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How to Assess and Improve Body Image in Your Clients

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Goal/Objectives

- Describe the various ways to think about and assess body image
- Explain factors contributing to body image concerns
- Showcase some approaches to improving body image
Body image as multidimensional

- Body image = internal representation of a one’s outer appearance

**Affective**
- *Feelings about one’s body*
- Body dissatisfaction
- Body shame

**Cognitive**
- *Thinking about one’s body*
- Overvaluation of weight/shape
- Body surveillance

**Perceptual**
- *How one’s body is perceived*
- Size estimation of body parts or body whole

**Behavioral**
- *Actions related to one’s body*
- Body avoidance
- Body checking
Body image as multidimensional: Affective aspect (body dissatisfaction)

- Body dissatisfaction
  - Weight, shape
    - Weight Concern & Shape Concern subscales of the Eating Disorder Examination-Questionnaire (Fairburn & Beglin, 2008)
    - Scoring
    - Norms for women (Mond et al., 2006) and men (Quick & Byrd-Bredbrenner, 2013)
  - Dissatisfaction with specific body parts
    - Body Parts Satisfaction Scale (Petrie, Tripp, & Harvey, 2002)
    - Body Parts Satisfaction Scale for Men (McFarland & Petrie, 2012)
    - Male Body Attitudes Scale (Tylka et al., 2005)
Weight Concern & Shape Concern (EDE-Q)

- *On how many of the past 28 days...*
  - no days, 1-5 days, 6-12 days, 13-15 days, 16-22 days, 23-27 days, every day

- Have you had a definite desire to have a **totally flat** stomach?

- Has thinking about **shape or weight** made it very difficult to concentrate on things you are interested in (for example, working, following a conversation, or reading)?

- Have you had a definite fear that you might gain weight?

- Have you felt fat?

- Have you had a strong desire to lose weight?
Weight Concern & Shape Concern (EDE-Q)

- **On how many of the past 28 days...**
  - 0 = not at all, 1, 2 = slightly, 3, 4 = moderately, 5, 6 = markedly
- Has your **weight** influenced how you think about (judge) yourself as a person?
- Has your **shape** influenced how you think about (judge) yourself as a person?
- How much would it have upset you if you had been asked to weight yourself once a week (no more, no less, often) for the next four weeks?
- How dissatisfied have you been with your **weight**?
- How dissatisfied have you been with your **shape**?
- How uncomfortable have you felt seeing your body (for example, seeing your shape in the mirror, in a shop window reflection, while undressing or taking a bath or shower)?
- How uncomfortable have you felt about **others** seeing your shape or figure (for example, in communal changing rooms, when swimming, or wearing tight clothes)?
Body Parts Satisfaction Scale (BPSS)

- 1=Extremely dissatisfied to 6=Extremely satisfied

Height  Stomach
Weight  Breasts
Hair  Buttocks
Complexion  Hips
Overall face  Upper thighs
Shoulders  Lower thighs
Arms  General muscle tone
Body Parts Satisfaction Scale for Men (BPSS-M)

- 1 = Extremely dissatisfied to 6 = Extremely satisfied
- Upper body: arms (biceps/triceps), shoulders, stomach, back, neck
- Legs: upper legs (quadriceps), lower legs (calves)
- Satisfaction with muscularity and leanness (asked separately)
Male Body Attitudes Scale

- 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = usually, 6 = always

Sample items:
- I think I have too little muscle on my body
- I feel satisfied with the definition in my arms (R)
- I think my chest should be broader
- I think my body should be leaner
Body image as multidimensional: Affective aspect (body shame)

- Body Shame subscale of the **Objectified Body Consciousness Scale** (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996)
  - Body shame = degree of shame for not fulfilling internalized cultural standards for body size and shape
  - $1 = \textit{strongly disagree}... \ 7 = \textit{strongly agree}$
  - Sample items:
    - When I’m not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed
    - When I can’t control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me
    - I would be ashamed for people to know what I really weigh
Body image as multidimensional: Cognitive aspect (overvaluation)

- **EDE-Q** (Fairburn & Beglin, 2008) items:
  - On how many of the past 28 days… (0 = not at all, 1, 2 = slightly, 3, 4 = moderately, 5, 6 = markedly)
  - Has your **weight** influenced how you think about (judge) yourself as a person?
  - Has your **shape** influenced how you think about (judge) yourself as a person?

- **Eating Disorder Examination** (Fairburn et al., 2014) – questions about importance of weight & shape
  - “If you imagine the things which influence how you feel about (judge, think, evaluate) yourself - such as (your performance at work, being a parent, your marriage, how you get on with other people) - and put these things in order of importance, where does your weight [shape] fit in?”
    - Rank ordering
    - Pie chart
Body image as multidimensional: Cognitive aspect (body surveillance)

- Body Surveillance subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996)
  - Body surveillance = degree to which a person watches their body or experiences their body from an observer’s perspective
  - 1 = strongly disagree... 7 = strongly agree
  - Sample items:
    - During the day, I think about how I look many times
    - I rarely worry about how I look to other people (R)
    - I am more concerned with what my body can do than how it looks (R)
Body image as multidimensional: Perceptual aspect (size estimation)

- Perceptions of specific body parts (e.g., stomach, thighs), perception of overall body
- Silhouettes
- Analogue scales
- Image marking
- Optical distortion methods
Body image as multidimensional: Behavioral aspect (body avoidance)

- Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (BIAQ; Rosen et al., 1991)
  - Body avoidance = avoidance of situations or context that could elicit concern about one’s appearance – e.g., avoidance of: form-fitting clothes, mirrors, weather-appropriate clothes, physical contact, photographs
  - 0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = usually, 5 = always
  - Sample items:
    - I wear baggy clothes
    - I don’t wear “revealing” clothes (e.g., bathing suits, tank tops, or shorts)
    - I avoid physical intimacy
    - I do not go out socially if I will be “checked out”
    - I look at myself in the mirror (R)
Body image as multidimensional: Behavioral aspect (body checking)

- **Body Checking Questionnaire** (BCQ; Reas et al., 2002)
  - Body checking = monitoring of one’s weight/shape,size, including changes in these aspects of the body and may include frequent: weighing, measuring parts of body (with measuring tape, with hands), pinching/squeezing parts of body, inspecting one’s body in the mirror
  - 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often
  - Sample items:
    - I check to see if my thighs spread when I’m sitting down
    - I pinch my stomach to check for fatness
    - I check to see if my things rub together
    - I check the diameter of my wrist to make sure it’s the same size as before
    - I check my reflection in glass doors or car windows to see who I look
    - I try to elicit comments from others about how fat I am
Expanding ways to think about body image

- Body positivity, body neutrality
  - Body appreciation
  - Body functionality
  - Body image flexibility

- Internalized weight bias/stigma
Body appreciation

- Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2; Tylka & Barcalow, 2015)
  - Body appreciation has been conceptualized as “accepting, holding favorable opinions toward, and respecting the body” while also rejecting media-promoted ideals (Avalos et all, 2005)
  - 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always
  - Sample items:
    - I respect my body
    - I feel good about my body
    - I am comfortable in my body
    - I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body
Body functionality

- Functionality Appreciation Scale (FAS; Alleva et al., 2017)
  - Body functionality focuses on what the body can do – e.g., physical capabilities, bodily senses, internal processes, creative endeavors, communication with others
  - 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree
  - Sample items:
    - I appreciate my body for what it is capable of doing
    - I appreciate that my body allows me to communicate and interact with others
    - I am grateful that my body enables me to engage in activities that I enjoy or find important
Body image flexibility

- Body Image-Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (BI-AAQ; Sandoz et al., 2013)
  - Body image flexibility has been conceptualized as “the ability for one to openly experience thoughts or feelings about the body without acting on them or trying to avoid or change them” (Linardon et al., 2021; Sandoz et al., 2013)
  - $1 = never true, 2 = very seldom true, 3 = seldom true, 4 = sometimes true, 5 = frequently true, 6 = almost always true, 7 = always true
  - Sample items:
    - When I start thinking about the size and shape of my body, it’s hard to do anything else (R)
    - My relationships would be better if my body weight and/or shape did not bother me (R)
    - Feeling fat causes problems in my life (R)
    - Before I can make any serious plans, I have to feel better about my body (R)
Internalized weight bias/stigma

- **Weight Bias Internalization Scale** (WBIS; BAS-2; Durso & Latner, 2008)
  
  - Developed for individuals with overweight and obesity
  - Internalized weight bias = “extent to which individuals endorse and apply negative weight-based stereotypes to themselves” (Bennett et al., 2022)
  - 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree
  - Sample items:
    - Because I’m overweight, I don’t feel like my true self
    - Because of my weight, I don’t understand how anyone attractive would want to date me
    - As an overweight person, I feel that I am just as competent as anyone (R)
Body image in diverse samples

- Considerations related to
  - Race and ethnicity
  - Gender identity
  - Sexual orientation
  - Age
Consequences of negative body image

- Eating disorders
- Unhealthy behaviors, often aimed at altering appearance:
  - dieting
  - binge eating
  - purging (e.g., self-induced vomiting, laxative use)
  - compulsive exercise
  - steroid use
- Emotional distress
- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Social anxiety
- Substance abuse
- Impaired sexual functioning
Sociocultural & psychological factors related to body image

- **Risk factors**
  - social comparison
  - appearance-ideal internalization (thinness, muscularity, etc.)
  - perceived pressures to be thin (peers, family, media)
  - negative body talk ("fat talk")
  - body-related teasing
  - parental direct & indirect comments about the body/eating

- **Protective factors**
  - body appreciation
  - body functionality
  - body image flexibility
  - self-compassion
  - media literacy
  - feminism
Sociocultural & psychological factors related to body image: Theories

- Objectification Theory
- Tripartite Influence Model
Tripartite Influence Model

Sociocultural influences
* Family
* Peers
* Media

Comparison

Body dissatisfaction

Internalization

Restriction

Bulimic symptoms

Thompson et al., 1999; Keery et al., 2004
Social media & body image

- Choukas-Bradely et al. (2022) – focus on adolescent girls
- Key features of social media:
  - Visual
  - Available 24/7
  - Quantifiable
- Key features of adolescence:
  - Pubertal changes
  - Identity development
  - Heightened self-consciousness
  - Salience of peers
- Social media can increase body image concerns via:
  - Focus on other people’s appearance
    - E.g., idealized images of peers, influencers, celebrities; see “likes”
  - Focus on their own appearance
    - E.g., heightened awareness of how appear on social media, editing self-images
Body image intervention techniques

- Cognitive-behavioral techniques
  - Discuss cognitions & their role in body image
  - Teach self-monitoring & restructuring of cognitions
  - Change negative body language
  - Conduct guided imagery exercises
  - Conduct exposure exercises
  - Provide size-estimation exercises
  - Teach relapse-prevention strategies
  - Provide stress management training

Alleva et al., (2015)
Body image intervention techniques

- Psychoeducation
  - Discuss the concept of body image
  - Discuss the causes of negative body image
  - Discuss the consequences of negative body image
  - Discuss the behavioral expression of negative body image

Alleva et al. (2015)
Body image interventions

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) – focus on values
- Dissonance-based interventions
- Self-compassion interventions
Body image intervention: techniques, activities, & approaches

- Not a one-time session – weave into the “core” work
- Empathy & alignment: “that voice must be really hard to live with and I’m sorry you’ve experienced it for so long”
- Avoid the trap of being unintentionally dismissive (e.g., “you look good... why would you worry about your body?”)
- Values work: draw out what they value & gently point out discrepancies in time/energy spent on their body & time/energy spent on what they value
  - Pie chart
- Exposures – specific to what client fears, provide scaffolding, emphasize the need for compassion
- Reduce body checking, including frequent weighing, and body avoidance
Body image intervention: techniques, activities, & approaches

- Consider discussing feminism & objectification, socialization forces
- Consider parental involvement: direct & indirect messaging
- Assess for body-related trauma, especially sexual trauma
- Attend to possible weight bias as a healthcare provider
- Physical activity (e.g., yoga, walking)
- Writing exercises
- Considering social media use
Body image activity – growing up

- What did your body look like?
- What/how did you think about your body?
- What events and experiences (interpersonal, cultural, etc.) influenced how you felt about your body?
- How satisfied were you with your body?

... in early childhood (e.g., up through 2nd grade)
... in adolescence (middle school/high school)
... now
Body image activity – fat talk

- Track the number of times you hear “fat talk”
- What was said?
- Who said it?
- What was the context/circumstances?
- How did others respond?
- What effect did it have on you?
Body image activity – video clips

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zKfF40jeCA&t=3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zKfF40jeCA&t=3s)
  (media images/messages montage – “Onslaught”)

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwkRHy74cZU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwkRHy74cZU)
  (social media – mothers & daughters)

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBEpOOLhNVQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBEpOOLhNVQ)
  (self-criticism, self-compassion)

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U)
  (media images: edited/manipulated – “Evolution”)


References


Thank you!