

How to talk to your kids about weight and health

It is normal to think about your child's weight when you think about their health. The way we talk to kids about their bodies is important. Kids can come in all shapes and sizes and be healthy.

Why is it important?

Even young kids can feel bad about their body shape and size. This can affect their confidence. It can lead to problems with eating, like eating way past feeling full or not eating enough to grow. It also causes a lot of stress.

Instead of...



Try...



Why

Talking about your child's weight:

"You've lost weight—good job!"

"You're gaining too much weight."

Focusing on your child's looks:

"You're so pretty!"

Talking about what their bodies can do:

"Our legs help us run around all day."



Complimenting kids on features that are not their looks:

"You're so good at soccer!"

"You are working so hard in school."



Weight is not something we can control easily. Helping kids appreciate the cool things their bodies can do will help them feel more confident.

This helps kids know that they are worth more than the way their bodies look. It will help them feel good about their skills and abilities.



Instead of...

Saying bad things about your own body in front of kids:

"I hate the way my stomach looks."

Setting weight loss goals for your child:

"You have to lose weight to be healthy."

"I don't want you to gain any more weight."

Eating less because of weight:

"You can't have more because the doctor said you're overweight."

Try...

Reminding kids that bodies come in all shapes and sizes:

"Some people are big and some are small. We're all different and that's a good thing"

Setting goals as a family that focus on healthy behaviors:

"Let's take daily walks as a family."

"Let's try to eat more colorful veggies at dinner this week."



Focusing on how their bodies feel before and after eating:

"Are you hungry? How do you know?"

"What does your body feel like when it's full?"

Why

Kids listen to us and copy our behavior. They will learn how to feel about their own bodies by watching us.

This makes healthy habits fun instead of a punishment or chore.

Kids are born knowing when to stop and start eating. When we connect to our body's signals, it's easier to eat the right amount. When we make rules about food, it makes it harder to stop eating.