

Okaying Body Image

A positive body image is to the physical self what positive self-esteem is to the whole person. Most junior highers, no matter how attractive they are, worry about their body image. Parents sometimes contribute to this anxiety. Use these ideas to gently encourage your son or daughter to feel better about his or her body:

- **Develop a positive body image yourself.** Set an example. Acknowledge aloud what you like



about your body. If this is hard, talk about that too. Together, explore cultural messages at the root of our embarrassment such as "Feeling good about how we look means we're conceited."

- **Talk positively.** Don't say negative, disparaging things—even casually or joking around—about your body or your junior higher's body.

- **Encourage exercise.** Together-activities such as walking and biking have obvious physical benefits. And they promote a sense of well-being and pleasure in the body.

- **Try new activities.** Focus on what the body can *do* rather than what it *looks like*. Initiate new activities that involve using the body such as gardening, carpentry, kite-flying, sailing and remodeling.

- **Give meaningful compliments.** Focus on things your junior higher has control over. "I love the way you smile" is more useful than "You've got a cute face."

- **Help your junior higher accept compliments.** Teach your junior higher to say "Thanks" or "That makes me feel good," to compliment-givers—even if he or she only half-believes what was said. Accepting praise is the first step to believing you deserve t' compliment