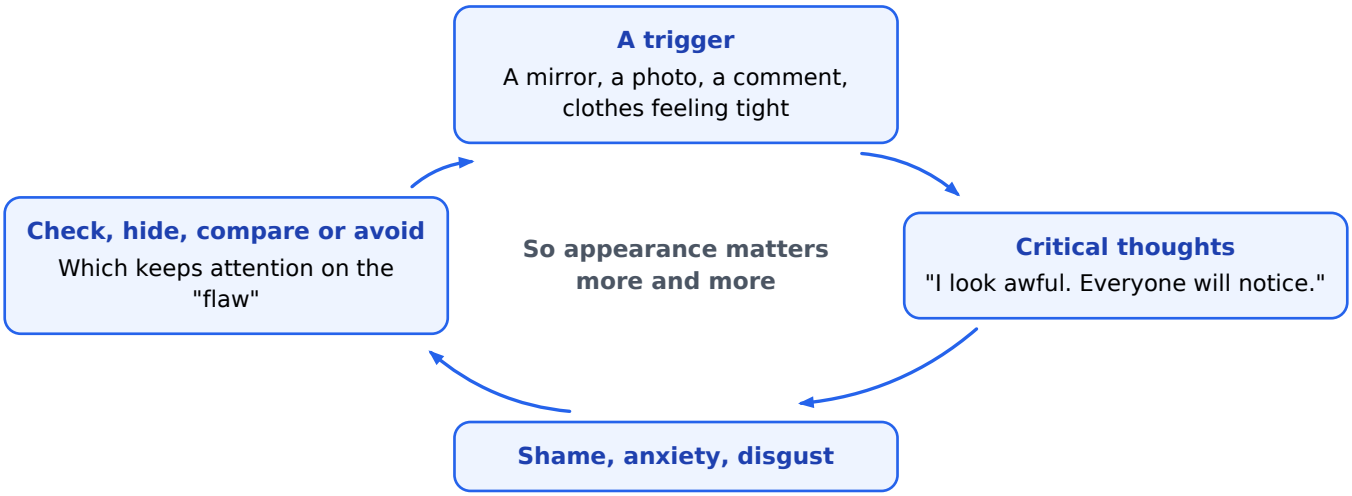
Understanding body image

How you see and feel about your body, which is not the same as how it looks.

Body image is the picture you hold of your body in your mind, and the thoughts and feelings that go with it. It is shaped by family comments, teasing, culture, media and experiences, and it can be very different from what other people see.

How a negative body image keeps going



Things that keep it going

- **Checking.** Mirrors, pinching, weighing, comparing photos. Looking closely magnifies what you see.
- **Avoiding.** Mirrors, photos, swimming, intimacy, certain clothes. You never find out that it would have been all right.
- **Comparing.** Usually with people who seem to look better, and often with edited images.
- **Measuring your worth by your appearance.**

What helps

1. Cutting back on checking and comparing.
2. Gradually doing the things you have been avoiding.
3. Noticing what your body does for you, not only how it looks.
4. Widening what your self-worth rests on.
5. Speaking to yourself as you would to someone you love.

When to get specialist help

If you are restricting food, bingeing, making yourself sick, exercising to compensate, or thinking about your shape and weight most of the day, please talk to your GP. Bodywhys, the Eating Disorders Association of Ireland (bodywhys.ie), offers information and support.

How my feelings about my body affect what I do, and do not do

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Body checking and avoiding

Two habits that keep you focused on what you dislike.

Name _____ Date _____

Tick what you do.

Checking

- [ ] Looking in mirrors or windows repeatedly
- [ ] Studying particular parts of my body
- [ ] Pinching or measuring
- [ ] Weighing myself often
- [ ] Checking how clothes fit
- [ ] Taking and examining photos
- [ ] Comparing myself with others
- [ ] Asking if I look OK

Avoiding

- [ ] Mirrors
- [ ] Being in photos
- [ ] Swimming, the gym or the beach
- [ ] Fitted or light clothing
- [ ] Being seen without make-up or styling
- [ ] Shopping for clothes
- [ ] Being touched or seen undressed
- [ ] Social events

The behaviour	How often	What I hope it will do	What it actually does

One checking habit I will cut back, and how (for example: one look in the mirror before leaving, for getting dressed, not for inspecting)

One thing I avoid that I will try, as an experiment

What I noticed

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