CHOOSE YOUR MINDSET

self image is key to becoming the best version of our selves

Youth Employees from left to right: Jentri Price, Rileyanne Hawpe, Mia Nanita, Rylee Gellner, Kennedy Maturino , Braley Hix *Not Pictured: Addi Price*

What is Self Image

According to the National Organization for Women, "50 percent of teens are "self- conscious" about their bodies; 26 percent report being "dissatisfied". By the age of 60, 28 percent of women feel dissatisfied and self conscious about their bodies. Struggling with self image, believing they are not good enough, criticizing their looks, personality, performance, etc. More commonly a girl's self esteem is related to how she views her body shape, weight, or physical appearance. Self image is the personal view someone has of themselves, it describes how someone sees themselves as a person, their characteristics, physical appearance, and mental health. Self image can be harmed from an abusive atmosphere, a critical role model in one's life, the need for control in life, or other sorts of mental trauma.

Why self image is important

Self image is important because it determines how one thinks or feels about themselves which then reflects on how one interacts with those around them. Someone with a low self esteem or low self image, may struggle socially due to having a difficult time setting boundaries. They may experience guilt or fear that people will judge them if they try to establish a boundary. This is because people who lack self awareness and esteem struggle to develop an understanding of their own needs, and if your needs are not met, you can not effectively connect, pursue, or create a healthy relationship with others. Having an unhealthy relationship with those around you affects one's feeling of acceptance. As Licensed Clinical Therapist, Jennifer Price's notes, "it's in our human nature to need acceptance and belonging, it's a basic need, like oxygen and food." without feeling acceptance, it decreases someone's mental health, increases want for perfectionism, and harms our connections with others. This all harms someone's sense of self worth, as they will lack a sense of belonging, and begin developing negative self thoughts. On the other hand, someone with a healthy self esteem knows their self worth, blocks out the opinions of others, and loves themself before they love others. WNBA player, Caitlin Clark, describes how she handles the harsh opinions of others, explaining how "To [her] the only opinions that I'm concerned with are my teammates, my coaches, my family, the people that I want to make proud of every single day." Remind yourself that what truly matters is not the opinions of others but the opinions of those who love you and truly want the best for you. In order to build your self- esteem and image, you must understand that the only opinions that you should truly care about are yours and those who surround you with love.

Why you are enough

Many people, especially teenage girls, strive for perfection, due to the fear of failure, feeling unworthy, having low self-esteem, etc. To challenge your fear of failure one must identify the forces behind one's need for perfection, and work on understanding why failure helps one grow. Don't get down or give up on failing, instead remind yourself that to succeed you must fail, it's how you learn and grow. Failure isn't bad, how you learn and bounce back from failure is what truly matters. As burlesque dancer, Dita Von Tesse, explains, "You can be the ripest, juiciest peach in the world and there will still be someone who hates peaches." Just like how you can not make everyone happy or like you, you can not be perfect, we are humans who all make mistakes. It's a part of our human nature to make mistakes, it challenges our brain and physical limits as mistakes push us to strive for more. You are enough because things like small victories, skills, talents, and your existence make you worthy. Progress is not perfection so do not strive for perfection. Instead, focus on small positive changes over time. You are worthy, remind yourself you are worthy of love, respect, and happiness just the way you are.

Tips on overcoming negative self image

It takes time, but you can overcome negative self image and create a healthy image of yourself. For example, try writing down the negative things you tell yourself, and once you write it down, try your best to leave it in writing and out of your mind. Writing affirmations daily, surrounding yourself with positive people, and doing things that make you happy and feel good about yourself help you build your self-esteem. When you do good, feel loved, or experience happiness, your body releases dopamine, which, in simple terms, is the feel-good chemical in your brain. When your brain releases dopamine, you feel pleased, building your self-confidence. When you are experiencing negative thoughts, challenge the credibility of the negativity and ask if those thoughts are true or if you are being hard on yourself. Often, you will realize that you are being too hard on yourself and that you have created a habit of negative thoughts. When you experience this, remind yourself that you are worthy and loved, and how you look, act, or perceive yourself does not determine your value. As teenager Mia Nanita describes, "People can criticize you, and that's okay because they do not decide how you see yourself." Changing your mentality will change so much about your daily life and your overall mental and physical health. What truly matters is that you are happy. Who cares what others say or think about you. You can't control others, and once you understand that the opinions of others do not determine your worth, your life and mentality will change. As singer-songwriter, Billie Eilish states, "I think the most important thing for me is to be authentic and true to myself." Trying to fulfill the needs and opinions of others, in the long run, will only drain you. What truly matters is that you are happy, safe, and healthy.