Maintaining Body Positivity during the Summer Months

Sinead Murphy July 31, 2023

What comes to mind when you think of summer?

For many people, the sunny season brings thoughts of blue skies, balmy evenings, and BBQs in the garden. It's a time of excitement and vibrancy where our moods are expected to match the brightness of the baking summer sun.

For others, however, summer brings with it a sense of stress. That's because the long hot days require a very different wardrobe than the one we got comfortable with over winter. It means short sleeves and bare legs. It means showing skin. It means casting away the comforting feeling of fabric concealing our form.

When we consider the number of people affected by body confidence issues, it's hardly surprising that many of us dread the start of summer. [Research](#) from The Mental Health Foundation has found that:

- 1 in 5 UK adults have felt shame because of their body image

- 19% of UK adults have felt disgusted by their body image

- One in eight adults have experienced suicidal thoughts due to concerns about their body image

When it comes to the factors that cause body confidence issues, 21% said the images used in advertising have contributed to their low self-image. 22% of adults and 40% of teenagers admitted that unattainable beauty standards on social media have led them to worry about their own appearance.

Because everyone has the right to feel comfortable in their own skin, we wanted to give you six quick tips to strengthen your self-image during summer. Don't worry – there won't be any talk of getting your body 'beach-ready' because frankly, it already is. Instead, we want you to focus on introducing small, healthy habits that will help you feel better in your body, and more at peace in your mind.

1. Refresh Your Social Feed

It's no secret that the airbrushed images we see on social media can take a toll on our mental health. Perfect bodies going about their perfect lives without a wrinkle or roll in sight. But just as you have the freedom to follow whoever you please, you also have the freedom to unfollow accounts that don't bring you happiness.

If you find that you're constantly comparing yourself to social media connections and fretting that you don't measure up, it's time for a tidy up. Take a look through your follow list and remove any accounts that make you feel jealous, insecure, sad, or lonely. Replace them with people who advocate for body positivity, make you laugh, or give you an uplifting feeling when you see their posts.

2. Practice Daily Affirmations

We're all guilty of being unkind to ourselves when we look in the mirror. Not least when we have to swap our comfortable winter clothes for skimpier summer styles. However, negative self-talk can feed feelings of anxiety and depression and ultimately contribute to lower levels of self-esteem. Words can hurt – especially when they're coming from within.

Instead of being critical towards yourself when you see your reflection, try repeating positive affirmations instead. You can use one affirmation or multiple - just make sure you recite them at least three times in an empowered, confident tone. Let the words sink in and really try to believe them. After a while, you should find your behaviour and thinking patterns changing for the better.

Examples of positive affirmations include:

- "I am at peace with myself"

- "I am a worthy of love and acceptance"

- "I value who I am"

- "I deserve happiness"

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3. Find Your Clothing Comfort Zone

From ultra-sheer fabrics to the revival of *really* low-rise jeans, fashion is never short of a current fad. But just because you're seeing a certain trend everywhere doesn't mean that everyone will feel comfortable in those clothes.

Rather than feeling pressured to conform to trends, it's much more beneficial to dress for your body type. Find the styles and fabrics that complement your personality and make you feel at peace instead of clothes that are in fashion but make you feel self-conscious. Opt for colours that lift your mood and swimwear that suits your shape. Dress for comfort and function. And remember: not every style was made to suit every body, and that's OK.

4. Don't Focus on Weight Loss

While many of us equate getting 'summer-ready' with weight loss, a far better way to measure personal success is by boosting your fitness. Instead of fixating on the numbers on the scale (which can fluctuate daily and cause us to develop unhealthy responses), concentrate on increasing your physical activity, eating nourishing foods, and drinking plenty of water.

You should begin to notice that these healthy lifestyle choices make you feel better from within, which in turn will help to boost your self-worth and sense of confidence during summer and beyond.

5. Spend Some Time on Self-Care

Self-care is all about being kind and compassionate to yourself. It's about taking little moments in the day to do things that lift your mood and make you feel cared for. Whether that's taking a warm bath, going for a walk, or practicing a hobby you're passionate about, self-care helps to build self-worth and encourages us to hold ourselves in higher regard.

6. Consider who you are outside of your body

It can be easy to pin all your self-esteem on how you look. But it's important to remind ourselves who we are and what we offer on a deeper level. Rather than obsessing over your physical appearance, try to think about what else makes you worthy. Perhaps you're a really good listener. Maybe you have the ability to make people laugh. These qualities should be celebrated and given as much – if not more – importance than how you look or how you dress.

We hope these tips have been helpful in reframing your thinking this summer. We hope they have given you a different way to measure your self-worth and feel more content from within. Now get out there and embrace the season just like you deserve.

Further Support

If your employer offers Vivup's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), there are lots of useful resources and downloadable workbooks to help you deal with body confidence issues. You can also access a 24-hour telephone helpline for responsive, confidential, and totally independent advice should you or a colleague need mental health support.