

Decreasing risk for the development of an eating disorder in children and adolescents

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What is it that we are trying to prevent?

- **Liz Jones** (born 1958 or before) is a British journalist and writer. She is currently the fashion editor for the Daily Mail. Previously to this she was the editor of British Marie Claire. She has had anorexia nervosa for over 40 years.



How it began

- To be honest, I can't remember the last time I ate normally, with no thought to what I was putting in my mouth.
- I do remember the first time I refused butter: I was 11, it was a Saturday morning and my mum brought me toast, butter and marmalade in bed. I hid the toast under the bed, to dispose of later, and took the empty plate downstairs. Thus began almost 40 years of extreme abstinence.
- I have never eaten a whole bar of chocolate, a whole banana, or even a whole avocado. I have never gone to friends for dinner and eaten what is on my plate, all of it.
- Food is just fuel - something I have to shove in my mouth to stay alive. I have never loved it. Food has always been the enemy.

What functions did it serve?

- I wanted to be like the women in the pages of Vogue. I wanted to do what the pages of 19 magazine told me to do, and that was to count calories.
- I found the gnawing, tight knot that is always in my stomach - fear of life, work, boys, social interaction - was quietened when I starved it.
- That's the thing about being an anorexic: it makes you feel superior, clean, morally unimpeachable.
- For me, being super-thin has never been about being attractive to men. It's about being invisible.
- I've never cared about my body, having always seen it as a battleground, something to punish, that will never be good enough or measure up.
- I might not have been good at anything else - relationships, sport, conversation - but I have been really good at being thin.
- All this eating has proved what I thought all along: food makes you soft, lazy, undisciplined.

What did it do to her life?

- Being this way made me not just socially awkward, but unlovable: I've always hated being touched, hugged, naked, half-dressed on holiday, in case I'm found wanting, in case someone felt or saw an extra ounce of flesh.
- Being this thin meant I never got pregnant; I have menstruated perhaps half-a-dozen times in my life.
- My gynaecologist, who sends me to a specialist, who tells me I am heading for osteoporosis.
- It makes no sense, but I'd rather be thin than happy or healthy.
- It's so pathetic to admit that a grown woman, and a fairly successful one, has her world ruled by how many calories she ingests.
- That the only pleasures in life are to see how concave you can make your stomach, how many ribs you can count, how normal it is to feel faint, to see stars, to be so weak you can, some days, hardly stand.

How do we prevent eating disorders?

- Recognise and tackle the risk factors
 - Internalisation of the thin ideal (**MEDIA LITERACY**)
 - Provides a measure of being worthwhile as a person when they feel not good enough in any other area of their life (**SELF ESTEEM**)
 - Confers a sense of achievement and perfectionism in people who otherwise feel too anxious and unable to cope with the normal developmental challenges in life (**PERFECTIONISM**)

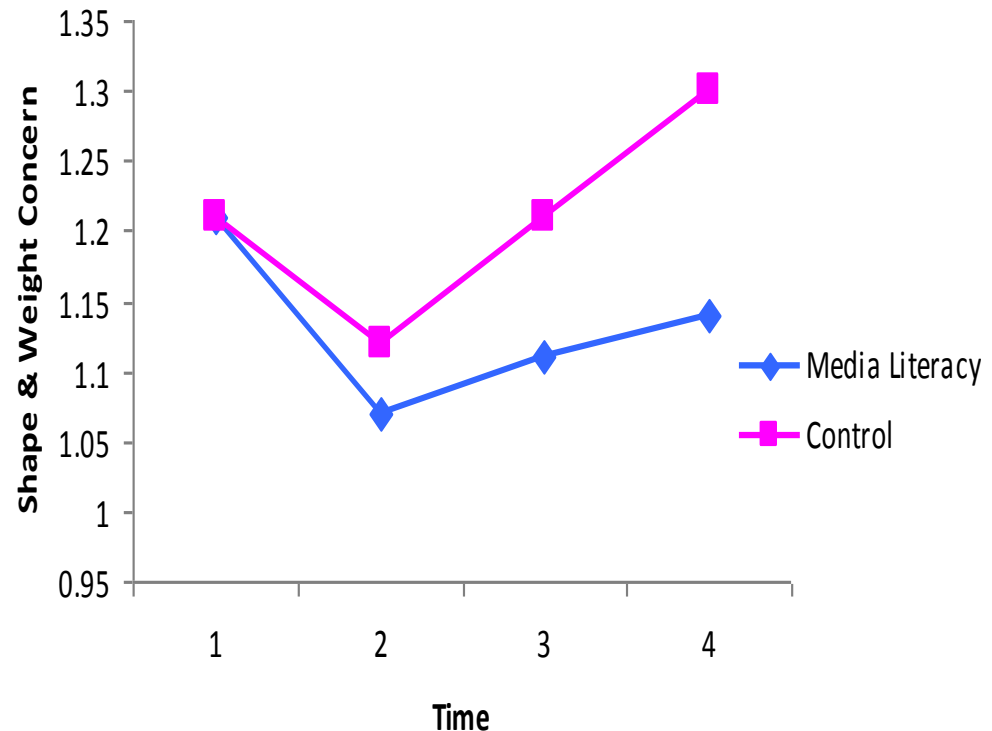
Media Literacy

<i>Lessons/ Main Topics</i>	<i>Key Features</i>
1. Stereotypes: We are not all the same	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define stereotypes and examine magazines for advertisements that stereotype • 'Send-up' these advertisements/stereotypes
2. Media advertising: What tactics do they use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint presentation of airbrushing (before and after shots)
3. Pressure: Who places pressure on us and what can we do about it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine pressures from media, family, friends • "What can we do to handle pressure placed on us?"
4. Pressure: Looking after ourselves and our peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-plays: responding to negative comments/teasing • Role-plays: How would you help somebody who is younger than you, not get sucked into the media's pressure to worry about looks?
5. Putting pressure on the media: Praising the good and protesting the bad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Consumer activism: what does it mean?" • Brainstorm possible ways to engage in activism
6 & 7. Is advertising harmful: What do you think?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of a media awareness presentation addressing the question "Is advertising harmful?"
8. Where to from here? (Bringing it all together)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from emails to advertisers • Propose alternatives to negative media messages • How to deal with "I know it's fake but I still want to look like it"

Media Literacy: does it work?

- Works well with 13-year olds at 30-month follow-up by reducing one of the strongest risk factors for disordered eating, weight and shape concern

- *Wilksch SM, Wade TD. (2009). Reduction of shape and weight concern in young adolescents: a 30-month controlled evaluation of a media literacy program. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 48: 652-661*



Self esteem

- Jenny O'Dea (2007). *Everybody's Different*. ACER Press.
 - Ways of dealing with stress
 - relaxation
 - Building a positive sense of self
 - Expanding self image across life domains
 - Challenging the pursuit of perfectionism
 - Identifying positive self-attributes
 - Exploring individuality of self and peers
 - Identifying positive traits in self and others that does not include physical attributes
 - Acceptance of self and others
 - Embracing diversity, uniqueness and difference

Self esteem: Does it work?

- A randomised controlled study by O'Dea and Abraham (2000) with 470 male (37%) and female (63%) students aged 11-14 years, showed that 9 lessons of a self-esteem intervention significantly lowered body dissatisfaction at post-program
- At 12-month follow-up, the importance of physical appearance, social acceptance by others and athletic ability were significantly lower for intervention participants compared to control participants

Perfectionism

- “Concern over Mistakes”
Perfectionism
 - overgeneralise *from* your perceived lack of performance or the times when you do not stick to the rules that you have imposed on yourself for achieving a certain goal *to* an unfavourable judgement on yourself as a person
- e.g., If I do not do as well as other people, it means I am an inferior human being



“The problem is you’re a perfectionist. You don’t always have to be totally evil. Sometimes it’s OK to just be annoying.”

Perfectionism: does it work?

- With 15 year old girls

- allocated to perfectionism (N=51); media literacy (N=43); or classes as normal (N=44)
- 8 lessons: pre-, post- and 3-month follow-up
- Content based on “Perfectionism: What’s bad about being too good?” by Adderholdt & Goldberg (1999)
- High risk girls in perfectionism group had clinically significant reductions in dieting as well as perfectionism
 - Wilksch SM, Durbridge M, Wade TD. (2008). *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 47, 939-947.

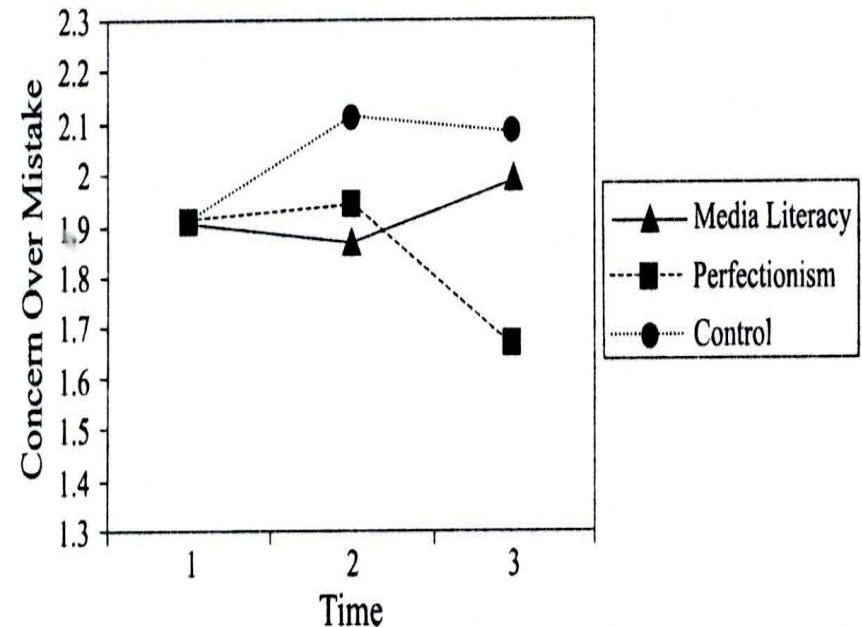


Fig. 1 Concern over mistakes scores by group (3) and time (3). The effect of the baseline value has been statistically removed to allow for direct comparisons across program attendance and time. The covariate value for concern over mistakes was 1.91.