What is Body image?

Body image relates to how a person thinks and feels about his or her own body. Body image also refers to the way we see our body and the way we think that others see our body.

There are different aspects of body image;

1. The way we see our own body (Perceptual)
   Our body image is not always an accurate reflection of what our body actually looks like. For example, many people in our society perceive their body to be larger or fatter than it really is. Perceptual body image is the difference between what you perceive your body to look like and what your body actually looks like.

2. The way we feel about our body’s appearance (Affective)
   We all feel a certain way about the way we look and aspects of our appearance. Affective body image refers to the amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction we feel about our general appearance, our weight or shape and even about specific body parts.

3. The thoughts and beliefs we have about our own body (Cognitive)
   The feelings that we have about our body and its appearance are often associated with certain thoughts or beliefs. When we feel dissatisfied with some aspect of our body it is usually because we believe that it is not the right shape, size or colour. For instance, the many boys in our society who are dissatisfied with their body shape think that they should be larger or thinner.

4. The things we do because we are dissatisfied with our body (Behavioural)
   Often, feelings of dissatisfaction with the body can lead a person to avoid doing certain things that might evoke those concerns. For instance, many people who have body dissatisfaction avoid doing physical exercise with their peers.

An important thing to remember about body image:

Our body image is not set in stone; it is very susceptible to change by the influences around us. This means that we may improve our body image by minimising all the things we see, watch, read, and listen to that have a negative effect on our body image. It also means that we have the power to change the way we see, feel and think about our bodies!

References