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Celebrate a Healthy Body Image

Your sister, your co-worker, your friend, or someone you just met—all of these women likely struggle with body image. Negative body image—the thought of not measuring up to the “thin ideal”—is a key factor for women in predicting unhealthy weight control behaviors as well as the development of some eating disorder symptoms.

Healthy Weight Network* has led the crusade to promote healthy body image by recognizing businesses and organizations that honor size diversity and reject gender stereotypes with their annual **Healthy Weight Awards**. The 2009 recipients are:

BEST PROGRAM: [Reflections Body Image Program](#). Co-developed by the Delta Delta Delta Fraternity, Carolyn Becker, PhD, FAED, and the local sororities of Trinity University in San Antonio, “Reflections” is a research-based program that combats the ultra thin media model of female beauty prevalent in today’s society. As part of its national launching, Tri Delta shared a key message with women across the nation by creating *Fat Talk Free Week* and a viral video email aimed at raising consciousness about Fat Talk and body dissatisfaction among women. On one college campus, 48% of women who said they “felt fat almost every day” reported 8 months after the intervention that they “felt fat never or less than half the time.”

So what is fat talk? “Fat Talk includes both negative (‘I’m too fat to wear this outfit’) and seemingly positive statements (‘You look great - have you lost weight?’),” explains Dr. Becker. “Fat Talk harms women and girls on a daily basis. It insidiously reinforces the unattainable thin-ideal standard of female beauty that contributes to eating disorders and body dissatisfaction,” she said. “A key Reflections message is ‘Friends don’t let friends fat talk.’”

BEST WEBSITE: [Love Your Body](#). Through this website, the National Organization for Women (NOW) Foundation gives girls and women tools and encouragement to help raise awareness about women’s health, body image and self-esteem. The important thing is to be healthy and love yourself regardless of what the scale says. The site features suggestions for treating your body with respect, mentoring, articles, a poster contest, positive and negative ads, a PowerPoint titled *Sex, Stereotypes and Beauty*, and activism options on dealing with advertising, clothing stores and the media.

You, too, can promote body image satisfaction by taking part in activities like these:

1. Form an alliance with a friend or family member—each time you meet, share one thing you like about yourselves.
2. Keep a journal of all the good things your body allows you to do (e.g., sleep well and wake up rested, play tennis, etc.).
3. Make a pact with your friends to avoid negative body talk. If any of you engage in negative talk, remind each other of the pact.
4. Make a pledge to end complaints about your body, such as “I’m so flat-chested,” or “I hate my legs.” When you catch yourself doing this, make a correction by saying something positive about that body part, such as, “I’m so glad my legs walked me across campus today.”
5. The next time someone gives you a compliment, rather than objecting (“Look at this bulge—I can’t possibly look good.”), smile and say, “Thank you.”

Reframing your body image from negative to positive allows you to move on to focus on health, *not* weight or size. Take the first step today—you may be surprised at how contagious it is!

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*Healthy Weight Network is an organization founded by Frances M. Berg, MS, a licensed nutritionist and adjunct professor at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine. She is a nationally recognized authority on weight and eating and is the author of several books.

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