

How to Love Your Body

March 21, 2012

In case you missed it, the cameras were rolling at the APS 23rd Annual Convention in Washington, DC. Watch Kaitlin K. Meyer from Northwestern University present her poster session research on “What You Love About Your Body: Evolution of an Antifat Talk Intervention.”

Some people — even people with normal body mass indexes — are just a little too preoccupied by their desire to lose a few pounds. “Fat talk” occurs when people make negative comments about their own bodies (e.g., “My thighs are soooo big!”). Meyer says that college women are particularly susceptible.

To combat fat talk on one college campus, Meyer and her coauthors hung a banner in the student center and asked passersby to write something they liked about their body. Then, they asked the volunteers to fill out a brief survey.

Based on the survey, the scientists found that women were more likely to write about their face and men were more likely to write about their overall body or adornments such as piercings or tattoos. In addition, people who wrote on the banner reported feeling less ashamed of their bodies and more confidence.

Even though the intervention fostered confidence, Meyers notes that over half of participants wrote about features that can’t be changed by diet and exercise, such as hair or eyes. These features aren’t necessarily related to fat talk. Therefore, Meyers suspects that a stronger, more fat-specific intervention might be more effective.