

# NUTRITION MATTERS

## HELP CHILDREN AND YOUTH FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES

Children and youth are greatly influenced by what they hear and see - whether it is at school, at home, at a friend's house or at an after-school program. They are especially influenced by the messages from parents, coaches and educators in these environments. Adults who spend time with children can positively impact how children feel about themselves by ensuring their words and actions reflect a positive, healthy lifestyle.

The lists below compare a balanced approach to a weight-centered approach to healthy living. The balanced approach is a positive way to role model healthy behaviours for children. This approach aims to create a balance between the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual factors that shape overall health. Follow the balanced approach to help keep your language and actions positive.

### **The balanced approach (positive)**

#### **Be active**

- For the joy of feeling your body move
- For the many health benefits of being active
- In a way you enjoy everyday

#### **Eat well**

- Enjoy eating
- Know that all foods can be part of healthy eating
- Respond to internal cues of hunger and fullness

#### **Be yourself**

- Question messages that focus on thinness or muscularity as symbols of success and happiness
- Relax and enjoy the unique characteristics that you and others have to offer

### **The weight-centered approach (negative)**

#### **Exercise**

- Believing in the philosophy of 'no pain, no gain'
- Being active only to change weight or shape
- Feeling like you 'should' or 'have to' be active

#### **Diet**

- Following a restrictive, repetitive eating plan
- Eliminating foods or food groups
- Ignoring hunger cues

#### **Strive to be someone else**

- Accepting the media's definition of the 'ideal body'
- Discriminating against people with obesity  
Thinking that weight loss will improve self-esteem

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH**

1-877-464-9675  
TTY 1-866-512-6228  
[york.ca/nutrition](http://york.ca/nutrition)

## Support positive healthy behaviour

It is important to be aware of your own verbal and non-verbal behaviours in front of children and youth.

### THINK ABOUT:

- Your beliefs and attitudes about eating and physical activity.
- How you feel about yourself and your body.
- How the things you say can affect your child's self-esteem. Consider how comments like "have you lost weight?" or "you look great" may impact children.
- What values you teach children. Focus on the important things, not appearances.

### TEACH CHILDREN TO:

- Value their abilities and personality traits rather than their appearance.
- Treat others with respect. Promote zero tolerance for bullying.
- Think about and question the messages they hear, see and read:
  - Who created this message or product?
  - What is its purpose?
  - How does it make you feel?
  - How and why is this message or product being marketed to you?

### LISTEN:

- To what children and youth say about themselves and others.
- In an open and empathetic way. Respect their feelings as important and valid.

## PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO:

- Do enjoyable activities outside. People tend to be more active and happy in nature.
- Try different physical activities so they can find something they enjoy.
- Participate in planning, shopping and preparing meals and snacks.
- Eat together as a family. It is good for nutrition, teaching communication skills and building self-esteem.

### REMEMBER:

- Children and youth go through major physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes that affect how they think and feel about themselves.
- Children's bodies change and grow. Celebrate that bodies come in all shapes and sizes.

### For more information:

For more information and additional nutrition resources, visit [www.york.ca/nutrition](http://www.york.ca/nutrition) or [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca)

To speak to a registered dietitian at no cost, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000

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