

# Body Checking Behaviours

Checking your body from time-to-time is a common human experience. Body checking may be unhelpful if it becomes repetitive, time-consuming, or a way of managing anxiety about your appearance.



Body checking behaviours may include:

- Frequently viewing or checking your body in the mirror or reflective surfaces (e.g., windows)
- Weighing yourself frequently
- Checking areas of your body by touching, pinching, or mentally scanning that area
- Measuring parts of your body
- Comparing your body size, shape, or weight to other people's or to images you see on social media
- Repeatedly assessing the fit of your clothing
- Seeking reassurance from others about your appearance, weight, shape, or size

## Problems with Body Checking

Body checking may help you feel safe, reassured, or less anxious in the moment. However, body checking behaviours are unhelpful for several reasons.

1. **It stops you from seeing your positives.** By only focusing on what you dislike or are concerned about, you can develop tunnel vision and become hyper-focused. This can increase body dissatisfaction, lead to even more checking, and make you overlook the positive aspects of your body.
2. **Your own assessment can be unreliable.** Studies have shown that ratings of our weight and shape are heavily influenced in the moment by mood, what we've eaten, how full we feel, and recent exposure to other bodies around us. This can make it difficult to view your body accurately.
3. **It changes your perspective of 'normal'.** People usually compare their bodies with those they believe look 'better' or 'more desirable' (often based on current social trends) rather than comparing themselves to all body shapes and sizes.

4. **It robs you of time and enjoyment.** Constant body checking and comparison is consuming and takes you away from being present and engaging in enjoyable activities.
5. **May place strain on relationships.** Constantly seeking reassurance from others, even if supportive, can cause frustration and fatigue.
6. **It impacts self-worth.** Body checking and comparison can reduce your self-worth down to how you look in a picture! It limits lots of other important areas of self-worth like relationships, work, your passions, intelligence, or your character.
7. **It negatively impacts your mood.** Body checking can actually increase feelings of anxiety, shame, worthlessness, which can have a big impact on your daily functioning.
8. **It can fuel your eating disorder.** Body checking can increase body dissatisfaction and negative emotions, which can drive eating disorder behaviours to try to cope. Unfortunately this can strengthen the eating disorder cycle.

## Reducing Body Checking

Reducing body checking and comparison can help build body acceptance and self-worth that is not related to your weight or shape.



If you would like to reduce body checking you may wish to try the following:

1. Identify body checking behaviours you use, their frequency and intensity. You may find it helpful to write these down.
2. Choose 2 or 3 behaviours you want to change.
3. Set specific goals for each behaviour. You may want to work on:
  - *Reducing intensity* (e.g., 3x/day instead of 6x/day)
  - *Limiting frequency* (e.g., 1x/week instead of daily)
  - *Eliminating* (stopping altogether)
  - *Postponing behaviours* (e.g., using timer to create space before using behaviour)
4. Start with easier goals and make changes gradually
5. Acknowledge and reward yourself for progress!
6. Check out our self-help modules ([Break Free from ED](#)) that include specific modules and strategies for Body Checking (Module 11).