

Article 231. The Role of social media in body image and Self-esteem

META:

KEYWORDS: body image, social media, impact, influence, self-esteem

SEARCH INTENT:

- How does social media impact body image?
- How does the media influence body image?

Have you ever caught yourself staring at your phone and a bunch of questions like...

How do they look so flawless and perfect? Why is their skin so glowy and healthy? What do I do wrong? Is it my skincare routine or is it just me?

...start running through your mind? Well, this means you and I have some things in common - we let social media affect how we see our bodies.

We let ourselves be affected by how social media transforms a body type, eyebrow, hair, and nail style into a trend. I think we all have seen these “trends” on TikTok, Instagram, or any other social media platform.

So, let’s find out how we got here!

Body image, easy - the way you see yourself in the mirror, right? This might be it in some cases but in reality, our minds can go a little bit further.

Let me explain! Well, when you see yourself in the mirror you can also see the flaws that you might think exist. By doing this you are switching the focus on the negative parts and ignoring the rest. And, let’s face it - I’m not the only one who does that.

Negative body image existed for a long time before social media appeared. But, once you were able to post yourself online everything got worse. How? Social media allows anyone to judge you. Also, it allows you to compare yourself to others which leads to unrealistic body standards.

I think you saw on Instagram models that post photos of themselves with flawless looks. And, in the caption, they wrote about the perfect bouncy hair that they got eating gummy bears.

Sounds familiar? **Well, she is doing her job as an influencer.** But, she’s also feeding the fear of impressionable people who wished they would look like this. She is creating more unrealistic body standards by letting you believe gummy bears did that. And the only outcome of this? False expectations.

What you expect of your body will determine the way you see yourself.

If you will start comparing yourself to that super-fit guy you follow online, your self-esteem might suffer. And unfortunately, those unrealistic expectations are the ones that can determine how you feel about your body, and deep down you know it's true.

I am just as confused as anyone can be in that situation. Low self-esteem can get the best of you and that inner voice can start making fun of you. *"You are ugly! You don't look good! You are fat!"* These are the things that might go through my mind when seeing those perfect models on Instagram. How many of you thought it normal to just not like parts about yourself? I certainly did.

What's worse? Researchers observed a direct link between social media, low self-esteem, and body image. And it makes sense! Social media can influence our opinion and can change how we see our bodies in only a few scrolls. Eating disorders like anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder are becoming common. And, the worst part is the young generation is the most affected.

The young generation, and not only, will get caught up in the power of the filters, the lightning, or the editing.

They will try to have that "perfect body", and if that doesn't happen, their self-esteem will get harmed. And don't forget that most of the people who post their bodies online looking so "up to the standards of the day" are, in fact, making a living out of their image. So they focus a big part of their time, energy, and money on their job, which happens to be their body.

While for some of us, the reality might look a little bit different. We might have only a window of time in a day when we can hit the gym, or have an even shorter period of time that we'd be willing to spend meal-prepping for the following day. In reality, we might end up skipping that gym day and order something to eat the next day because, well, normal people get caught up in other aspects of their lives.

Jobs, side projects, school, and other daily activities can ramp up and leave us feeling like taking care of our bodies is an impossible task. And yes, I totally agree with the idea that supposedly there is time to do all of it and still get the daily physical activity done while eating remains as simple as choosing better. But that's not that simple in practice.

And don't get me started on how expensive it can be to get everything done and keep a hairstyle and hair color looking fresh, getting nails and other aspects of our beauty routine done. Not to mention that the skincare routine products and all other beauty instruments we might be required to use are both expensive and they require our time, energy, and consistency to be effective.

I think we can conclude that social media is a main factor in leading people to feel bad about how they look. And while all of us might have heard the fact that how we look is a

matter of choice, we can't just close our eyes on every other factor that actually influences that "choice". At the end of the day, it's important to do our best to be healthy, not to go for a body type we see online and get frustrated when we see we can't get there. Nobody wants to be the horse that runs for the carrot in the hook always in front of him.