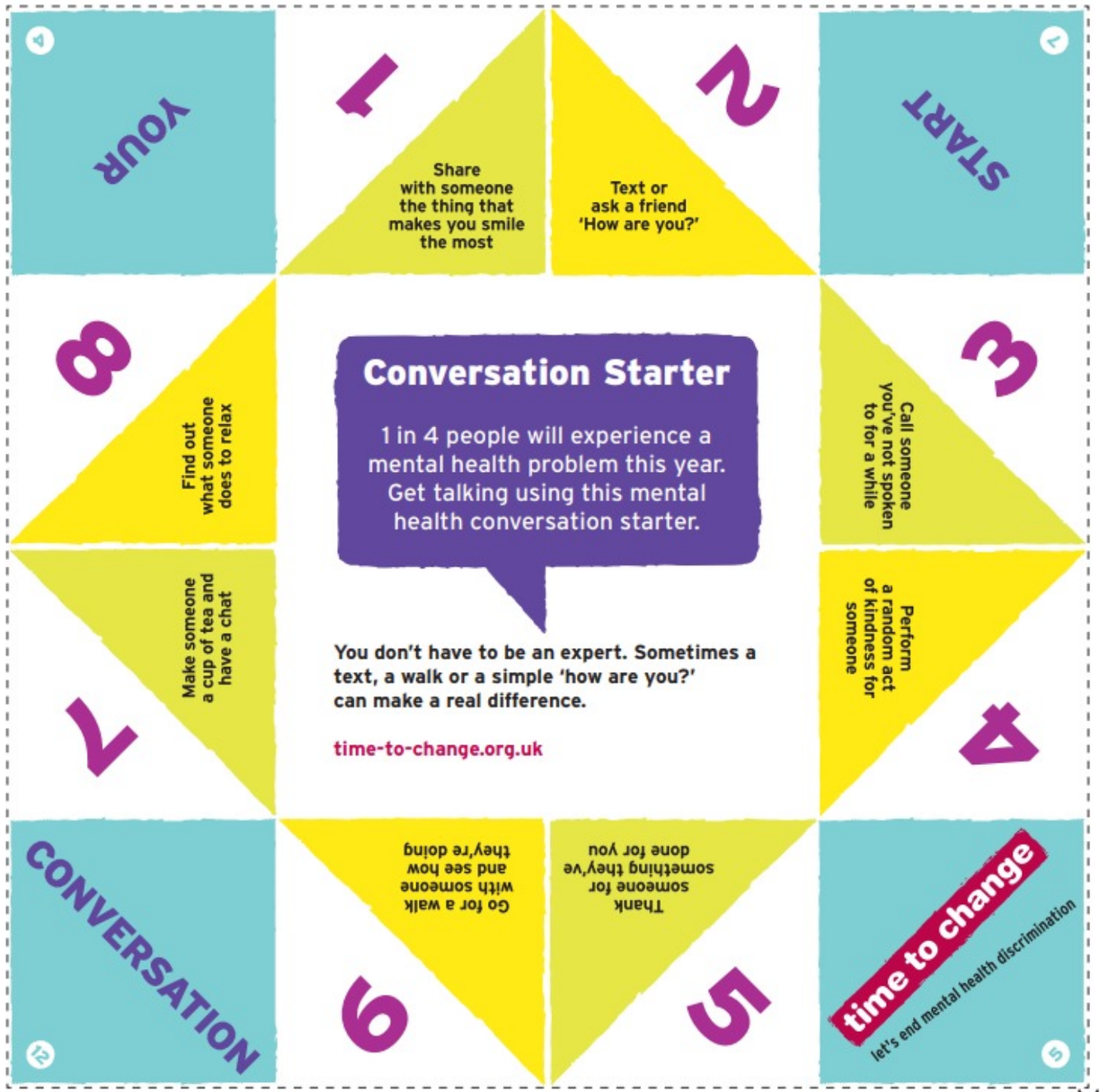
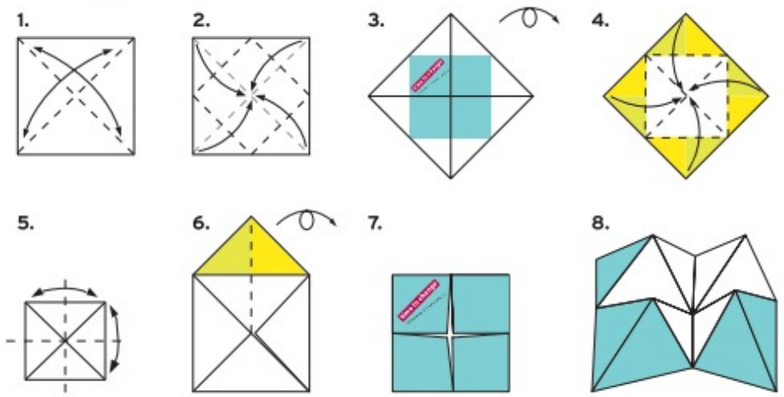


Folding Instructions



How to start a conversation

- Pick a circled number and open in alternate directions that amount of times
- Pick a purple number and open alternately that amount of times
- Pick your final number, open flap and start your conversation
- Make sure you log your chat on the interactive map on **time-to-change.org.uk**