

Parents as Role Models: The Impact of Parental Body Talk on Children's Body Image

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Abstract

Introduction. Research suggests that parents may influence the development of body satisfaction and body talk in their children by modelling their own self-related body talk. However, little is known about how parents' *positive* body talk affects children's self-related body talk and body image. This study examined the impact of parents' functionality-focused versus appearance-focused comments on children's body-related comments and body satisfaction. **Methods.** An experimental design was conducted among 61 children (aged 10–12 years) and one of their parents, including 46 daughter–mother and 15 father–son dyads. Children completed an individual mirror exercise, followed by a joint parent–child mirror exercise. In both tasks, they described what they liked or disliked about a specific body part and rated their satisfaction with that body part. **Results.** When exposed to parents' positive functionality-focused comments, children increased their own functionality-focused comments during the joint exercise compared to the individual exercise. No decrease in appearance-focused comments or increase in body satisfaction was found. Parents' appearance-focused comments did not affect children's body talk or body satisfaction. **Conclusions.** These findings indicate that parents may help foster a functionality-focused view of the body in their children. The results highlight the value of involving parents in body image prevention and intervention programs.