



BODY IMAGE ISSUES: BEHAVIOR CHANGE AND STAGES OF CHANGE

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Research shows that the way one views his/her body directly affects self-esteem. Negative views of the body may lead to disordered appearance management behaviors related to eating, exercise, substance use, and self-harm. Success in adopting healthy behaviors may be based on stages of readiness for change: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance.

A survey was developed to gather data from 200 college women, ages 17-49, using measures of body shape orientation, body change, and demographics. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression analysis.

Body shape and efforts to maintain a "good shape" were highly valued; subjects were satisfied with overall appearance (3.49 out of 5), but lower torso, mid-torso, and weight were concerns. Self-esteem was fairly strong (39.5 out of 50). Body self-consciousness was negatively related to self-esteem ($r = -.26, p < .01$). Greater self-consciousness and greater value placed on improving body shape tended to encourage risky behaviors such as fasting, bingeing/purging, and using diet pills ($F=4.22, df=2, p < .01$). Those in preparation and action stages were more invested in adopting healthy behaviors by trying to avoid behaviors such as comparing themselves to magazine models, fasting, weighing and measuring food, and heavy exercising. Educational and prevention/ intervention outreach efforts are being planned to target individuals in different stages of change.