



COACHES

PROMOTING A HEALTHY
BODY IMAGE

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As a coach, it's important to remember that your team looks up to you as a mentor - someone to support them when they are facing difficult situations. Sometimes coaches are surprised to find that members of their team have negative body images.

HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS TO HELP COMBAT POOR BODY IMAGE ON YOUR TEAM:

- Make every effort to praise each team member at practice for his or her cheer or dance ability. By concentrating on the athlete's ability, it's obvious to the team that it's his or her skills are being evaluated, not their bodies.
- Stress the importance of eating correctly. A healthy diet should include a variety of nutrients, limited sugar, and a few saturated fats. However, this does not mean food should be limited. Promote good food choices.
- Encourage your team to make healthy food and beverage choices, especially before, during, and after practices or games (i.e. suggest water, not coca-cola).
- Avoid educating your team about the symptoms and signs of eating disorders, as research shows this can give them bad ideas of how to control their weight. Instead, focus on the positive aspects of nutrition.
- Choose uniforms that are suited for all body types on your team.

These suggestions and a supportive spirit can help you set a positive and realistic mind-frame about body image among your team members. Even if it takes a while, they'll appreciate you for it.

