

EDITORIAL

BEYOND THE MIRROR: RETHINKING BODY IMAGE AND MENTAL HEALTH

We live in a world where appearance is constantly on display. Billboards, television screens, and social media feeds bombard us with images of carefully curated sculpted bodies and flawless skin with airbrushed perfection. The underlying message is clear: only certain bodies are worthy of admiration. Yet behind this glossy façade lies a quieter, more troubling reality—the toll these ideals take on our mental health. **The pursuit of an “ideal” figure creates an unattainable benchmark that leaves many people dissatisfied with their natural selves.**

Body image - how we perceive, think, and feel about our physical appearance - is deeply personal, yet profoundly social. It is shaped by cultural expectations, peer comparisons, and now, the relentless gaze of the digital world. When our bodies fail to match the narrow standards projected back at us, the impact is not merely physical; it seeps into our confidence, our self-worth, and ultimately, our mental well-being. Research consistently links poor body image to various insecurities besides anxiety, depression and eating disorders. **These struggles rarely make headlines, but they affect countless lives in ways both subtle and devastating.**

The commercialization of insecurity has only intensified this struggle. **Fairness creams, anti-aging serums, and “slimming solutions” are marketed with the implicit message that natural appearances are somehow inadequate. By monetizing these insecurities, the industry not only profits but also reinforces harmful stereotypes, trapping individuals in a cycle of dissatisfaction and consumption.** A leading fairness brand, for instance, has long promoted the idea that lighter skin equates to confidence and success, pressuring countless young girls—and increasingly, boys—into altering themselves.

What is often overlooked is that body image concerns are not confined to adolescence; the image insecurities can persist across the lifespan if it is left unchallenged. For adolescents and young adults, who are still forming their identities, this pressure can be particularly damaging. Adults too, wrestle with insecurities—about weight, hair, skin, or the natural process of aging. On the other hand, positive body image has a ripple effect on mental well-being. Accepting and appreciating one’s body fosters resilience, reduces the risk of disordered eating, and improves overall life satisfaction.

The way forward is not in chasing another impossible ideal, but in reframing the conversation altogether. We need to move from asking “How do I look?” to “How do I feel?” Movements toward body neutrality and inclusivity are encouraging, but real change begins at home, schools and in our communities—through the words we use, the images we promote, and the examples we set. The media, too, must reflect diverse bodies and challenge narrow stereotypes.

It is time to remember that we are more than what the mirror reflects. Mental health thrives not in perfection but in self-acceptance, authenticity, in the ability to respect (and not judge) our bodies for their resilience and purpose of carrying us through life. **The mirror shows a reflection, not a definition. We are more than what we look like.**




-Dr. Aabha Pimprikar
Co-Editor

POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

How do you feel about your body - really? If you don’t have a positive body image, do you feel confident or feel low....

Many people feel pressure to measure up to certain social and cultural ideals of beauty, which can lead to feeling bad about the way their own body looks.

Social media, TV, movies, and magazines constantly show images of bodies that are, at best, hard to achieve and maintain - and at worst, unhealthy and unattainable.

But we can build or keep it positive...

If we keep ourselves with gratitude of what we have may be of any shape and size with appreciation we have a positive body.

Here are some practical tips to help you foster a positive body image and celebrate your unique self.

1. Prioritise self-kindness: University life can be stressful but remember to treat yourself with kindness.

2. Focus on movement: When we exercise for pleasure, strength, and accomplishment we can get so much out of it.

3. Curate a positive circle: Surround yourself with friends who uplift and inspire you

4. Challenge beauty norms: Challenge these norms by seeking out content that celebrates diversity and authenticity. Embrace your unique features and redefine what beauty means to you.

5. Practice gratitude for your body: Shift others narrative about you from criticism to gratitude

6. Self-care rituals: Craft self-care routines that make you feel confident and empowered. Whether it's a skincare regimen, dressing in a way that resonates with your style, or engaging in hobbies, prioritize activities that boost your self-esteem.

7. Mindful reflection: Practice mindfulness by gently redirecting negative thoughts about your body. positive affirmations.

8. Seek support: If negative body image impacts your well-being, consider seeking guidance from a professional.

9. Embrace progress, not perfection: Building a positive body image takes time. Progress may not always be linear, and that's okay.

10. If you can't be positive, work towards neutrality. We don't need to be defined by our bodies. Our lives are rich, interesting, and multifaceted in a way that is largely unrelated to what sort of body we exist in, or whether or not we are conventionally attractive.

Using the strategies above you can build a better version of you who is not afraid of anything. You can foster a deep sense of love for yourself and then for society too...Keep loving Keep Rocking....

Poor Body Image and Mental Health
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9970735/>
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4843362/>

-Ar. Nivedita Singh
Architectural Consultant

CLUB IN ACTION**GERIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH-
AGELESS HAPPINESS**

Rotary Club of Nashik Grapecity, a consistent supporter of DAGMHI 3030 India since its inception, has announced the formation of its **Mental Health Committee** for the Rotary year 2025–2026. To mark the occasion, the club hosted a Mental Health Awareness talk by Dr. Aabha Pimprikar, Founder President of DAGMHI 3030. Dr. Pimprikar spoke on the genesis, growth, and future projects of DAGMHI, followed by a presentation on *Geriatric Mental Health* and strategies to care for older adults. A lively quiz, *Ageless Happiness*, and an interactive Q&A session engaged members meaningfully. The event concluded with the club felicitating Dr. Pimprikar, who was recently honored with a special appreciation award by RID 3030 for her dedicated work in mental health.

-Rtn. Anjali Mehta
President, RC Nasik Grapecity, RID 3030
India

**SESSION ON
'STRESS AND TIME MANAGEMENT'**

On 23rd August 2025, Rotary Club Pachora-Bhadgaon organized a student guidance session at Gram Vikas Vidyalaya, Pimpalgaon Hare. The topic was "Stress and Time Management", conducted under the Mental Health Awareness initiative.

Dr. Prashant Sangade guided students on how stress affects school life and shared practical ways to manage it. He emphasized the importance of yoga, meditation, hobbies, sports, and a positive mindset along with academics.

Rotary Club President Dr. Mukesh Teli addressed the students about Rotary's community service efforts. Other dignitaries present included Chandrakant Lodaya, Sanjay Kotkar, Dr. Kunal Patil, Dr. Siddhant Teli, and Chintaman Patil.

Acting Principal Mr. Chaudhary and school staff supported the program. Over 400 students attended the session. The program was well-received and informative. Anchoring and vote of thanks were done by Mr. Mandewal.

**EDITORIAL TEAM**

- Rita Aggarwal :Editor
- Aabha Pimprikar :Co-Editor
- Sripriya Shaji :Co-Editor
- Devika Gokhale :Reviewer



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BODY IMAGE: RIPPLE EFFECTS OF DISTORTED REFLECTIONS

In my practice, as a nutritionist & psychologist, I witness the daily battle of the mind, where admiration, shame, pride, and despair constantly vie for dominance. Westernised ideals—slimness for women, muscularity for men—dominate global consciousness.

Psychologists note that **the internalisation of these appearance ideals is one of the strongest predictors of body dissatisfaction** (Thompson et al., 1999). It is not the body itself that causes distress, but the constant comparison between “who I am” and “who I am told to be.”

Body Image and Mental Health

Poor body image is strongly associated with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and disordered eating (Cash & Smolak, 2011). For adolescents, especially, the dissatisfaction can tip into dangerous territory—fueling self-harm, social withdrawal, or eating disorders that may scar a lifetime.

Body dissatisfaction is a major risk factor for **developing disordered eating behaviours** and is part of the diagnostic criteria for anorexia and bulimia nervosa.

Body image concerns are tied to **higher rates of suicidal thoughts** and feelings. One UK survey found that 13% of adults had experienced suicidal thoughts or feelings because of worries about their body image. **People with high body dissatisfaction are twice as likely to attempt suicide.**

In body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), individuals have a distorted perception of their appearance and become preoccupied with perceived flaws. It is a shame-based disorder with one of the highest suicide rates of any psychiatric illness.

Body dissatisfaction spares no age or gender; it erodes quality of life and deepens psychological distress. Among adults, nearly 60% report negative feelings about their appearance, with 20% experiencing shame and 34% feeling low, as noted in a 2019 UK survey. Adolescents are especially vulnerable, with over a third reporting distress about body image. In A study from Kerala noted body image concerns are particularly higher in those with high BMI. While women have historically reported greater dissatisfaction, rising pressures on men to appear muscular highlight that body image challenges increasingly affect all genders. **When body image fractures, the mind bleeds quietly.**

Ancient Indian sculptures celebrated robust, full-bodied figures as symbols of fertility and grace. Our mythology redefined beauty itself:

- Ganesha's rounded belly symbolised wisdom and abundance.
- Krishna or Shymala's dark skin radiated charm beyond fairness.
- Hanuman's monkey form embodied courage and devotion over appearance.

The body was never meant to be a battlefield; it was a temple, honoured with reverence. *“Deho Devalayah prokto jīvo devo sanātanaḥ” — The body is a temple, the soul its eternal deity.*

Body image is more than a single thought or feeling—it has four dimensions:

- 1.Perceptual:** how we *see* our body, not always accurately.
- 2.Affective:** how we *feel* about it—satisfaction or shame.
- 3.Cognitive:** how we *think* about it, sometimes to the point of obsession.
- 4.Behavioural:** how we *act* on these feelings—choosing rituals of care, or retreat and harm.

Together, these dimensions significantly shape mental well-being.

If our children are taught to view beyond blemishes, body image will be rooted in respect, intellect, and health—not perfection. **When we honour the body as temple, distorted reflections lose their hold, and ripples of harm fade.**

-Dr Sripriya Shaji

Counselling Psychologist & Nutritionist
Srisha Counselling, Kozhikode

THE WEIGHT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LOW WEIGHT BODY IMAGE

For a long time during my adolescence, I used to avoid clicking pictures and being active on social media. Every time I felt like posting a picture of myself, I questioned whether it was really ‘post-worthy’ or ‘aesthetic’ enough and somehow always ended up convincing myself that it wasn’t. While my friends were busy clicking ‘Pintersty’ pictures and curating their Instagram feeds, I always stayed behind the camera, convinced that my skinny body and tall stature made me ‘ugly’. I always felt posting myself would invite a lot of judgement and body-shaming my way. To others, it seemed like I was reluctant to post, but in reality, it was a deep struggle I had with my self-esteem. Every time someone looked at me, I would get conscious of how I might be appearing to them and believed that once you are photogenic, have a ‘perfect curvy body’ and flawless skin, nothing else matters. **I started believing that not looking good enough meant not being good enough.**

These beliefs have become quite common with the increasing use of social media. While we may have started using it for networking, today it has become a platform where there is a pressure to look a certain way. It has become more about glowing skin, ‘perfect’ bodies (not too skinny, not too chubby), coordinated outfits and pretty pictures of your life. What might have started out as a platform to express your authentic self has turned into a culture of self-comparison and seeking validation. While we talk about how everyone portrays only their ‘best self’ on social media and how that is just a part of their lives, we rarely believe it. We often forget that behind those picture-perfect posts, there are retakes, edits and even professional helpers. Yet, we always internalise these posts and start rating ourselves, leaving ourselves dissatisfied and judgmental of our very own real, imperfect selves. Sadly, not just school kids or teenagers, but adults are equally involved in this silent competition of keeping up with ‘looking’ their best, forgetting that our worth is often defined by our efforts and not by our looks.

Social media has certainly made body image issues universal and worse. Earlier, these comparisons were mostly made only in our immediate surroundings but today they’re more out there. This has resulted in poor self-esteem and anxiety around one’s appearance. What appears to be a person’s ‘shy nature’ may actually be a silent struggle with low self-esteem and self-comparison.

However, there’s also a side of social media where people are talking about body-positivity, encouraging people to embrace their acne, scars, stretch marks etc. If there are more of such campaigns where people are taught ways to foster acceptance and love towards their bodies, body image issues would significantly decrease.

Social media does shape how we view ourselves, but it is our choice to decide whether it traps us in its loop or not.

-Devika Gokhale

Counselling Psychologist, Nagpur

PC: ChatGPT



THE BODY IMAGE AND THE COSMETIC INDUSTRY

‘Beautiful women are women who stand up to accept what they are and not what shows them up.’

The cosmetic industry has become one of the fastest-growing sectors worldwide, influencing not only consumer habits but also perceptions of self-image and beauty. While cosmetics provide people with opportunities for self-expression and confidence, they are also linked to concerns about unrealistic beauty standards, body image dissatisfaction, and social pressures.

The global beauty and personal care market was valued at over USD 532 billion in 2023 and is projected to surpass USD 800 billion by 2030 (Statista, 2023). According to the Dove Global Beauty and Confidence Report (2016), 85% of women worldwide report opting out of important life activities because of insecurities about their appearance. Social media and advertising have intensified the “ideal body” narrative, often linking attractiveness with thinness, fair skin, or youthful appearance. Males are no less, male grooming is an emerging segment. In 2022, men’s skincare products represented a market worth USD 12 billion globally, reflecting changing notions of masculinity and appearance. India’s cosmetic and personal care market was valued at USD 17.4 billion in 2023, projected to grow to USD 33 billion by 2027 (IMARC, 2023).

India has the highest youth population of 65%, most of them being less than 35 years of age, so now you can guess why our country is targeted for cosmetics. Nearly 60% of Indian women felt unhappy with their appearance due to societal and media-driven standards. Young men also report pressure to have muscular physiques, fuelling demand for grooming and fitness-related products.

Growth is driven by rising incomes, urbanization, and social media influence, cultural and social influences. Fairness creams have historically dominated the Indian market. Bollywood, beauty pageants, and Instagram culture reinforce narrow beauty ideals, increasing pressure especially on young girls and women. Constant exposure to influencers, filters, and celebrity endorsements leads to increased cosmetic consumption but also higher body dissatisfaction. Suicides have been on the rise due to body image issues. A 22 year old died due to body shaming in Delhi as per Times of India, Aug 25 2018. Forget that, this year on Aug 25th, in Bengaluru a 27 year old techie died due to dowry death and the undercurrent issue included her body shaming by her mother in law. There are many such incidents reported when researched.

The cosmetic industry has also led to multiple health problems which are now being researched seriously. (Alnuqaydan, A. M. (2024b). The dark side of beauty: an in-depth analysis of the health hazards and toxicological impact of synthetic cosmetics and personal care products. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1439027>)

Remember our grandparents who looked young and beautiful even at their age, courtesy, natural products and home food. ‘Please love yourself. Each one of us is a masterpiece in ourselves. Learn to project right naturally’

-Rupashree Venkat

**Art Therapist, Child Mental Health
Counsellor**

Rotary Bengaluru Platinum City

THE HIDDEN BODY IMAGE INFLUENCERS: FAMILY, PEERS, AND SELF-PERCEPTION

When we speak of 'hidden influencers,' we are referring not only to the apparent influence of family and peers, but also to the subtle, often unobserved means by which they affect body image—through offhand remarks, comparisons, or cultural norms that quietly shape the self-image.

Body image is not what you look like in the mirror. It is what you feel when you are alone. Most of the time, our body image does not emerge by itself. It is shaped by the people around us, especially our relatives and friends, through their words, attitudes, and behaviours. They can be kind to us, but they can hurt our self-esteem.

When Words Cut Deep

Family members often do not understand the impact their words have on us. A thoughtless "You've gained weight" or "You're too thin" may pass without a second thought, but these words can make us question ourselves. During childhood and adolescence, when individuals are developing their sense of self, such comments can create a persistent sense of self-doubt.

Peers are the top cause of this issue. School hallways, sports teams, and social cliques provide venues for comparison. Peer disapproval, or even unspoken disapproval, can impact anyone's self-esteem, regardless of body shape, colour, or fitness. Social media, too, has increased this issue, with photoshopped and filtered images presenting unattainable beauty standards.

A Client's Journey

One of my clients was a young adult from a family where there was a great deal of talk about the body. Her friends were critiquing her body shape. She began weighing herself in terms of the number on the scale, treating her body like a project that she would never complete. The client came to therapy with low self-esteem, dissatisfaction with their body, and criticism of self. These problems not only affected her confidence but also her social life and motivation towards everyday living. During our sessions, we assisted her in identifying the underlying influences behind such as core beliefs, learn healthier coping strategies, and developing self-acceptance over time.

By undergoing therapy, she discovered the basis of these insecurities. She realized that the negative self-statements she developed were not facts. She was helped in recovering her body image, being kinder to herself, and dealing with the internal critic built from criticism by peers and family. She was also able to talk to herself, be less uncomfortable about how she appeared, and be more self-conscious about how she felt. She appreciated her body not for the way it appeared but for its potential.

How Counselling Helps

Counselling offers a safe, non-judgmental space to examine these influences. Counselling can assist individuals to:

- **Identify triggers** like words, circumstances, or recollections that influence the body image.
- **Fight internalized beliefs**, separating worth from appearance.
- **Encourage** positive self-talk and **replace** unhelpful inner conversations with positive messages.
- **Set boundaries**, knowing how and when to respond to insulting comments

Final Reflection:

Body image concerns are not narcissistic but stem from issues of self-esteem, belonging, and identity. Seeking professional help, such as counselling or therapy, breaks the cycle of comparison and judgment, fostering a more compassionate relationship with oneself. Part of our existence involves family and friends, who communicate with us. The goal is not to silence them—an impossible task—but to amplify our positive inner voice. Our bodies are not works in progress; they're our home. With courage, compassion, and if needed, professional support, we can protect that home from the weight of others' words and live our lives boldly, comfortably, and proudly.

Akansha Hirraani

**Founder & Head Psychologist,
CALMFIT COUNSELLING**

(<https://calmfitcounselling.com/>)

BODY IMAGE ISSUES, BODY DYSMORPHIC DISORDER AND GENDER DYSPHORIA

Let us begin to understand each condition, however it is evident and simple that all the three conditions have similarity of not being satisfied with one's own body, it later becomes complex as they are each different in the permutation and combination of how one thinks, feels and sees oneself, coming uniquely from one's individual nature and nurture.

Nature-Refers to the **biological and genetic factors** that influence who we are. Like DNA, brain chemistry, hormones, physical traits, temperament.

Nurture-Refers to the **environmental influences** and life experiences that shape us. Like family upbringing, culture, education, social relationships, life events.

1. Body Image Issues (Unhealthy body image)

It is the general dissatisfaction with one's body shape, weight, size, or appearance. The focus is on how the body looks (often tied to beauty standards, weight, skin, hair, etc.). It can be caused by social pressures, media ideals, comparison, and low self-esteem.

Example: Feeling "too fat" or unattractive even if healthy.

2. Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)

It is a mental health condition where someone is preoccupied with a perceived flaw in appearance that others may not notice. They focus on a specific body part (e.g., nose, skin, hair) seen as "defective." It is caused by distorted perception + obsessive thought patterns (classified under OCD-related disorders).

Example: Someone convinced their nose is "ugly" and spending hours checking mirrors or seeking surgeries.

3. Gender Dysphoria

It is the psychological distress due to a mismatch between one's gender identity and the sex assigned at birth. There is discomfort with one's sex characteristics (e.g., breasts, genitalia, voice, facial hair) because they don't align with the person's gender identity. It is caused by Identity–body incongruence (not just appearance).

Example: A transgender boy feeling intense distress about having breasts.

The common challenges in all the three conditions are

- **Distress about the body**-All involve unhappiness with one's body
- **Desire to fix or change the body** – there is an urge to change something through dieting, surgery, exercise, medical transition, or compulsive behaviors
- **Impact on one's self-esteem** - It can affect relationships and social interactions
- **Risk of anxiety & depression** -it leads to increased mental, emotional struggles.
- **Pressure of society & culture**-societal norms often intensify these struggle.
- **Impacts on daily living**- It acts as a roadblock and the person feels stuck in a loop & survival mode.

Let me give you examples to help you understand the differences

Unhealthy Body Image (not necessarily a disorder)

Riya looks in the mirror and feels her arms are "too fat." She avoids sleeveless clothes and sometimes compares herself to actresses on Instagram. She still goes out with friends, manages school/work, and the thought comes and goes, but she wishes she looked "better." This is **unhealthy body image**: dissatisfaction + comparison, but not obsessive or life-disrupting.

Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)

Ananya believes her nose is "huge and ugly," even though others say it looks normal. She spends 3–4 hours daily checking mirrors, taking selfies, or researching cosmetic surgery. She avoids parties because she's sure people will stare at her nose. Even after a cosmetic procedure, she still feels "deformed."

This is **body dysmorphia**: obsessive, irrational, and severely impacting daily life.

Overlap Example

Meera doesn't like her weight (unhealthy body image) and sometimes skips meals. But if she starts spending hours daily fixating on one body part, avoids all social events, and her life revolves around "fixing" her body, it can cross into **body dysmorphia**.

Example of Gender Dysphoria

Arjun, assigned female at birth, identifies as male. As puberty begins, he feels increasing distress when his breasts develop and menstruation starts. He avoids looking in the mirror, binds his chest tightly every day, and feels anxious using public restrooms. This discomfort isn't just about "appearance", it's about his body not matching his inner sense of being male.

This is **gender dysphoria**: distress caused by the mismatch between **gender identity** and **physical/assigned sex traits**

The treatment options of each of them have some common factors while some are different.

1. Unhealthy Body Image

(Not always a disorder, but can lead to anxiety, eating disorders, or low self-esteem if untreated.)

Helpful approaches:

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**: Helps challenge negative thoughts about appearance and build healthier self-talk.
- **Psychoeducation & Workshops**: Learning about media literacy, body diversity, and self-acceptance.
- **Mindfulness & Self-Compassion Practices**: Yoga, meditation, journaling to connect with the body positively.
- **Support Groups**: Sharing experiences with others who struggle with body image.
- **Lifestyle Support**: Balanced nutrition, joyful movement (exercise for fun, not punishment).

2. Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)

(A diagnosable mental health condition — needs clinical treatment.)

Evidence-based treatments:

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for BDD**: Specialized CBT focusing on reducing compulsive behaviors (mirror checking, reassurance seeking).
- **Exposure & Response Prevention (ERP)**: Gradual exposure to feared situations (like going out without camouflaging) without doing compulsions.
- **Medication (if severe)**: SSRIs (a type of antidepressant) are often effective for obsessive thoughts.
- **Psychoeducation & Family Support**: Helping loved ones avoid reinforcing compulsive behaviors.
- **Avoiding Unnecessary Cosmetic Procedures**: Since surgery usually doesn't fix the underlying obsession.

3. Gender Dysphoria

(Recognized in DSM-5 — not because being transgender is a disorder, but because the distress can be significant.)

Helpful approaches:

- **Gender-Affirming Therapy**: Counseling to explore and affirm one's gender identity in a safe, supportive way.
- **Social Transition Support**: Changing name, pronouns, clothing, hairstyle.
- **Medical Interventions (if chosen)**:
 - Puberty blockers (for youth)
 - Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)
 - Gender-affirming surgeries (top/bottom surgery, facial feminization/masculinization)
- **Peer & Community Support**: Trans support groups, safe spaces, online communities.
- **Family Therapy**: To help families understand and support the individual.

Hope the above understanding helps you understand each condition, its commonalities, with its examples and how the treatment options may vary.

-Kavita Saraf

Psychotherapist, soft skills trainer

Mental & Emotional wellbeing Coach

BODY IMAGE AND EATING DISORDERS

"I'll be happy when I lose five more kilos."

That was the thought looping in Maya's mind each morning. The scale wasn't just an object in her bathroom. It was her judge and jury. What Maya didn't realize was that her struggle had a name: an eating disorder. And she was far from alone.

The Weight of Culture: We live in a society obsessed with thinness, "clean eating," and the illusion of perfection. A 2019 meta-analysis found that heavy social media use significantly increases body image dissatisfaction and risk of disordered eating behaviors. Add to this the casual "diet talk" among friends or family, and the seeds of an eating disorder can take root early.

According to the World Health Organization, eating disorders affect millions worldwide and are among the deadliest mental health conditions, second only to opioid overdose. Yet many remain misunderstood, hidden beneath shame and stigma.

Beyond Food- What Eating Disorders Really Are: Eating disorders are not about vanity or "just wanting to be thin." They are complex mental health conditions involving distorted body image, emotional distress, and unhealthy behaviors with food. Genetics, personality traits, cultural ideals, and life experiences all intertwine to create vulnerability.

Here are the most common types:

Anorexia Nervosa: Characterized by extreme food restriction, an intense fear of gaining weight, and a distorted body image. People with anorexia often see themselves as larger than they are, even when dangerously underweight. Physical risks include heart complications, bone loss, infertility, and in severe cases, death.

Bulimia Nervosa: Bulimia involves cycles of binge eating consuming unusually large amounts of food in a short time followed by compensatory behaviors like vomiting, laxative misuse, fasting, or excessive exercise. Unlike anorexia, body weight may appear "normal," which makes bulimia harder to detect. Over time, it damages the digestive system, teeth, and heart.

Binge Eating Disorder (BED): The most common eating disorder, BED involves repeated episodes of loss of control around food, often followed by guilt or shame but without purging. Many people with BED struggle with weight stigma, making it harder to seek help. BED is linked to diabetes, high blood pressure, and depression.

Other Specified Feeding and Eating Disorders (OSFED): Not every struggle fits a neat box. OSFED includes serious disordered eating patterns that don't meet full criteria for anorexia, bulimia, or BED. Despite being "atypical," OSFED carries the same emotional pain and medical risks.

The Mirror vs. The Mind : Neuroimaging studies show that individuals with eating disorders process body-related information differently, reinforcing the warped reflection they see.

Finding a Way Back: Treatment often includes medical care for physical complications, psychotherapy (such as CBT-E or family-based therapy), nutrition therapy to rebuild trust in food and support systems because no one recovers alone. The earlier the intervention, the better the outcomes.

Rewriting Maya's Story: With therapy and guidance, Maya began to see food not as an enemy, but as nourishment. The mirror no longer dictated her worth. Her story, like so many others, is proof: recovery is possible.

- Malvika Fulwani
Dietician, Nagpur

F-ACTUALS

Beyond Aesthetics

People are undergoing extreme body modifications from head to toe—reshaping, cutting, or sculpting body parts, sometimes even risking damage to vital sensory organs like the eyes. These transformations are often driven by identity, social influence, or cultural ideals. The consequences are real and can be life-threatening, including infection, embolism, nerve damage, or blindness. Both physical and psychological risks are significant: while mirrors and digital filters may inspire change, biology imposes immutable limits.

Surgical procedures and Mortality Rate:

Among elective cosmetic procedures, **Brazilian Butt Lifts (BBLs)** are associated with **the highest mortality rate**. The procedure involves injecting fat into or around the gluteal muscles, and if fat enters large veins, it can travel to the lungs, causing a **pulmonary fat embolism**, which can be fatal. Studies estimate death rates between **1 in 2,300 and 1 in 15,000**, with some surveys—including both fatal and nonfatal embolisms—reporting a risk of **1 in 1,473**. By comparison, **liposuction** has an estimated death rate of **1 in 10,000**, while **abdominoplasty (tummy tuck)** ranges from **1 in 10,000–13,000**, and combined procedures like "Mommy Makeovers" are generally less deadly. These statistics highlight why BBLs are considered the deadliest cosmetic surgery and underscore the importance of strict surgical safeguards and awareness of the risks.

Rise with Social Media

1. Adolescents and young adults exposed to **body-focused content on Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat** are more likely to experience **body dissatisfaction**, a major predictor of disordered eating. ([Fardouly et al., 2018, Body Image](#))
2. Fitness, diet, and weight-loss content often portrays **unrealistic body standards**. Studies show that viewing "fitspiration" images increases **negative mood, appearance anxiety, and drive for thinness**. ([Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018, Journal of Adolescent Health](#))
3. **Snapchat Dysmorphia** is a growing phenomenon where individuals seek cosmetic procedures to look like **digitally filtered versions of themselves**, linking social media directly to **body image distortion and surgical interventions**. ([Wikipedia – Snapchat Dysmorphia](#))
4. Frequent social media use leads to **social comparison**, with users comparing their real appearance to curated images, contributing to **disordered eating behaviors like restrictive dieting, bingeing, or purging**. ([Holland & Tiggemann, 2017, Body Image](#))
5. Influencers promoting extreme diet trends, detoxes, or "clean eating" can **normalize restrictive eating** and increase anxiety around food. ([Rodgers et al., 2020, Eating Behaviors](#))
6. **Social media** platforms' algorithms **amplify body-focused content**, meaning users who engage with weight, fitness, or diet posts are likely to see more, reinforcing **body dissatisfaction loops**. (Perloff, 2014, *Communication Research*)
7. Qualitative findings from *BMC Psychology* show that Indian men face intense pressure to match muscular, lean ideals—often framed by Bollywood and media portrayals. Participants describe pervasive **societal expectations, perfectionism**, and relentless self-comparison, leading to anxiety, shame, and social withdrawal. Crucially, there's a **lack of support systems** or safe spaces for them to discuss these struggles.

-Dr Sripriya Shaji
Co-Editor

