

Your Body Is Not the Enemy

A Teen Guide to Body Image, Eating, Exercise, Steroids & Self-Worth

A nine-page booklet for teens and tweens — boys and girls, athletes and gamers — about body image, eating, exercise, steroids and SARMs, and the difference between training and obsession. Written to be read by a kid, alongside a parent or alone.

Free to print, photocopy, and share. No login, no email capture, no tracking.

Page 1 — Dear You. Yes, You.

Before you read another word, hear this: you matter. Not because of how you look. Not because of your weight, your muscles, your skin, your followers, or your stats. You matter because you exist. Your worth is not something you have to earn by changing your body.

This booklet is not going to lecture you. It is going to tell you the truth — the kind of truth that the internet, edited photos, and your own loudest critic (often yourself) try to hide from you.

You are allowed to:

- Take up space in the world.
- Eat when you are hungry. Without guilt. Without apology.
- Rest when you are tired.
- Grow at your own pace — not the pace of someone in a viral video.
- Look different from influencers, athletes, classmates, and celebrities.
- Change your mind about diets, trends, and goals that hurt you.

Read this slowly: You do not need to be thinner. You do not need bigger muscles. You do not need to punish yourself. You do not need pills, powders, or shortcuts. You need to love yourself enough to protect yourself.

That is the whole point of this booklet. Everything else is just details.

Page 2 — What Body Dysmorphia Really Is

Body dysmorphia is when your brain becomes stuck on flaws in your appearance — flaws that are often invisible to everyone else, or completely imagined. It is not vanity. It is a real mental health condition, and it can affect anyone.

It might look like:

- Checking the mirror over and over — or refusing to look at all.
- Comparing yourself constantly to people online or at school.
- Believing you are “too big” when you are medically healthy.
- Believing you are “too small” and obsessing over getting bigger.
- Hiding your body in oversized clothes — or showing more of it to chase validation.
- Editing every photo before you post it. Or refusing to be in photos at all.

It can affect anyone:

Girls and boys. Athletes and gamers. Quiet kids and popular kids. Influencers with millions of followers and people no one knows. Body dysmorphia does not care about your gender, your sport, your faith, or your friend group.

The Social Media Trap

Apps push content that makes you feel worse so you keep scrolling. The algorithm does not love you. It is designed to keep your attention, even if it costs your peace. Things that look effortless online are usually:

- Edited.
- Filtered.
- Posed and lit for hours.
- Enhanced by surgery, injections, or steroids the person never mentions.
- Made by someone who is also miserable about their body.

If a piece of content makes you feel smaller every time you see it, you are allowed to unfollow, mute, or block. Curating your feed is not weakness. It is self-respect.

Page 3 — Eating Disorders Are Real Illnesses

Eating disorders are not a phase. They are not a choice. They are not vanity. They are serious mental and physical illnesses, and people of every body size can have one. You cannot tell by looking at someone whether they are sick.

Some of the most common eating disorders include:

- Anorexia nervosa — severe restriction of food and intense fear of weight gain.
- Bulimia nervosa — cycles of eating large amounts and then trying to undo it.
- Binge eating disorder — frequent episodes of eating large amounts while feeling out of control and ashamed.
- Orthorexia — obsession with “clean” or “healthy” eating to the point that it controls your life.
- ARFID — avoiding food due to sensory issues, fear, or low interest, not body image.

Quiet warning signs to take seriously:

- Constant anxiety, guilt, or shame around food.
- Eating in secret or feeling panic eating around others.
- Avoiding meals, social events with food, or family dinners.
- Feeling like food rules run your whole day.
- Mood swings, exhaustion, dizziness, hair changes, fainting, or feeling cold all the time.
- Feeling like your body is the enemy that needs to be controlled or punished.

What eating disorders can do to your body and mind:

They can affect your heart, brain, hormones, growth, fertility, bones, mood, and your ability to focus and feel joy. The longer they go untreated, the harder they pull. But here is the most important sentence on this page:

Recovery is real. People recover every single day. Telling someone is the bravest, strongest first step — not the weakest.

If anything on this page sounds like you, even a little, please tell a parent, school counselor, doctor, coach, pastor, or any trusted adult. You are not in trouble. You are not broken. You are a person who deserves help.

Page 4 — Movement Should Help You, Not Hurt You

Moving your body is a gift, not a punishment. The goal is to feel stronger, calmer, and more like yourself — not to earn the right to eat or to make up for something you did wrong.

Healthy movement looks like:

- Doing things you actually enjoy — sports, dance, walking, lifting, biking, swimming, anything.
- Building strength and endurance over time, with rest days built in.
- Sleeping better, feeling clearer, and laughing more.
- Stopping when something hurts in a bad way.

Unhealthy exercise can look like:

- Working out while injured because you are afraid to stop.
- Exercising to “cancel out” something you ate.
- Feeling panic, guilt, or self-hatred if you skip a workout.
- Letting workouts replace friends, sleep, school, or fun.
- Counting every step, calorie, and minute as if you are on trial.

Rest days are part of training, not the opposite of training. Sleep, food, and recovery are when your body actually gets stronger. Athletes who burn out usually burn out from too much, not too little.

A different question to ask yourself:

Instead of “Did I do enough today?” try “Did I move in a way that made me feel good today?” That single change in language can shift your whole relationship with your body.

Page 5 — Steroids and Other Dangerous Shortcuts

There is a lot of pressure on teens — especially boys, athletes, and gym kids — to look bigger, leaner, more cut, more shredded. The pressure on girls to look smaller, tighter, and “snatched” is just as loud. Both pressures push kids toward shortcuts that can cause real, lasting harm.

Shortcuts that are not worth it:

- Anabolic steroids (“gear,” “juice,” SARMs, prohormones).
- “Fat burners,” appetite suppressants, and diet pills.
- Laxatives or other products used to control weight.
- Unregulated supplements bought online or from a friend at the gym.
- “Detox” teas, cleanses, or extreme fasts pushed by influencers.

What these can actually do:

- Damage your heart, liver, and kidneys — sometimes permanently.
- Disrupt the hormones your body needs to grow and develop.
- Affect mood, sleep, and aggression. Real “roid rage” is not a meme; it is a symptom.
- Hurt your future ability to have kids.
- Trigger or worsen depression, anxiety, and body dysmorphia.
- Land you in the ER — or worse.

Here is what nobody tells you:

A huge number of the bodies you see online are not natural. Influencers, fitness models, and even some pro athletes use enhancements they never disclose. When you compare your real body to their chemically altered one, you are losing a race that was never fair to begin with.

You cannot out-train, out-diet, or out-supplement your way to someone else’s genetics, lighting, or pharmacy. Trying will cost you your health. Stop running their race.

Page 6 — Peer Pressure: How to Protect Yourself

Some of the most damaging pressure does not come from strangers online. It comes from people sitting next to you at lunch. Friends, teammates, group chats, and gym partners can pull you toward harmful habits without ever meaning to — or sometimes on purpose.

Things a “friend” might say that are not okay:

- “You’re really going to eat that?”
- “Try this pill, it’s nothing.”
- “We’re skipping lunch this week.”
- “You’re weak if you don’t hit it again.”
- “Everyone our age is on something. Don’t be the only one not.”
- “Send me a pic. Just one. I won’t show anyone.”

Real friends do not do that:

A real friend wants you healthy, alive, and around for a long time. A real friend can handle hearing the word no. If someone gets angry, mocks you, or pulls away when you decline, that is information about them — not about you.

Things you can actually say:

- “I’m not doing that to my body.”
- “That sounds like a fast way to get hurt.”
- “I’m working on actually liking myself, and that’s the opposite of helpful.”
- “Hard pass. Let’s do something else.”
- “No.” — By itself. As a complete sentence.

If a friend is the one struggling:

Tell a trusted adult. You will not be “snitching.” You will be one of the only people in their life brave enough to actually try to help them. People who recover from eating disorders, body dysmorphia, and steroid use almost always say later: I wish someone had told an adult sooner.

You are not responsible for fixing your friend. You are responsible for getting them in front of someone who can.

Page 7 — Building Real Confidence

Confidence that depends on how you look will collapse the second a flash goes off, a filter glitches, or you have a bad week. Real confidence is built on something deeper than your reflection.

Real confidence grows from:

- Kind self-talk. (Would you say what you say to yourself to your best friend? If not, stop.)
- Sleep, food, water, sunlight, movement — the boring stuff that actually works.
- People who are kind to you — and that you are kind to.
- Faith, family, community, or a tradition that reminds you who you are.
- Doing hard things on purpose — learning a skill, finishing a book, helping someone else.
- Gratitude. Even one thing a day. It rewires your brain over time.

Try this right now:

Write down three things you genuinely like about yourself that have nothing to do with how you look. Put your phone down for one minute and actually do it. Examples to get you unstuck:

- I am loyal to my people.
- I make my friends laugh.
- I notice when other people are sad and I check on them.
- I work hard at things I care about.
- I love animals / music / books / building things / cooking.
- I am someone's favorite person.

These are the parts of you that will still be there in twenty years. Bodies change. Trends change. Your character is the thing you actually carry forever. Build that.

Page 8 — Where to Get Help

If anything in this booklet feels familiar — if food, exercise, your reflection, or hidden pills are starting to take over your life — you do not have to handle it alone. There is no version of this where reaching out is the wrong move.

People who can help:

- A parent, guardian, aunt, uncle, grandparent, or older sibling.
- A school counselor, teacher, or coach you trust.
- Your doctor or pediatrician — they have heard everything before.
- A pastor, youth leader, rabbi, or other faith leader.
- A therapist who works with teens.

Helplines and resources:

- National Alliance for Eating Disorders Helpline: 1-866-662-1235. Free, confidential, staffed by licensed therapists.
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988 anytime, for any kind of crisis. Not just for suicide — for any moment when things feel too heavy.
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741.
- FindTreatment.gov — free, confidential search for licensed treatment providers near you.

If you are scared to tell someone:

Try writing it down first. A note. A text. Even one sentence: “I think I need help with food / my body / pills.” That sentence has saved lives. The first ten seconds of asking are the hardest. Everything after gets easier.

You will not get in trouble for telling. You will not be a burden. You will not ruin your future. You will start the part of your story where you get to feel like yourself again.

Page 9 — One Last Thing

Your body is not a project, a punishment, or a problem to solve. It is the only one you get. It carries you to your friends, through your favorite songs, into the rest of your life.

It deserves food. It deserves rest. It deserves not to be talked to like an enemy.

And you — the person inside it — deserve peace. You deserve friends who lift you up. You deserve adults who listen. You deserve a future where you are healthy enough to actually live in it.

Love yourself enough to:

- Eat.
- Rest.
- Ask for help.
- Walk away from people who hurt you.
- Protect your health like it belongs to someone you love — because it does.

You are valuable exactly as you are.

References

Citations follow Chicago Notes-Bibliography style.

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