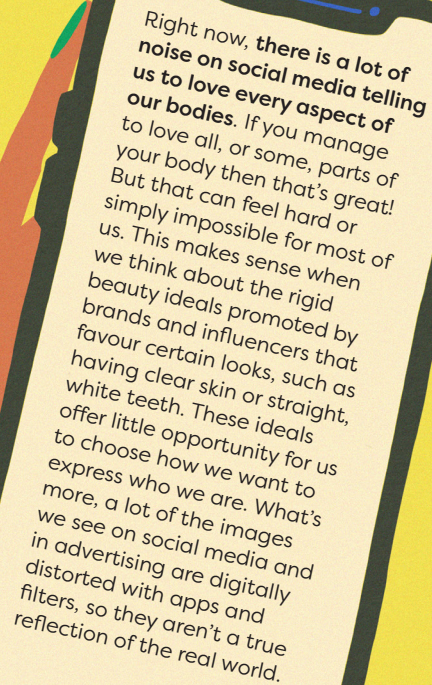
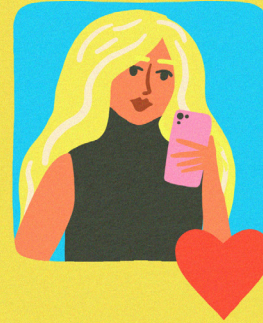


# Respecting, appreciating and protecting your body

**Body confidence** is a term used to describe positive body image, or in other words, having a healthy relationship with our bodies, including how they look and what they can do.



Right now, there is a lot of noise on social media telling us to love every aspect of our bodies. If you manage to love all, or some, parts of your body then that's great! But that can feel hard or simply impossible for most of us. This makes sense when we think about the rigid beauty ideals promoted by brands and influencers that favour certain looks, such as having clear skin or straight, white teeth. These ideals offer little opportunity for us to choose how we want to express who we are. What's more, a lot of the images we see on social media and in advertising are digitally distorted with apps and filters, so they aren't a true reflection of the real world.



It's also important to remember that it's unrealistic to feel happy and content every single moment of every day. Feeling sad, lonely and unhappy sometimes is a natural part of being human. Take a deep breath and relax. **You don't have to love every part of your body to have body confidence.**

A more realistic and helpful goal is to focus on body respect. **Body respect** is when we care about and look after our bodies, irrespective of whether we like how they look or how they change as we grow. Our bodies will evolve over time; it's a part of life and growing up.





**Respect is  
often the  
first step  
to taking care  
of something.**





Think about something that you always wanted and that you saved up to buy or were lucky to receive as a gift. It could be a musical instrument, an item of clothing, a piece of sporting equipment or your mobile phone. Chances are that **if the item is important to you, you try to take good care of it.** You take care not to break it, you're careful who you share it with, you clean it and put it in a safe place when you're not using it. On the other hand, if you have an object that you don't like or care about, you might forget where you put it, leave it about for anyone to use and not care if it gets broken.



Our bodies are the same. If we have low body confidence, we might try to hide them with baggy clothes, ignore them when they're hungry or aching, and try to change them after listening to what other people say. On the other hand, if we respect our bodies, we're more likely to take care of them by rejecting unrealistic beauty standards, getting enough sleep, moving so we feel strong and flexible, and eating food that makes us feel nourished. **We can appreciate the things our bodies allow us to do,** like dance, make art, hug our friends, read books and learn new things. We'll also find it easier to ignore pressures from other people to look a certain way.

Going forward, **try focusing on being curious and open-minded.** Experiment with being kind and gentle with yourself and take small steps towards accepting and respecting your body. Over time, these small steps will get easier, and they'll add up to creating a headspace where you see your body as a positive part of your life. And, if you're already feeling comfortable with your body and your looks, we're going to cover how you can share this with your community, so that everyone gets the opportunity to feel body confident.