The Center for Eating Disorders
AT SHEPPARD PRATT

Strategies & Tips for Managing Your Social Media Networks

Building a Body Positive Presence Online

The way we feel about our bodies has a significant impact on how we feel about ourselves overall. More and more, our body image is influenced by images and messages we interact with online. Listed below are just a few simple ways you can begin to make sure this influence is a positive one.

- **TUNE IN TO ANY NEGATIVE EFFECTS SOCIAL MEDIA USE MAY BE HAVING ON YOUR SELF-ESTEEM OR BODY IMAGE.** *How often do you publicly or privately criticize your own body while on Facebook? How much time do you spend comparing your body to other people's bodies online? Do your comments on other people's photos regularly focus on weight or appearance? Do you ever get overwhelmed by this?*

- **REMEMBER THE BASICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA…**
    - People often go to great lengths to create a perfected image of themselves online. Be wary of comparing your real life, or your real body, to someone else's online persona or their "highlights reel".
    - Online connections can be fun and beneficial but they are not a substitute for daily human connection and socialization. Be mindful that you are not relying entirely on social media for your basic social needs.
    - Choose only to engage with people and organizations that you respect and who give you respect in return.
    - Don't forget – people tend to be mostly focused on themselves; other people are never looking at photos of you as critically or as closely as you are of yourself.

- **INTERUPT BODY NEGATIVITY** in your social network feeds by following or subscribing to several body positive Instagram or Twitter accounts. By doing this, you set yourself up for a boost of daily body positivity. Over time, you will begin absorbing these positive messages, and it can help you shift your own focus away from weight, back to health and emotional well-being.

- **TAKE A STAND** and make a conscious decision NOT to engage in weight obsession or "fat talk" within your online communities. Only comment on friends' non-physical accomplishments and successes instead of immediately zeroing in on how they look. We hear from individuals with eating disorders all the time who get a lot of positive feedback for their weight loss - online and offline – from friends, family and even health care providers who don't know what they're really doing to lose the weight. This positive reinforcement often promotes an escalation of unhealthy behaviors and can strengthen a person's reliance on weight loss for measuring their overall worth.

- **DRAW A LINE** when it comes to protecting your own well-being while online. If you find yourself continually triggered by a certain profile, don't hesitate to hide or unfollow them. It can be very empowering, and beneficial to your body image to hide comments or unsubscribe from people if they continually focus in unhealthy ways on weight, dieting or superficial definitions of beauty.

- **TAKE AN EXTENDED BREAK FROM SOCIAL MEDIA** if you find yourself unable to escape feelings of jealousy, sadness or comparison while online. Experiment by logging off temporarily and see how your mood and body image respond. Use the time that you would have spent on Facebook or Instagram to acquire a new hobby, connect with body-positive friends by phone or in person, or engage in other activities that honor your body and mind in a healthy way.

For more information about body image or eating disorders visit <u>eatingdisorder.org</u>.