

## “I had no idea...what *healthy* really meant.”

Springtime often brings thoughts about swimsuit season, new diets, and new gym memberships. At the end of February, however, departments within Wellness USF will be encouraging your student to think differently about health. Research shows that unhealthy perceptions about exercise, diet, and beauty are more common than ever for men and women. For National Eating Disorder Awareness Week, our campaign theme is “I had no idea...what *healthy* really meant.” Have a look at our tips for students – they might apply to you too!

- **When you see magazine ads and the like, think about all the stylists, photographers, art directors, and Photoshop experts who created that product.** Don't think it's realistic or attainable – media images are manufactured by a team of stylists and other professionals, and then digitally altered.
- **Get rid of clothes that don't make you feel good about your body.** Don't keep clothes that make you want to hold in your stomach or make you feel unattractive, even if you used to wear them. Clothes are poor motivators to work out and are rarely effective. You can find clothes that make you look good regardless of size.
- **Measure yourself by your accomplishments, not by numbers on a bathroom scale.** Bathroom scales can't measure strength, persistence, beauty, resilience, or personality.
- **Express appreciation for everything your body can do:** “My smile expresses the true happiness I feel” “My thighs let me be active, like go hiking”. Don't give in to “fat talk” with statements like “Does this make me look fat?” or “You're lucky you can wear sleeveless shirts; my arms are too flabby.” Fat talk drags down your mood and the mood of those around you. You'll feel happier, stronger, and more beautiful if you appreciate what your body does for you.
- **Think of food in terms of “everyday” foods, like fruits and vegetables, and “sometimes” foods, like sweets,** instead of as “good”, “bad”, “sinful”, etc. Judging food can lead to unhealthy dieting and food habits and feelings of shame and guilt. Healthy diets include nutrient-rich foods as well as the occasional less nutritious food.
- **Read magazines like “Verily”, who have pledged not to use models whose facial structure or bodies have been digitally altered,** instead of ones that perpetuate the unattainable “thin ideal” with unrealistic photo spreads. Research shows that looking at digitally altered images of models leaves people feeling worse about themselves.

The events for the week of February 24-28 will help students have a better understanding of healthy diets, healthy exercise habits, and a health body image. Encourage your student to check out an event, or, better yet, model the good behavior and help yourself live a healthier lifestyle!